

## Exhortation to be Holy

### INTRODUCTION:

Hebrews 5:12-14 (NIV)

<sup>12</sup> In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! <sup>13</sup> Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. <sup>14</sup> But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

In these days of worship teams, personal fulfillment, powerful preaching skills, great name speakers, TV ministries, mega Churches, stirring music, creative programs, large crusades, and exciting revivals - - there is one thing that gets little attention and little emphasis in the church, and often gets lost behind all those distractions. HOLINESS!

Holiness: dedicated or consecrated to God or a religious purpose; sacred. The word in the highest sense belongs to God, and to Christians as consecrated to God's service, and in so far as they are conformed in all things to the will of God. Personal holiness is a work of gradual development. It is carried on under many hindrances, hence the frequent admonitions to watchfulness, prayer, and perseverance.

### TEXT:

Heb. 12:14

<sup>14</sup> Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

This morning I want to look at what it means to be holy, some practical ways to grow in holiness, and some distractions from a holy focus.

And now the problem with many people's concept of "holiness" ... they think it is some state of spiritual depth that makes them more spiritual than others, or that it is some negative constrictive lifestyle that is boring and uninteresting. We even have the phrase, "Holier than thou" which is a negative slight aimed at those we resent. In reality however, holiness in the Bible is an ACTION concept! Holiness is not just what we DON'T DO; it is very much what we POSITIVELY DO!

*Holiness in the Bible is almost always connected with actual lifestyles, not just with some state of mind.* It is very powerful, and very practical, and very positive!

The basic concept of holiness in the Bible is that of "*separation*," a separation from sin, and a separation to God!

**PROPOSITIONAL SENTENCE:** The Bible teaches us that "*without holiness, no man shall see God!*" (Heb. 12:14). Holiness therefore is an absolute necessity as a discipline for the believer!

### **I. HOLINESS: IS ACTIVE, NOT PASSIVE!**

1 Peter 1:13-16

<sup>13</sup> Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not conform to the evil

desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

#### **A. First, holiness pushes us to Preparation**

1. Peter here describes the holy life as one who prepares his mind for action!

a. The KJV here has, "*gird up the loins of your mind*" which meant a great deal to a man of the first century who wore long flowing robes as his daily attire. If something had to be done quickly he would gather up his robe and tie it around the loin area so he would be free to respond without being encumbered or held back! Today we might say, "*Roll up your sleeves*" to indicate the need to be ready.

b. If planning a trip, they would often gather up the robe and "*gird it around their loins*" so that they could act quickly if necessary to anything that happened on the trip without being slowed down!

2. Notice Peter's meaning and advice here: "*PREPARE YOUR MINDS FOR ACTION!*" 1:13 (NIV)

a. Preparing to live a holy life begins here, IN THE MIND!

b. While not a popular subject in church life today, it is important and critical!

c. Philip. 4:8-9 8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. Those things that build the positive rather than the negative should be the focus of our minds!

3. The point of this preparation is to be ready for ACTION!

a. Holiness is not some spiritual state of ecstasy; it is a verb of action!

b. Notice what follows Peter's call to prepare the mind for action:

(1. "*be self-controlled*"... it is in the imperative tense, the man or woman who is holy demonstrates the characteristic of self-control in all areas of their life! (KJV has the word "*sober*."))

(2. "*set your hope fully on the grace to be given you*" ... meaning: as you expect Jesus' coming at any minute live as though He would be here any second! Purity is the idea here, being always prepared for Christ's return; how would you live today if this was the day Jesus returned?

4. Peter says holiness is more than just rules or laws, it is righteous living!

a. Peter's use of the word "*self-controlled*" or in the KJV "*sober*" refers to one who avoids excesses, the life that is free from self-indulgence or reckless living.

b. It can mean any excess, *even religious excesses!* We are to be in control of our lives to honor God and to serve others if we are to be "*holy!*"

5. When one views the real God, the wonder of Him and His grace, it will drive us to live in a way that pleases Him, not ourself or others!

When we look at God and creation, shouldn't we have a feeling of wonder at His power and awe of His grace? When we see it, it will make us respond in a moral way, a way that honors God.

6. Peter here also connects "*holiness*" with the second coming of Christ, when we truly believe that He can come at any moment it will have an effect on us as we live, a life that is holy waiting for Christ

to come!

1 Jn. 3:1-3 (NIV)

3 See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 3 All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

- a. Thus we are to abandon the "*old ways*" we used to live by!
- b. Then, we lived in ignorance, we did what everybody else did, but now our eyes are open to sin and we need to be aware of what pulls us from God and avoid those things!
- c. Those old evil desires should not be expressed anymore in one who calls himself a Christian!

#### **B. Second, holiness changes our Performance**

1. The argument Peter uses here is simple: If God is holy and we have God in us we will live holy!
2. Peter does not spend the time arguing why "*holiness*" is something we should think about, or why it is right, just that it IS RIGHT because God Himself is Holy!
3. The call to holiness is based on the character of God being a Holy God! It is that simple!
  - a. *We can't embrace the God of the Bible and fail to embrace a holy lifestyle.*
  - b. To have the one is to have the other or you don't have either!
  - c. Hence the statement in HEBREWS 12:14 "*Without holiness, no man shall see God!*"
4. God in the life of a believer will express Himself in holy living! There will be a performance! It is not enough to know what the right desires should be, they must be acted out too!
5. Holiness requires an actual performance!

## **II. HOLINESS: AFFECTS OUR ATTITUDE AND IS PERSONAL! Titus 2:11-15**

### **Titus 2:11-15**

11 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. 15 These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

#### **A. First, a holy attitude impacts our Perspective**

1. Titus' teaching about holiness mirrors that of Peter's here: Holiness is a real change on how we live and what we think! It is not just a religious concept; it is a concrete lifestyle!
2. Holy living can alter the landscape of a nation!
  - a. It is NOT something however that can be legislated by man's laws!
  - b. It is NOT something that you can make others do!
  - c. It IS SOMETHING that we must do in our own lives and by our example affect others.

3. We can never legislate morality – the Old Law proved this didn't work, the best thing we can do is live morally!
  - a. The world needs a perspective of morality seen as a model!
  - b. Holy living will provide this for others!
  - c. If the church and Christians do not live a holy life our calls for the world to be more holy will only fall on deaf ears!
4. Notice Paul's teaching here: holiness *"teaches us to say 'NO' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age."* 2:12
  - a. *It is not enough to just say NO ... it also requires living a positive model of holiness too!*
  - b. Perspective begins in the mind remember, but it then flows out into action!
5. No one can continue to live the Christian life that doesn't practice a holy life!
6. Paul says here to this young evangelist that God's grace should do two things:
  - a. Help us *"say 'NO' to ungodliness and worldly passions!"*
  - b. And *"to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age."* (2:12)
7. This is the challenge for all Christians, to demonstrate to the world our commitment to living a holy lifestyle!
  - a. We talk different!
  - b. We act different!
  - c. Our values our different!
  - d. Our perspectives are different -- eternal vs. temporal!
8. Does it really show!!!????

**B. Next, a Holy attitude impacts our Purity!**

1. God's purpose in saving us is described here by Paul as God's way of purifying us.
  - a. Salvation is meant to make a difference in the way we live!
  - b. It will impact the present age in the way we live!
2. Jesus gave Himself, as Paul says here to *"redeem us from all wickedness."*
3. Sanctification is a church teaching that desperately needs emphasis again!
4. Revival is contingent on repentance from sin, a turning from sin and sinful passions to holy living!
5. The very effectiveness of the Gospel being preached may hinge on the purity of our lives before the world, they need to see real holiness at work!
  - a. If the world sees holiness as a negative thing it is only because WE have made it appear that way!
  - b. We can show the world that holiness is a great POSITIVE!
  - c. There is NO BETTER way to live than in God's holiness!

**ILLUSTRATION:** Picture a surgeon selecting a scalpel in the operating room. He will just as readily reject a slightly defective tool as one with serious defect. As an instrument used to bring healing he looks for purity or he endangers the healing process. How can God heal our land if we are not clean, how can we be his instruments of healing if we are defiled as His people? Holiness is living a life of purity, of self-control from worldly passions.

6. Notice too that Paul here states that not only is holiness a pure lifestyle but that it makes us *"eager to do good."* 2:14b
- a. This certainly reflects the POSITIVE side of holiness!
  - b. Those that have a clear conscience and clean life are eager to work for God; they have joy in their salvation and love to serve the Father that they know is pleased with them!
  - c. Paul then tells young Timothy that these are the things he is to *"teach."*
7. In a final word to him, Paul commands two things:
- a. *"encourage"* -- God's people to live holy!
  - b. *"rebuke"* -- those who would ignore this call to living a life of holiness!
  - c. Paul's point is for Timothy to not be afraid to use God's authority to do what is necessary to have His people live a life that is pleasing to God, and thus this will reveal to the world the nature of sin and bring conviction on ungodly and unfruitful lives!
  - d. And with a final touch Paul says to him, *"let no one despise you"* -- meaning *"don't let anyone put you down"* for teaching the truth!
  - e. Holiness does not know any age limit ... it is for all God's people because *"without holiness no man will see God!"*

### **III. HOLINESS: Roadblocks and distractions**

#### **A. Not recognizing sin**

We do not recognize sin. Our society has dulled our senses to what is right and wrong, up and down. It is almost as if everything old and traditional is the new evil. Morality is relative and nothing is true. I was recently talking to a friend about a mutual acquaintance. This young man was embarking on a romantic relationship.... With another guy. The sad thing was that the church he attends says nothing about it. There is much in our society that does not know what sin is and that is influencing Christians as well.

#### **B. Not seeing the seriousness of sin**

We do not see sin the way God sees it. Sin is a serious sad thing which separates each person from their Creator. God cannot be in the presence of sin.

#### **C. Focusing on elementary things**

Hebrew 6:1-3 (ASV) Wherefore leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, let us press on unto perfection; not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, <sup>2</sup> of the teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. <sup>3</sup> And this will we do, if God permit.

We have heard the different stories that talk of doing everything to train ourselves on how to evangelize while never actually doing it. A story I remember from my youth had to do with a drive through the Florida orange groves with the trees laden with fruit. At a church along the way there were endless classes and instruction on the proper way to identify an orange and the exact way to approach and pick one off the tree. There is a story of a light house society in which the entire purpose and mission was forgotten because of attention to minutia

unrelated to warning ships off the rocks. If we think the main point of interacting with the lost is to get them baptized and then be done we are missing the whole picture. We should want what God wants, which is separation from the worldly patterns and ways.

So let us be vigilant and study God's word so much that we know what is righteousness and what is sin. Let us consider carefully the seriousness of how sin and how it separates us from God. And let us not get stuck simply on the elementary first steps of obedience but let us strive ever upward toward maturity and holiness in Christ.

**CONCLUSION:** For many people "holiness" has a negative connotation to it; "we don't do this, we don't do that!" Biblically however, holiness has a strong positive focus, one of positive action! Holiness is a simple concept, it means being set apart by God to reflect His will in this world. Since God is set apart from the evil of this world we must be also. "Without holiness, no man shall see God!" May your life and my life be filled with the reflection of God's true holiness!