

The author inserts personal comments when quoting Scripture which are indicated by square brackets. All biblical references are quoted from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.” Let’s take our Bibles, please, and turn to Isaiah 6. A. W. Tozer in his excellent little book called, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, on pages 112 and 113 wrote this about God’s holiness:

Holy is the way God is. To be holy He does not conform to a standard. He is that standard. He is absolutely holy with an infinite, incomprehensible fullness of purity that is incapable of being other than it is. Because He is holy, His attributes are holy. That is, whatever we think of as belonging to God must be thought of as holy.

Isaiah 6:1 says, “In the year that King Uzziah died.” He was a good king, a wonderful king. It was a sad moment in history. The last sixteen years of his life he was a leper and Jothan, his son, reigned as co-regent. Everyone that came into the palace and would see this godly man Uzziah, as a leper, would hear from his lips the cry to them to warn them: “Unclean, unclean!” Imagine being king of the realm and having to say that to people. The loneliness of those with leprosy is well known. There was isolation and the awfulness of the disease for sixteen years before he died.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.

Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

And one cried to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!”

And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

So I said: “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.”

Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.” (Isaiah 6:1-8)

And now turn to Revelation 4, please. As we have a commentary on these words of Isaiah 6, and a portion of it is quoted word for word. In Revelation 4, the scene is heaven. God the Father is sitting on a throne that is like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance. There is a rainbow about the throne which has the appearance like an emerald. Twenty-four thrones around the throne and from the head throne were going lightnings and thunders and voices. And there are seven lamps of fire there and the whole throne room is sitting on a sea of glass like crystal. Around the throne on all four sides of it are four angels. We call them the worship leaders of heaven.

The Bible says in Revelation 4:8–11

The four living creatures, each having six wings, [just like Isaiah's account] were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night saying: [And what do they proclaim? They are constantly say this:] "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come! Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever,
The twenty-four elders [who we believe represent a completed body of the church in heaven, and they] fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:
"You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created."

What brought forth all this worship was the announcement by the worship leaders of heaven saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." And everyone bowed down and worshipped.

Let's look to the Lord in prayer.

Father, as we attempt to discuss the holiness of God from Your Word, I pray that there would be a deep and profound sense in our hearts of our need to be holy. May the Holy Spirit of God convict us of sin and convict us of unholy and ungodly attitudes and lifestyles. May the Holy Spirit of God convict us that sinful man and woman cannot possibly enter the presence of a holy God apart from the work of Jesus Christ. Give us a new understanding of holiness, we pray, that it would make a difference in how we live. It is in Jesus' name that we ask these things. Amen.

One hardly knows where to begin because the subject is so vast. We are going to deal with two things about the holiness of God. We first want to look at the nature of God's holiness—what He is. And then we are going to look at our need for personal holiness in our lives because of it.

The title of this study is, "The Nature of God's Holiness". Holiness means "separation" and is translated *sanctify* or *purify*. To be made holy is to be set apart and there are several ways in which God is set apart. Please turn in your Bibles to Exodus 15:11. When you speak of the nature of God's holiness, it refers to His unique person—that there is no one like Him. He is separate from anyone you have ever met or known. God is totally different. Radically, unusually, and completely different from anyone you have ever known. And the Bible emphasizes His uniqueness all the time, especially in Isaiah the prophet.

In Exodus 15:11, it says in the Song of Moses: "Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness." No one is like the Lord in holiness, in being separate, He is totally separate.

Turn to 1 Samuel 2 where it refers to the unique person of God in that there is not anyone like Him. When you say He is holy, no one is comparable to Him. In 1 Samuel 2, Hannah the mother of Samuel, prayed for a child. She was barren and God answered her prayer. She started to rejoice in the Lord and in a wonderful prayer in 1 Samuel 2:2 she said, "No one is holy like the LORD, for there is none besides You, nor is there any rock like our God."

What a statement! There is none holy (separate) like You. When you speak of the holiness of God, you mean He is totally different and separate from anyone you have ever met in your life.

Secondly, turn to Psalm 99. It also refers to His exalted position. There is no one in the same camp who is over everything like He is. I like what one writer said: "Every man on the face of the earth who ever entered politics has tried to be over someone or something." Now, there is no way anyone on the face of this planet could possibly be higher than God Almighty. He is holy. He is separate from anyone who has ever tried to be over anyone. He is, in His exalted position, absolutely separate from everyone.

In Psalm 99:1-2 it says,

The LORD is great in Zion,
And He is high above all the peoples
Let them praise Your great and awesome name—
He is holy.

What? What does it say? "Holy."

Exalt the LORD our God,

And worship at His footstool—
He is holy.
[Verse 9 repeats it again.]
Exalt the LORD our God,
And worship at His holy hill;
For the LORD our God is holy.

It refers to His unique person. It refers to His exalted position.

In Isaiah 57:15 it says, “For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, Whose name is Holy.” He is absolutely separate because of His exalted position. He is high and lofty. He is above all the peoples, above everyone and everything. That is how separate He is.

It also refers to the places where He dwells. Without having you turn, I want to list several of them for you, just to show you what I am talking about. When you talk of God’s holiness, His separateness, it is interesting that wherever He dwells, God always adds the adjective “holy” to it. We read in Psalm 99:9, “His holy hill”. We are to worship at His holy hill. You can read in 2 Chronicles 30:27 that the holy dwelling place of God is heaven. You can read in Psalm 5:7 about His holy temple. You can read in Ephesians 2:21 that the church (all the believers having God dwelling in them) become a holy temple in the Lord. You can read in Isaiah 56:7 that we are to worship at a holy mountain because that is where God is. It is the same thing in Isaiah 66:20, speaking of the coming kingdom of God on earth, the millennium, when God dwells among His people. It calls it a holy mountain. In Psalm 24:3, where He dwells is called a holy place. Heaven itself, the new city in Revelation 21:10 is holy Jerusalem. Revelation 22:19 says, “holy city”.

Folks, wherever God dwells, it becomes a unique and separated place. And God puts with it an adjective and says, “That is holy ground.”

Turn to Exodus 19. When we speak of the holiness of God, it refers to His unique person, His exalted position, and the specific places where He dwells. But it also refers to His special people. His special people are mentioned in Exodus 19—I love this. God said, “You shall be to me, [speaking to the children of Israel] a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.” Israel is called a holy nation. Now, did Israel ever sin? Oh yes. Were they ever disobedient? Yes, they were idolatrous. They were immoral. They sinned against God and they were certainly not “holy” in the sense of being separate from sin. But God says, “You are a holy nation. I want you separated from all nations on the face of the earth” (Exodus 19:6, paraphrased).

Turn to Leviticus 11. In order to show that they were holy, God made them eat kosher. Amen? It would not be a bad idea if you tried it. But in Leviticus 11 God said, “I am going to give you a diet so that everybody will know that you are weird.” This is my translation, but it gives you the idea. God wanted all of the children of Israel to be totally different from everybody around them. So He said, “You are going to eat differently.

You are going to stay away from all that stuff that the goyim like. Lobster, crab, shrimp—get rid of that junk. Oh by the way, there is one animal and everything it produces that I do not even want to see on your plate. They call it pig, hog, ham, pork, bacon—get it out of your life. Amen?

In Leviticus 11:44, God said,

For I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

For I am the LORD who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.

Turn to Deuteronomy 7. When we talk about the holiness of God it refers to His special people. He wants His people to be separate from all nations around. In Deuteronomy 7:6 He said:

For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.

The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath.

My friends, the holiness of God referred to the nation of Israel. He wants them to be separate. Turn to 1 Peter 2 and we will see an interesting thing is that the special people of God not only refers to the children of Israel, it also refers to the church of Jesus Christ. In 1 Peter 2:9-10, Peter writes to believers and says:

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

1 Peter 3:5 says, “For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves.” The point is that there are special people who are believers, who trust in God, who God puts the adjective with and says that they are “holy” now. He says, “They are people for Me.” They are the people of God. All

believers of the church of Jesus Christ are called “a holy nation” because we now belong to God. God does not want us to talk like, think like, act like, or speak like, any of the world around us. He wants us to be different.

One of the cultural problems that we are having in western civilization today is that we are adopting secular viewpoints into Christian thinking. We are amalgamating the two viewpoints and thinking that this is the way to reach people. No, it is not and it never has been. God does not want us to talk like them, to do what they do, to think like them, or to go where they go. He wants us to be different and a lot of us are afraid of being different. The message in society today is to be the same with everybody alike. No, Christians are to be different. God wants us different. I like to use the word “weird” or I throw in “wacko.” God wants us to be different. Paul even said, “I am a fool for Christ’s sake” (1 Corinthians 4:10, paraphrased).

Holiness refers to His people.

Turn back to Leviticus 21. The holiness of God refers to His unique person, to His exalted position, to the specific places where He dwells, and to His special people. It also refers to His designated priests. Boy, you get a glimpse, of holiness when you look at what God said about priests in Leviticus 21. There is no group of people on the face of the earth that have had higher standards than the priests of the Old Testament.

Leviticus 21:1 says,

And the LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: ‘None shall defile himself for the dead among his people.’”

He was saying, “You cannot even touch a dead body. If somebody dies in your presence, you have to call for help.” You talk about tough things!

They shall not make any bald place on their heads, nor shall they shave the edges of their beards nor make any cuttings in their flesh. (Leviticus 21:5)

I mean nothing, folks, not even haircuts. Why? Because it says,

They shall be holy to their God. They shall not take a wife who is a harlot or a defiled woman, nor shall they take a woman divorced from her husband; [Why?] for the priest is holy to his God. He is holy. And he shall take a wife in her virginity. A widow or a divorced woman or a defiled woman or a harlot— these he shall not marry; but he shall take a virgin of his own people as wife. (Leviticus 21:6, 7, 13, 14)

By the way, another passage tells us the priest could not divorce her either. And verse 17 says that no man who has any defect may approach God. The priest could not have a defect, could not be blind, could not be lame, and could not have a broken foot or a broken hand. He could not be a hunchback or a dwarf. He could have no eye problems and no scabs. Nothing!

Hey, are you reading this?
You got a sore, then you are out.
I got a limp.
You're out!
I lean over a little.
Get out!
You're kidding? Why would God do that?
Because He wanted them to be different from everybody else.

The priests were not the same; they were totally different. They had different standards physically. They had different standards socially in terms of marriage and family. They were absolutely to be different. Why? It was because they were to be holy to the Lord.

Let me tell you what else He did. Out of all these priests God said, "Oh by the way, one of you is really going to be different. And he is the only one who can go into the special little room I have in the tabernacle or temple that I call the holy of holies. This is the holiest place on earth, I know! This is where My presence is going to come once a year on the Day of Atonement and it will be so holy. By the way, there are no chairs. I do not ever want to see the priest sitting down. Oh by the way, put a rope on the end of his robe because if he dies, nobody can go in to get him since he is the only one who can go in there. So you have to pull his dead body out if he dies in there of a heart attack. This guy is holy unto the Lord. In fact, I want him to wear a giant turban and I am going to label that turban, 'Holiness to the Lord.' And everybody will know that this is the weirdest guy in Israel. We call him the high priest. Do not even get close to him. And he is the only one who can go in to the holy of holies. And all the rest of you guys are also going to be different from everybody else. And you are going to serve Me day and night in this holy place."

Now I do not care what you think about all this, I really do not. The American generation does not like those kinds of things. Today's generation thinks that everybody should be treated alike. No, God never did that. He never did it. God is no respecter of persons, but don't think that He does not have standards of holiness. He does. And He had it among the priests.

What does this mean to you and me? Turn to 1 Peter 2. This might surprise a great many of you, what I am going to say now. 1 Peter 2:4-5 says,

Coming to Him [that's our Lord Jesus Christ] as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and

precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood.

Stop right there. You know I understand why Martin Luther had such a problem, I really do. Martin Luther, at the time of the Reformation, was an Augustinian monk. By the way, he died an Augustinian monk. In the technical sense he was not the founder of the Lutheran Church, although certainly the teachings of Martin Luther became precious to the Lutheran people. He was an Augustinian monk and he wrote a lot of things about the church needing to be reformed. There were three basic tenets that caused the Protestant Reformation. One was the authority of Scripture over the authority of the church. Number two was justification by faith alone, not by works. But the third one is the one that believers today do not know much about, but it was indeed the most controversial tenets and the straw that broke the camel's back. And it was a treatise that Martin Luther wrote on the priesthood of the believer.

For a thousand years, as many of you who have been to school and studied it know, we had a period of time called the Middle Ages or the Dark Ages. There was a separation between priests and people. And Martin Luther, through his study of the Scripture, came to the conviction that every believer is a priest and that we do not need to go through men who are priests to get to God. Behind this was a theological problem that exists to this day, not only in the Roman Catholic Church, but in many Protestant denominations. This is because they equate Israel and the church as one and the same; therefore, pastors are the same as priests.

Therefore there is a division between clergy and laity. Is everybody following? I just want everybody to know that the principle of the Protestant Reformation, the principle that should characterize every Bible-believing church, is that everybody (including the pastor and the people in the pew) are priests. We can all go directly to God and we do not need to go through any other human agency; and that way has been prepared for us by Jesus Christ, our Lord. We have access into the very presence of God because He died on the cross for us. He is our sacrifice. He is our atonement. He is the mercy seat. He is all of it. And we now have “entered into the veil,” the Bible says in Hebrews 10. And we can talk to God directly because of what Jesus did.

What I want to say is that God calls the people of His church “priests” and He says we are “holy priests”. We have lost a sense of that today. We like the fact that everybody is a priest and can do what we want—we think. But what God calls it is “a holy priesthood.”

Turn please to Revelation 15. When we speak of the nature of God's holiness, it refers to His unique person, His exalted position, the places where He dwells, His special people, and His designated priests. It also refers to His remarkable power.

God is holy. His power is separate from any power you have ever seen or understood. Any explanation you have ever given does not adequately explain the power of God. And I am going to show you something I think is really special in Revelation 15. The scene is heaven and verse 1 says that the seven last plagues are the attention of this moment and

then the wrath of God is complete. They sing the song of Moses in verse 3, the song of the Lamb. And here is what it says:

Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty!
Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!
Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name?
For You alone are [What?] holy.
For all nations shall come and worship before You,
For Your judgments have been manifested.

What caused the people of heaven to declare the holiness of God upon seeing the power of God displayed in the tribulation period? It was His holiness. It was separate from anything they had ever seen before. The power of God is separate, folks, from anything you have ever seen.

Let me give you one illustration. Let's take earthquakes. Isn't it interesting how we have analyzed earthquakes today and we use the science of seismology? We are really studying it. We know where the faults are. We are even talking about predicting the movements in the earth. We have what we call a "Richter" scale to determine how severe the movements are. We are getting a handle on it, we are told. We are beginning to understand earthquakes like we have never understood them before. And I say, "Praise the Lord!" May that continue for the protection of us all.

But I want you to know that God is going to do something in the tribulation period that is going to blow the science of seismology to kingdom come. He is going to have an earthquake on this planet like the world has never seen or ever measured. The Bible says that every island and mountain is going to be removed out of its place. All of the cities of the nations will fall. The Bible says in the Old Testament, describing this event that it is like God taking the planet in His hands and giving it a shaking. The entire globe will have one massive earthquake. Men's hearts will fail them for fear. There will be worldwide panic and they will know it comes from God because it is unlike anything they have seen before. And all heaven breaks out in praise because, "You alone, Lord, are holy" (Revelation 15:4).

That is only one example. The tribulation period, in that holocaust of terror that God will bring on the earth, is going to be the greatest demonstration of the power of God that the world has ever seen. And they will know He is holy in His power.

Turn please to Psalm 89. It not only refers to His remarkable power, but His holiness also refers to His faithful promises. God is different from anybody you have ever known and loved who has made a promise to you. He is totally different. You may say, "In what sense?" He never goes back on His word. You say, "Oh, I knew somebody like that. He always did what he said." Well, God is even better than that. He not only doesn't go back on His word, He never makes it conditional. He does it no matter what you do. A lot of people have trouble with this.

Let me show you something that I think is absolutely wonderful. If this does not bless your socks off, you are unbleisable. Psalm 89:30–37 says,

If his sons forsake My law and do not walk in My judgments,
[And I would like to add, they did not.]
If they break My statutes and do not keep My commandments,
[And that was certainly true of them also.
They didn't keep them but they broke them.]
Then I will punish their transgression with the rod,
and their iniquity with stripes.
[And He did that and judged them.]
Nevertheless, My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him,
nor allow My faithfulness to fail.
My covenant I will not break,
nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips.
Once I have sworn by My [What?] holiness; I will not lie to David:
His seed shall endure forever,
and his throne as the sun before Me;
It shall be established forever like the moon,
even like the faithful witness in the sky.

Presumably the rainbow and the flood is mentioned there.

Psalm 60:6 says that God has spoken in His holiness. God is so separate, so different, and so unique that whatever He promises will come true no matter what happens in anybody's life. Aren't you glad of that? Heaven and earth may pass away. My words will never pass away. You say, "What if I can't keep holding on?" No sweat. It is no problem to God whatsoever. God is holding on to you by the way, if you are a believer, so do not worry about it.

Jesus said, "I give unto them eternal life. They shall never perish. Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28). And it just amuses me how often I hear somebody say, "Well what if you could jump out of His hand?" Jump out of His hand? The whole universe is in His hand, so where are you going to go? You might move from knuckle to knuckle but you are not getting out. Talk about security—isn't it wonderful? Nothing can alter the word of God. Why? It is because He swore by His what? Holiness.

You see, He is separate from man who changes and who makes things conditional, and who does not keep His word. God always keeps His word. The Bible calls this, in Hebrews 6, "a sure anchor to the soul." It says it is impossible for God to lie. That by these immutable things (unchangeable things), the character of God and the Word of God, we know that everything God promised will come to pass. Hallelujah! Aren't you glad of that?

Imagine being in a ministry where everything was dependent upon your performance. Imagine! Unfortunately, some churches teach that. It is no wonder that people are so insecure.

Turn please to Leviticus 19. When we talk about the nature of God's holiness it refers to His unique person, His exalted position, the specific places where He dwells, His special people, His designated priests, His remarkable power, and His faithful promises. But it also refers to His absolute purity, which is what most people think of when they hear the word *holy*.

Leviticus 19:2 says,

Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy."

Then it goes on to tell you what you are not to do.

Leviticus 20:7 says,

Sanctify yourselves [that is the word, be holy] therefore, and be holy, for I am the LORD your God.

It tells you what not to do. You can look at the list following it.

Leviticus 20:26 says,

You shall be holy to Me, for I, the Lord, am holy and I have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine.

Turn to 1 Peter 1 in the New Testament. When God talks about holiness, He tells us about things He does not want us to do. The holiness of God refers to His absolute purity. He cannot sin—there is no sin in Him.

1 Peter 1:13–16 says,

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

This is the absolute purity of God. We talked about the nature of God's holiness. For a few moments I want us to reflect on why we need God's holiness in our lives. It should be obvious.

Let me give you an example of your need and mine. If you are a believer I think that you want to know about God. I mean, you really do even if you are not a believer. There are a lot of people who are unbelievers that would like to know about God. We like to see, at least with our mind's eye, and understand about who God is, how He functions, and how He works, so that we know how to relate to Him. And it seems like such a tragedy to me that a lot of us are trying to know that and are running up against a blank wall. We do not see where the problem lies. I will give you an example.

In Hebrews 12:14 it tells us to pursue holiness, without which no one can see the Lord. Isn't that interesting? We want to see, at least with our mind's eye, with our heart, we want to understand who God is and how He works. Yet the Bible says to pursue holiness because without that, you cannot see Him.

Jesus said in the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). In our concern to see and know and understand the Lord, I say to all of us that we need holiness.

In addition to our concern to see the Lord, we have the whole matter of our conversion. You cannot be converted to Jesus Christ without holiness—it is impossible. In 1 Corinthians 6:11 it says, "But such were some of you: but you were sanctified." The word means "declared holy." God made you holy. By what? It is by the work of Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, the following things are necessary to make you holy in your conversion. Number one, you need Jesus Christ Himself. 1 Corinthians 1:30 says, "He is our holiness, our sanctification." Apart from Jesus Christ, I do not stand a chance. He is my holiness. He is the way. He is the truth. He is life. He is my holiness.

Next I need the Holy Spirit. According to the Bible, sanctification or holiness happens in our hearts when we are converted by the Holy Spirit of God. You will find that in 1 Peter 1:2. Sanctification is by means of the work of the Holy Spirit. He causes us to be made holy.

Finally, I need the blood of Jesus Christ. In Hebrews 9 and 10 it tells me that the sacrifice of Jesus, the blood of Christ, is what sanctifies and makes me holy—once and for all. I can never be holy before God apart from the blood of Jesus Christ. By the way, this has nothing to do with your performance, nothing.

Not only do I need Jesus and the Holy Spirit and the blood of Christ at His cross, I also need the Word of God. Jesus, in His prayer to His heavenly Father in John 17:17 said, "Sanctify them, make them holy through Thy truth. Thy word is truth" (paraphrased).

Ephesians 5 says that God wants to cleanse and sanctify the church by the washing of water of the Word. It is the Word of God that the Holy Spirit uses. We are talking about

Jesus at His death on the cross. And the death of Christ 1900 years ago is essential to our holiness, without which no one can serve the Lord.

In my conversion, I need holiness. In my commitment to serve God and to worship Him, I need to be holy.

In Romans 12:1–2 it says,

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,
that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, [what's the
next word?] holy, acceptable to God, which is your
reasonable service.

Do you want to serve God? That is wonderful. We need holiness to serve God. “Be holy for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16).

In our communication of love and affection to other believers, we need holiness. There is nothing as awful as attending a church that is cold, dead, unresponsive, and filled with people that look like spiritual zombies. The last time they smiled was probably when their doctor pulled their lips up. You know what I mean? I do not like churches like that. There ought to be a smile on our faces if it is physically possible. There ought to be joy in our hearts. We have come to worship the Lord. There should be wonderful fellowship and we are to express our love for each other. You probably know that in the Bible there is an exhortation to greet people with a holy kiss.

Turn to 1 Thessalonians 3. God does not want us to be cold and apathetic and indifferent to each other. But God also wants us to be careful and He wants us to be holy. And in our communication of love and affection to other believers, we are to be holy.

1 Thessalonians 3:11 says,

Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus
Christ, direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you
increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just
as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts
blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the
coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus
that you should abound more and more, just as you
received from us how you ought to walk and to please God;
for you know what commandments we gave you through
the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, [your holiness]
your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual
immorality. (1 Thessalonians 3:11–4:3)

He starts out by saying, “I want you to love each other.” We need to love each other, but watch out; you must abstain from sexual immorality.

For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.
Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God,
who has also given us His Holy Spirit. (1 Thessalonians
4:7–8)

Folks, listen to me. There is hardly a week that goes by in the ministry of this church, in this community, that somebody does not justify what is pure sexual immorality in the name of love. The compromise here is so incredible. Kids are having sex with each other before marriage all in the name of loving each other. They say, “We’re not hurting anybody.” You are hurting yourself and it is unholy.

God wants you to be separate. God is not trying to keep you from having fun or being satisfied. God knows how you work. God knows how you function physically, emotionally, and spiritually. He wants you to be happier than you could ever possibly imagine and He knows what it takes. This world has gone bonkers for sexual immorality. However, they do not call it sexual immorality anymore. But God still calls it that and we ought to also.

My dear friends, we have never lived in a day like today when there is such a need for holiness in our communication of love and affection to each other. We need holiness and God frequently says so.

Turn please to 1 Peter 1 again. We also need it in our conduct before God and others. We need to be holy in whatever we do.

The Bible says,

As obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the
former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called
you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,
[Whatever you do.] because it is written, “Be holy, for I am
holy.” (1 Peter 1:14–16)

In our conduct we need to be holy.

Now folks, I hear this and sometimes I wonder if we can do anything about it. In fact, one man told me that sanctification is a work of God. There is nothing any believer can do about it. Turn to 2 Corinthians 7. I want to show you a verse that troubles me on that question. I want you to look at it for yourself. People have told me for many years that you cannot possibly be holy. They say that the only way we can be holy is through Jesus Christ. I agree. There is a position of holiness. What I am confronting us all with is whether there is a practice of holiness? Yes, I know that in my standing before God I am made holy only by the work of Christ. But I want to ask you about your present state as a

believer. Do you have a responsibility to be holy in your life? Was God tricking us when He said, “You be holy, because I am holy?” Is that an impossibility and they were just words?

And how about 2 Corinthians 6:14 where Paul tells us not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers? In verse 17 he says, “Come out from among them and be separate.” That is holiness—separation. “Do not touch what is unclean and I will receive you. I will be a father to you,” he said. And verse 1 of the next chapter he says, “Therefore having these promises [of that special father/son relationship with God], beloved [beloved means he is writing to Christians] let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

Now you tell me if you believe that you can cleanse yourself? I have a lot of believers who say, “No”. You are only cleansed by the cross. Hey, I believe the only way I can be forgiven of my sins is through the death of Christ. But do I have responsibility to cleanse myself? And the Bible says, “Yes”. This is seen in 2 Corinthians 7:1. In the Greek grammar it even demands that it is in and of myself. It is not being done to me; it is my responsibility.

Is there some filthiness of the spirit in disposition or attitude in your heart? Is there some bitterness or resentment or complaint? God says, “You clean it up.” Is there something that we are doing in our lifestyle that is demonstrating the lust of the flesh? Clean it up! We are to perfect, or “bring to a completion,” holiness in the fear of God, recognizing our accountability to God.

Yes friends, among believers there is to be a practical holiness where we cleanse ourselves, where we get right with God. There is nobody who is going to cause you to stop sinning but you. There is nobody who is responsible for sinning but you. We can be tempted and baited and enticed by the enemy, but we sin.

James 1:13–15 says,

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin.

In our generation, with all of its counseling procedures, it is trying to absolve us of responsibility. Blame it on somebody—your parents, your children, your environment, or somebody. Just do not stand there and say that you did it.

Listen, the only way to try freedom is to admit that you did sin. The only way to true freedom is to confess your sin and forsake it. Do you have to confess your sin to become a Christian? That is being asked now numerous times when I go in other cities. Why is that question being asked when Christians have believed it for years? I will tell you why.

It is because of the gigantic toleration of sin. We are bringing people into the Christian camp without going through what the Bible says they should go through. They are to confess their sins.

1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness.” People need to repent of their sin. That question has been asked of me maybe a hundred times in the last two years, both formally and publicly. Do people have to repent? Listen, it was the preaching of Jesus Christ and of the apostles in the New Testament that we are to repent of our sins. The Bible says, “If you cover your sin you will not prosper. If you confess and forsake it you will find compassion” (Proverbs 28:13, paraphrased).

It is no wonder that we have a weak Christianity. There is an anemic belief because we have not dealt with sin. And a lot of us, as believers, are not dealing with sin. Who cares? Nobody is going to bring it up and everybody tolerates it. Let me tell you something friends, God is not fooled. “Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that will he also reap” (Galatians 6:7).

I have to tell you the good news. The good news is that at the second coming of Jesus Christ, you are going to finally be holy. Amen? Praise the Lord! I struggle like you do to be holy in front of God. I know positionally that it is true because I put my faith in Jesus, but I struggle with it. One day I will not struggle anymore. God says that we will be holy and blameless at the second coming of Jesus Christ. We will. No more problems. We will be separated from sin, its power, and its consequences forever. No more sin. No more pain. No more struggle. No more tears. It will be all gone. Praise the Lord!

“Now unto Him who can keep you from falling and present you faultless (holy) at His glorious appearing, unto Him be glory” (Judges 1:24).

God can keep you, folks. And one day He who has begun a good work in us will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6). We will be holy at last. But until that day, I do not want to lose my joy. Do you? I do not want to lose my peace. I do not want to lose the thrill of being His servant. I want to know His power. Don't you? Then be holy, for God is holy.

Let's pray.

Father, You know how messed up we are in this generation about holiness and about sin. God, I thank You for Your Word. And I pray that You would cause the believers here to rush to it frequently and to think what You would think about sin, to say what You would say and to do what You would do. Lord, I pray for those in our audience who perhaps have thought that becoming a Christian is simply a matter of our own doing and performance. God, please deliver them from that and help them to understand that

sinful people can only possibly approach a holy God through Jesus Christ our Lord, who made the way possible by His own shed blood. Thank You that we have forgiveness of sin and access into the presence of God through His work. Lord, I pray for people in this audience that are not sure of their relationship to You. Would You cause them, by Your Holy Spirit, to flee to the Lord Jesus before it is too late. Lord, we who are believers, are in serious need of the practice of holiness in our lives. Oh God, convict us of sin. May there be a holy desire to get right with You. We thank You, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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