

## THE CALL TO HOLINESS – PART 2

Last week we began a series entitled “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” What does it mean to be holy? It means to be “set apart” **from sin**—and to be “set part” **for God**. I want us to go back to I Peter 1 for a quick review of what we looked at last week. Notice again verses 15-16.

First, we noted from the context that God is **not** specifically talking to pastors or spiritual leaders when He says to be holy. He calls **all of His children**—not just a select few—to be holy!

Second, we looked at the **pattern** for holiness. In verse 14, we are told **not to fashion** ourselves—don’t be molded by—our former sinful desires. Instead—“but,” vs 15—we are to be holy (a command) as God is holy. Notice it says “be **ye**.” “Be ye”—**you**—be holy! **Each individual** believer has the responsibility—“as obedient children”—to pattern our lives after God our Father. It doesn’t matter if others are being holy or not—God commands **you** to be. Are you **an obedient** child?

Our **example** is God; the **extent** is “**all** manner of conversation” (end of vs 15). That doesn’t just mean in our speech—it means **every** area of our life, every day, all day.

Third, we noted the **purpose** for being holy. The obvious answer is because **God commands** it! As mentioned earlier, “...so be ye holy” in the middle of vs 15 is in the **imperative**—meaning it is a command. We have a second reason to be holy in vs 17—because God will **judge our works**.

As mentioned last week, there are **two** main judgments. There is not **one** judgment that everyone goes to—there are two! The reason there are two different judgments is because from God’s viewpoint there are only 2 groups of people! We divide humanity into a lot of different groups—God divides us into 2!

--We are either born again—or we are not!

--We are a child of God—or we are not!

--We are either forgiven and heaven-bound—or are unforgiven and hell-bound!

--We either **have** the Son—and have eternal life—or we **do not have** the Son and do not have eternal life!

And God has a separate judgment for each group.

--The **unsaved are judged for their sins** at the Great White Throne judgment to determine their degree of punishment.

--The **saved** are judged at what is called the judgment seat of Christ. They are not judged for **their sins**, but for **their works**—what they did for God after they were saved. They receive either rewards—or loss of rewards—dependent on their obedience to Christ.

And Peter reminds us here that **because God judges** every man’s work, we should pass the time of our sojourning—our pilgrimage here on earth—in fear. There should be a reverential awe of God in our daily living because we will stand before Him some day! Enough in the way of review...

My **original** intent for today was to begin to dig a little deeper into the **meaning** of holiness. God led differently, however, and I felt led to really point out just **how much** God emphasizes His desire for us to be holy! Last week we looked at the **depth** of holiness—we are to be as holy as God is; today we are going to look at the **breadth** of holiness—how frequently God tells us to be holy!

We are going to do something today that I usually don’t do—read through a number of verses throughout the New Testament. I’d rather “park” in one place and stay there, but it is impossible to show you **how often** God tells us to be holy if we only stay in one spot! Let’s consider first...

### 1. What Jesus says about pursuing holiness

Please know as we go through these verses that the word “holiness” isn’t always used. But I think you’ll agree that when Jesus tells us to **be like the Father**, that includes the concept of being **separate from sin**—and **separated unto** God.

One more **disclaimer** as we get started. I'm obviously not going to attempt to bring up **every** passage in the NT where God says to **stop** being like you used to be—and **start** being like Him! But my guess is that you, like me, will be surprised how many times God says it—and how often we “overlook” those commands.

Please turn to Matthew 5. If you have a “Red Letter” Bible, you'll notice that starting in vs 3, the words are red—indicating that Jesus spoke them. Verses 3-12 are commonly called the “**Beatitudes**.” Although the **beatitudes** are certainly “**attitudes**” that we should “**be**,” the name comes from the Latin word “beatitudo” which means “**blessedness**.” It is pretty hard to miss the fact that verses 3-11 **all start with** the word “blessed” which means, “happy, blissful.” It is more than a **superficial happiness** that is dependent on circumstances, though—it is a **contentedness and joy** of soul that can be ours regardless of circumstances.

--Vs 6 “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness”

Jesus says you will have contentment and joy when you whole-heartedly **pursue righteousness**. What is righteousness? God is obviously righteous—“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Mt 6:33)—but the idea here is probably **inward righteousness**—the same thing as **holiness**.

--Vs 8 “Blessed are the pure in heart...” We know that our heart is where **sin lies**—and where sin comes from. **Jeremiah 17:9** “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” Jesus expanded on that in **Mark 7:21-23** “For from within, **out of the heart of men**, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, <sup>22</sup> Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: <sup>23</sup> All these evil things **come from within, and defile the man.**”

To be pure in heart—to be holy—is what we should desire. When we are, we will be blessed—joyful!

--Vs 16 “Let your light so shine before men...” What does that mean? We know from the rest of the verse that it refers to **our life**—our good works—that others are to see in us. In essence, Jesus is saying ‘Your life needs to be **so different** that when others see what you do, they will **recognize God's work in you** and give Him honor and praise!’

That's what happened when Paul was born again and started preaching about Christ! **Galatians 1:23-24** “But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. <sup>24</sup> And they **glorified God** in me.”

What about you? Has there been such a undeniable change in your life since you were saved that people are amazed and praise God because of you? “Let your light so shine before men!” Don't put your candle under a bushel like Jesus says in vs 15—hold it up high so people can see it!

Now verses 46-47. Here Jesus asks 4 questions. Why? Not to gather information, but to impress upon them their need to **be different**. Then He sums it up with vs 48 “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

Sounds a lot like “But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy...” doesn't it!

--Does Jesus want us to be perfect? Yes—we just read it!

--Can we be perfect? No—but we are to strive to be!

--Why? Because He will help us to be holy if we want His help—and others will see that change in us!

## **2. What Paul says about pursuing holiness**

What does God **through Paul** say about holiness? Let's just say so far we've been drinking water from a **garden** hose. Ever have someone turn the water on full blast when you are getting a drink? This will **be worse**—it'll be like drinking from a **fire hose**! So fasten your seat belt on and hang on!

--Romans 6:22 “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto **holiness**, and the end everlasting life.”

--Sin is no longer your master—God is; and your fruit—what you produce—should be holiness.

--Romans 12:1 “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, **holy**, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

--Based on what God has done for you through Christ, it is reasonable—it is just and logical and right—for you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice—that is **what? Holy!** God freed you from the **penalty** of sin, so you should serve Him by striving to be holy—free from sin!

--II Corinthians 7:1 "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

--"Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." Don't just be cleansed on the **outside** where men can see—be cleansed **on the inside**, too, where only God can see!

--"Perfecting" means to be made complete. **Barnes writes:** "Holiness had been commenced in the heart, and the exhortation of the apostle is, that they should make every effort that it might be **complete** in all its parts." **He then adds:** "The unceasing and steady aim of every Christian should be **perfection** - perfection **in all things** - in the love of God, of Christ, of man; **perfection of heart**, and feeling, and emotion; **perfection in his words**, and plans, and dealings with people; **perfection in his prayers**, and in his submission to the will of God."

--Ephesians 1:4 "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be **holy and without blame** before Him in love:" God's desire is for us to **be holy** and without blame!

--Ephesians 4:22-24 "That ye **put off concerning the former conversation** the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; <sup>23</sup> And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; <sup>24</sup> And that ye **put on the new man**, which after God is created in **righteousness and true holiness.**"

--We are to put on a new man—a new way of living—which is righteousness and true holiness.

--Ephesians 5:27 "That He [Christ] might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be **holy and without blemish.**"

--The church is not a building—it is believers! The verse is not talking about a spot-free, wrinkle-free, blemish-free **building**—it is talking about God's people **being holy!**

**Philippians 2:15** "That ye may be **blameless** and harmless, the sons of God, **without rebuke**, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;"

**I Thessalonians 4:7** "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto **holiness.**"

--II Timothy 2:19b "...And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ **depart from iniquity.**"

--Can it get any plainer than that? If you are a child of God—if you name the name of Christ—don't sin!

--II Timothy 2:21 "If a man therefore **purge himself** from these..." Stay away from certain things; get them out.

--II Timothy 2:22 "Flee also youthful lust: but follow righteousness..." Sounds a lot like what Peter said: "not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance:" Instead, be holy!

### **3. What James says about pursuing holiness**

Turn to James—the book right after Hebrews. James was the half-brother of Jesus—and we know from Acts 15 that he had a position of leadership in the church of Jerusalem.

--James 1:26 "If any man among you **seem to be religious**, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's **religion is vain.**"

--Pretty straightforward, isn't it? If your religion—your belief system—has no control over your tongue, your religion is vain—meaning **empty and worthless!**

--James 1:27 "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

**Barnes writes:** "The apostle does not say that this is the whole of religion, or that there is nothing else essential to it; but his general design clearly is, to show that religion will lead to a holy life...." What will a holy life look like? Caring for the needs of others—and avoiding sin!

### **4. What Peter says about pursuing holiness**

Peter had more to say about holiness than the passage we looked at last week. For the sake of time, I won't have you turn there.

**II Peter 3:10-11** "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. <sup>11</sup> Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, **what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,**" Since this world will pass away, live holy, godly lives!

## 5. What John says about pursuing holiness

Lastly, please take your Bibles and turn to the book of I John. John, of course, is the Apostle John and wrote the gospel of John, I John, II John, and III John, and the book of Revelation. John's writings were the last books to be written and I John was probably written about 85 AD. John has much to say about avoiding sin—and living a life that is pleasing to God. We can't cover everything God had him write, but here are some:

--I John 2:1 "My little children, these things write I unto you, **that ye sin not**. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:"

--Even though Jesus is our advocate—someone who pleads on our behalf—we are still exhorted to not sin!  
--vs 3-4 "And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we **keep** His commandments. <sup>4</sup>He that saith, I know Him, and **keepeth not** His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

--The proof that you have come to know God—and that you are indeed His child—is if you keep His commandments. If you **say** you know Him—but **don't obey** Him—you are a liar—and not a child of God!

--I John 2:6 "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked."

--If you say you belong to God, then you ought to walk—which means "live"—the way Jesus lived!

I John 3:2 "Beloved, **now are we the sons of God**, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

--What a wonderful verse! "**Now** are we the sons of God..." Aren't you glad that we have a "know-so" salvation? It isn't a **hope-so...** or **maybe-so...** or "we'll-find-out-when-we-get-there" so! **Now**—right now—at this **very instant**—we can **know** that we are sons of God!

--"and it doth not yet appear what we shall be..." We aren't **in appearance** right now what we will be in the future. We are not the **finished product**; we are not yet glorified. When will that happen? When He shall appear, then we shall have a body like unto His glorious body. Then we shall be like Him—for we shall see Him as He is!

I John 3:3 "And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

--Every man that has his hope fixed on Christ—that has the expectation that Christ will return—"purifieth himself." What does that mean? It means to **be holy**, doesn't it? Purify ourselves **like who**? Who is the example we are to pattern ourselves after? "Even as **He**"—Christ—"is pure."

A lot of verses—and a lot of thoughts! Rather than try to summarize what each said, I'm going to select just one verse from each, make one comment, then ask one question.

1. **Jesus said** in Mt 5:48 "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

--Jesus said we are to be perfect—but we know this side of heaven that we can't be.

--Are you using that as an excuse—or are you striving to be perfect like God your Father is perfect?

2. **God through Paul** said in Romans 12:1 "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

--In light of what God in His mercy has done for you, it is reasonable that you give yourself to God.

--What kind of life are you **giving back** to the One who **gave Himself** for you?

3. **God through James** said in James 1:26 "If any man among you seem to be religious, and **bridleth not his tongue**, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's **religion is vain**."

--God says that **what we believe** should affect the way we **talk**.

--Is your language pleasing to God?

4. **God through Peter** said in II Peter 3:11 "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in **all holy conversation and godliness**,"

--Heaven and earth will pass away some day and in light of that, we should be different.

--Are you a holy and godly person?

5. **And God through John** said in I John 2:6 "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked."

--If we are truly a child of God, we are to walk—live—the way Jesus lived.

Jesus always did what pleased His Father. Do you strive always to please God—or do you strive to please you?

So, what would God have us do in light of His Word this morning?

1. First and foremost, God wants you to be saved from the penalty of your sins—He wants you to be born again! As mentioned last week, you striving to be holy will not get you to heaven.

--God will not say to anyone—‘You tried pretty hard to be good so I’m going to let you into heaven!’

--What He will say to some, though, is, ‘Welcome home, child! You have received my gift—Jesus—to pay for your sins—and I now receive you!’

--But to others, God will say, ‘Depart from me, ye that work iniquity! You rejected my gift—Jesus—and I now reject you!’

May that not be you!

2. Second—for those of us who are children of God—are you **striving** to be holy? There is a unexplainable kind of joy that comes when we realize we **can’t be holy**—but that God can make us holy—when we hunger and thirst after Him. Are you experiencing that?