

## Being Holy

5/26/2024

The word *holy* is used more than 600 times in the Bible. It always describes something or someone set apart from all else. God's holiness is among the most difficult of His attributes for the human mind to grasp. This is partly the case because it's one of His essential qualities that is not inherently shared by human beings, not being an intrinsic part of our nature. We only become holy in relationship to Christ. It is thus an *imputed* holiness. Only in Christ do we "become the righteousness of God"

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2nd Corinthians 5:21)

You probably have heard the expression 'Holier than thou'. Often used in a remark about how someone's actions or attitude are being expressed, as in He or she came across with a holier than thou attitude. But what you may not be familiar with is where that expression comes from. It appears in Isaiah 65:5 (KJV) where God is rebuking Israel for their attitude and conduct. We will be looking at that reference in a moment but first a few things to consider about Holiness. In last weeks lesson titled 'Holy Holy Holy' we looked at two places in Scripture where God is called Holy three times in a row or Holy Holy Holy emphasizing this characteristic of Him. It was noted in that lesson that even though John in his writings refers to God as being love, scripture does not refer to God as being Love Love Love, or Righteous Righteous Righteous or Gracious Gracious Gracious or Merciful Merciful Merciful even though God is all of those things, and to a degree we can't fully comprehend.

God's Word tells us were created in God's image and that we are called to be holy because He (God) is Holy.

But despite having been created in God's image mankind has fallen because of sin. The result of which can be seen in Isaiah chapter 65 spoken of earlier which says -

*"I am sought of them that asked not for me;  
I am found of them that sought me not:  
I said, Behold me, behold me,  
unto a nation that was not called by my name.  
I have spread out my hands all the day  
unto a rebellious people,  
which walketh in a way that was not good,  
after their own thoughts;  
A people that provoketh me to anger  
continually to my face;  
that sacrificeth in gardens,  
and burneth incense upon altars of brick;  
Which remain among the graves,  
and lodge in the monuments,  
which eat swine's flesh,  
and broth of abominable things is in their vessels;  
Which say, Stand by thyself,  
come not near to me; for **I am holier than thou.**  
These are a smoke in my nose,  
a fire that burneth all the day.*

(Isaiah 65:1-5 KJV)

We through our sin have wandered far from being the bookmatch to God we were created to be. As opposed to Christ who -

*“Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.” (Hebrews 5:8-9)*

And yet despite mankind’s sinfulness God has repeatedly throughout time called us to be holy as He God is Holy. Here are a few examples from Scripture -

We see this idea being expressed by God unto Moses concerning the conduct of the priests in Leviticus 21:1-6

*“And the Lord said to Moses, “Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them, No one shall make himself unclean for the dead among his people, except for his closest relatives, his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, his brother, or his virgin sister (who is near to him because she has had no husband; for her he may make himself unclean). He shall not make himself unclean as a husband among his people and so profane himself. They shall not make bald patches on their heads, nor shave off the edges of their beards, nor make any cuts on their body. They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God. For they offer the Lord’s food offerings, the bread of their God; **therefore they shall be holy.**”*

And again in Exodus 19:1-6 concerning the people of Israel -

*“On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, while Moses went up to God. The Lord called to him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; **and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”*

And again in Revelation 1:4-6 where those in the church are called to be the following

*“John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood **and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father**, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”*

Thus as a kingdom and priests are we not called to be holy?

Peter repeats God’s call for Christians to be holy in 1st Peter 1:16. Here is that passage in its context 1st Peter 1:3-25 -

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the*

revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow.

It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, **“You shall be holy, for I am holy.”** And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for

“All flesh is like grass

and all its glory like the flower of grass.

The grass withers,

and the flower falls,

but the word of the Lord remains forever.” And this word is the good news that was preached to you.”

A few things for us to consider this morning from this passage in 1st Peter.

1. It was according to God's great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
2. This is into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.
3. This is being done by God's power for those who through faith are being guarded for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
4. This should cause us to rejoice.
5. Rejoice even though we may be tested by various trials in this life.
6. This testing has a purpose - so that it may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. It is not the test that brings glory to God but us passing the test through the power of The Spirit and His Word in overcoming sin in us.
7. And though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, **obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**

8. This is God's Grace to you as described in this statement - *"Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about **the grace that was to be yours** searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories."*

Or as Peter says elsewhere **we** have the word of the prophets made more certain.

We can rejoice because we see this salvation, as it were, not from afar but manifestly close for Christ has come and done what the prophets declared the Messiah would do and thus we can have the assurance that He the risen Christ is going to return again as Scripture tells us.

9. This Good News comes by way of men preaching the Gospel via Holy Spirit which was sent from Heaven.

10. Therefore (or our response needs to be)

- a. Alert and sober minded
- b. Setting our hope (teleiōs (tel-i'-oce) - perfectly, completely, without wavering.)
- c. On the Grace
- d. To be brought to you
- e. When Jesus Christ is revealed at His coming

11. Next - As obedient children

- a. Do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.
- b. But as He who called you is Holy, so be holy in all you do.
- c. For it is written "Be holy because I am holy"

12. Perhaps we should view Peter's last statement through a lens like this -

be holy because I Am Holy for He is the Great I Am who is Holy Holy Holy. This might give us a better perspective of Peter's next statement.

13. *"And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, **conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile**, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."*

14. *"He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."*

God's plan is just that - a plan of God as Isaiah describes in the following -

Isaiah 55:8-11 *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, **but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.**"*

15. ***“Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;”***

16. *for*

*“All flesh is like grass  
and all its glory like the flower of grass.  
The grass withers,  
and the flower falls,  
but the word of the Lord remains forever.”*

17. ***“And this word is the good news that was preached to you.”***

The Hebrew writer speaks of us being made Holy by God through the sacrifice of Christ Jesus on the cross. Thus doing the Will the Father.

*“And by that will, we have been made **holy** through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”* (NIV)

The Word Holy here in this passage is the Greek word *hagiazō* pronounced *hag-ee-ad'-zo* Which is defined as - to make holy, that is, (ceremonially) purify or consecrate; (mentally) to venerate. (\*Note some translations say sanctified vice holy as here in the NIV)

And finally 1st Corinthians 6:9-11

*“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. **But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”***

Here the word translated as ‘sanctified’ is also the Greek word *hagiazō* as in the passage of 1st Peter being discussed here - Be Holy Because He is Holy.

Being sanctified, holy, or set apart by God is one of the many things God has prepared for us in His plan of salvation for mankind.

God’s Will is that none should perish. If you have not yet responded to God’s call we invite you to do so at this time. And if you are among those who have responded let us press on to do our best to be holy because He God our God is Holy.