

What? Me Be Holy!
1 Pet 1:15-16

Intro: Today we begin a new series I am calling **A Passion for Holiness**. In the days of the great revivals of our land and around the world it was a **Passion for Holiness** that often fueled them.

That we are expected by God to be holy cannot be overlooked, understated and over simplified. Of course we, when we accept Christ as our savior, receive by God's grace His righteousness which makes us "**partakers of his holiness**" (Heb 12:10). But there is also a responsibility for us to "**Follow...holiness**" the word translated here as *Follow* actually means *Pursue* therefore the Hebrew 12:14 actually reads *Pursue holiness*. If we are to pursue something then that implies a responsibility.

Here is what other great men of God thought about personal holiness. Jim Elliot said, "*I am dwelling in a generation to whom nothing is holy. Sacredness is an aspect people never assume toward anything. They revel in bald frankness which enervates moral consciousness. I feel it affecting me*"

Oh, to be holy! Just to sense for a moment that I have somehow, however small, simulated some measure of Thy character, Lord Jesus. A word from Horatius Bonar spoke to me tonight. "Holiness is not austerity or gloom; it is the offspring of conscious, present Peace." —The Journals of Jim Elliot, from 1949. Christian Reader, Vol. 33, no. 5

Jonathon Edward said, "*A true love of God must begin with a delight in his holiness, and not with a delight in any other attribute; for no other attribute is truly lovely without this.*" —Jonathon Edwards in *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affectations: Works*

A little boy had difficulty pronouncing some words. The word worship was one of them. He said, “We go to church to wash up.” How true his mispronunciation of worship is, we do go to church to “wash up!”

In our text for today Peter makes it very clear that we have a responsibility to live holy lives.

[Read 1 Peter 1:13-17/Pray/Dismiss Jr church]

The argument in our text is a logical and simple one. Children inherit the nature of their parents. God is holy; therefore, as His children, we should live holy lives. We are “**partakers of the divine nature**” (2 Peter 1:4) and ought to reveal that nature in godly living.

Peter reminds his readers of what they were before they trusted Christ. They had been **children of disobedience** (Eph. 2:1-3), but now they were to be obedient children. True salvation always results in obedience (Rom. 1:5; 1 Peter 1:2).

Not only were **children of disobedience** they had also been **imitators of the world, “fashioning [themselves] according to the former lusts in your ignorance”** (V. 13), what they had been doing was pursuing after the standards and pleasures of the world. Paul, in Romans 12:2, says it this way “**be not conformed to this world.**”

Why were both Peter and Paul so concerned about their no longer conforming or fashioning themselves after the world? Because their nature was changed, before it was their nature to be sinful and now they had a new nature that had to be cultivated. Unsaved people lack spiritual intelligence, and this causes them to give themselves to all kinds of fleshly and worldly indulgences.

Since we were born with a fallen nature, it was natural for us to live sinful lives. Nature determines appetites and actions. A dog and a cat behave differently because they have different natures.

We would still have that sinful nature were it not for the grace of God. One day, Jesus called to Peter and his friends and said, **“Come, follow Me ... and I will make you fishers of men”** (Mark 1:17). They responded by faith to His call, and this completely changed their lives; their very nature was changed.

But God’s gracious election of sinners to become saints always involves responsibility, and not just privilege. He has chosen us in Christ **“that we should be holy and without blame before Him”** (Eph. 1:4). God has called us to Himself, and He is holy; therefore, we should be holy. Peter quotes Lev. 11:44-45 when he says, **“Be ye holy; for I am holy”** there at the end of V.16.

God’s holiness is an essential part of His nature. **“God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all”** (1 John 1:5). Any holiness that we have in character and conduct must be derived from Him.

Basically, to be *sanctified* or *holy* means to be **“set apart for God’s exclusive use and pleasure.”** It involves separation from that which is unclean and complete devotion to God (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). We are to be holy **“in all manner of conversation [behavior],”** so that everything we do reflects the holiness of God.

To a dedicated believer, there is no such thing as “secular” and “sacred” way of living, all of life is holy as we live to glorify God. Even such ordinary activities as eating and drinking can be done to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). If something cannot be done to the glory of God, then we can be sure it must be out of the will of God.

Over the next few weeks we are going to be looking at the different implications of Peter’s command that “...**as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy.**” But today we are going to look at just what it means to be holy and why we struggle so in this area of our Christian walk.

Now, I want to say right up front that I am not a legalist, nor do I believe it is my place to tell you how you should live out your Christian walk. Having said that it is my responsibility to tell you what the Word of God says about the way we should live, it is up to you to be obedient to God’s Word.

First, What Does Holiness Mean?

- A. Before we move into this I want to make this very clear; Peter is not talking about Christ’s righteousness that we receive at our point of Salvation.
 - 1. Heb 12:14 tells us that we are to “***Follow [pursue] peace with all men, and holiness...***”
 - 2. This makes it clear that there is a holiness of life that we are responsible for
 - 3. Of course the ability to pursue holiness comes only from the Holy Spirit that lives in the life of every believer
 - 4. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that enables us to be holy
- B. In some way the easiest way to define Holiness is this – OBEY ALL OF GOD’S WORD
- C. ***Holiness Is Not Simply Moral Purity***
- D. This holiness is not talking about just moral purity
 - 1. Pure morality is of this world – it says we are to ***Holy as God is Holy*** and God has never struggled with moral purity

- a) Moral purity is founded on God’s law but not His nature
- b) Holiness is talking about a nature of holiness not just moral purity.
2. The text states, “**be holy**” So it is obvious that before I can be, I must know what it is.
3. The word “holy” itself is used nearly 600 times in the Scriptures.
 - a) In the Hebrew (OT) the word for holy is Qadash (kaw-dash’) and in the Greek (NT) the word for holy is Hagiazo (hag-ee-ad’-zo) – kind of like “Hagen Daze”
 - b) It isn’t important to know the Hebrew and Greek words, just know this; they both have the same meaning
 - c) What holiness is in the OT is the same as what holiness is in the New Testament.
 - d) Whatever God was looking for in the OT among His people is the same thing He was looking for in the NT among His people.
 - e) And it is the same thing he is looking for in us – The Church
4. The word Holy means “*to be set apart.*”
 - a) But the word is means much more than that
 - b) Holy is a term that gives birth to other words
 - (1) When you read in Scripture words like *consecrate, sanctify, dedicate, hallowed, or saint* they all come from the same root word as “holy”
5. The term throughout Scripture it is used to describe objects and people
 - a) Objects such as “holy ground”, “holy Sabbath”, “holy place”, “holy garments”, “holy gifts”, “holy

- altar”, “holy ointment”, “holy vessels”, and “holy crown”.
- b) People are referred to as, “holy nation”, “holy people”, “holy prophets”, “holy men”, “holy women”, “holy apostles”, and “holy angels”.
6. Holiness is much more than just the term; It is something that grows
- a) When we are saved the seed of holiness is planted in our soul
 - b) The Holy Spirit takes the Word of God in our heart and begins to water, feed and nurture us to holiness
 - c) The HS uses the hearing, reading and studying of the Word of God to grow us in holiness
- E. Since we now know that “holy or holiness” means to be set apart, to be separated, for God’s use we see that all those things mentioned earlier were set apart specially for God’s use.
- F. But Peter commands us to be holy
- What the Command to be Holy means***
- A. God has called every Christian to be holy
- 1. There are no exceptions to this call
 - 2. It isn’t just for pastors, missionaries and a select few Sunday School teachers – it is every born again believer
 - 3. Every Christian from every nation, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, influential or totally unknown it makes no difference we are all called to be holy.
- B. This call to a holy life is based on the fact that God Himself is holy
- 1. The text says that because God is holy, He requires that we be holy

2. Many Christians today have a kind of “cultural holiness”
 - a) They adapt to the character and behavior pattern of Christians around them
 - b) As the Christian culture around them is more or less holy, so these Christians are more or less holy
 3. But God has not called us to be like those around us
 - a) He has called us to be like Himself.
 - b) He has called us to be a **“holy priesthood”** (1 Pe 2:5)
 4. Holiness is nothing less than conformity to the character of God
- C. It is God’s nature to be holy and we are to be like **“obedient children, not fashioning [ourselves] according to the former lusts in [our] ignorance”**
1. Since He is our Father and we are His children then when we were born again through the work of the Holy Spirit the ability to live a Holy life was born in us
 2. Since God always does right then it should become our nature to always do right
 3. The problem is that if we try in our own power to be holy we won’t always know what is right or wrong
 4. Or sometimes we will know what is right or wrong but there is reluctance on our part to do it.
- D. Yet Peter tells us **“as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy”**
1. Since God can be nothing but Holy we need to come to grips with the truth that when we choose to behave in an unholy manner it is just that – OUR CHOICE
 2. It isn’t God tempting us – God is holy he can never tempt us to do something unholy

3. We try to justify our behavior to God when we do that which we know to be wrong
 - a) We do that to save our own consciences but God really doesn't accept our excuses - he is holy it would violate his nature to accept our excuse for not being holy
 - b) God doesn't accept the excuse "*Well, that is just the way I am,*" or even the more hopeful statement, "*Well, I'm still growing in that area of my Christian walk.*"
 4. No, God's holiness does not make allowance for minor flaws or shortcomings in our personal character
 - a) The next time we are tempted to justify our unholy behavior it would do us well to remember the words of Hebrews 12:14 "***Follow [pursue]... holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:*** "
 - b) Because God is holy He takes our being Holy very serious
 - c) Because God is holy He cannot and will not tempt us to sin, "***Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:***" (Jam 1:13)
 - d) To try and say that the lord is tempting me is simply not so
How, then can we be Holy?
- A. We need to recognize the real problem when it comes to our being holy
 - B. Actually there are three basic problem areas that hinder our being holy as our father in heaven is holy (this may be a little simplified)

- a) ***The first Problem is Our attitude toward sin is more self-centered than God-centered***
- (1) We are more concerned about our own “victory” over sin than we are about the fact that our sins grieve the heart of God
 - (2) We cannot tolerate failure in our struggle with sin because we are success-oriented, not because we know it is offensive to God
 - (3) W. S. Plumer said, *“We never see sin aright until we see it as against God...All sin is against God in this sense: that it is His Law that is broken, His authority that is despised, His government that is set at naught...Pharaoh and Balaam, Saul and Judas each said, ‘I have sinned’; but the returning prodigal says, ‘I have sinned against heaven and before thee’; and David said, ‘Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned’*
 - (4) God wants us to walk in obedience not victory
 - (i) Obedience is God-centered
 - (ii) Victory is self-centered
 - (5) Until we face this attitude and deal with it we will not consistently walk in holiness
- b) ***The second Problem is that we have misunderstood, ‘living by faith’ (Gal 2:20)***
- (1) We have taken it to mean that no effort at holiness is required on our part
 - (2) In fact, sometimes we have even suggested that any effort on our part is “of the flesh”
 - (3) J. C Ryle says, *“Is it wais to proclaim in so bald, naked, and unqualified a way as many do, that the holiness of converted people is by faith only, and not at all by personal exertion?”*

Is it according to the proportion of God's Word? I doubt it. That faith in Christ is the root of all holiness...no well-instructed Christian will ever think of denying. But surely the Scriptures teach us that in following holiness the true Christian needs personal exertion and work as well as faith"

- (4) We must face the fact that we have a personal responsibility for our walk of holiness
- c) ***The Third Problem is that we do not take some sin seriously***

- (1) We have mentally categorized sins into that which is unacceptable and that which may be tolerated a bit.
- (2) An man was doing a remodel job on his offices and had to relocate into a temporary trailer they pulled on to the property. This trailer, however, had to have a permit for them to occupy it while the remodel job was going on. The job came to a close at about the same the temporary permit expired. In fact the permit expired just a couple days before they were able to move into the new office.

Now the trailer could be on the property it was only their occupancy that required the permit. At a meeting the problem was discussed and one of the men said to the owner, "What difference would it make if we didn't move out for a few more days. The trailer is well hidden behind the building and the city will not come around to check this soon."

Well, the owner, who was a Christian, would not hear of it, he insisted that they work overtime until they were moved out. You might say that Isn't insistence on obeying the letter of the law nit-picking legalism?

- (3) Scripture says it is ***"the little foxes that spoil the vines"*** (SoS 2:15)
- (4) It is compromise on the little issues that leads to greater downfalls
- (5) And, who is to say that a little ignoring of civil law is not a serious sin in the sight of God?

Conclusion: We are commanded by God to ***"Be ye holy; for I am holy."*** Are you living a real holy life? Of do you simply claim the holiness granted you by virtue of your salvation but forget about your responsibility to life holy?

Remember, ***Being Holy is more than just living a moral life, it is about being totally separated and set a part for God's use.***

How can we ever hope to live a holy life, first we need to change our ***attitude toward sin from being self-centered to one that is God-centered.*** Next we need to understand what it really means to walk by faith and then do it. Finally we need to take all sin, even those we have until now counted a small, more seriously