

3. BE HOLY

1/8/2004

We, Americans, have weird concepts about being holy. But then again, it is not just limited Americans, but all human. When somebody mention the word, "Holiness", we immediately come up with the words such as these:

<i>Thinness</i>	<i>Hollow-eyes Gauntness</i>	<i>Beards</i>	<i>Sandals</i>
<i>Long Robes</i>	<i>Hours of Prayer</i>	<i>No Sex</i>	<i>No jokes</i>
<i>Stone Cells</i>	<i>Frequent Cold Bath</i>	<i>Deserted Place</i>	<i>Stained Glass</i>
<i>Fasting</i>	<i>Getting Up at 4 AM</i>	<i>Clean Fingernails</i>	<i>High-rised Steeple</i>
<i>Quietness</i>			

In another words, our holiness something do with our physical efforts to isolate ourselves from any fun. That is why when our friends find out that we became Christians, they look at us like, "Why did you do that? You are going to miss all the fun, man."

Holiness does not consist in mystic speculations, isolation from the rest of the world, crazy fervors or weird acts. But it consists in thinking as God thinks and willing as God wills.

A. INSULATION, NOT ISOLATION

Phil. 2:15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,

Middle age monasteries were a full of men who wanted to follow God, but they missed the point of God's way for us in the midst of the crooked and depraved generation. They isolated themselves from the world, but their thoughts were not insulated from the worldly thinking.

John 17:14-15 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.

Jesus never told us to be isolated from the world, but we are supposed to be insulated from the world. If a boat stay out of the water, it does not have its worth as a boat. The boat should stay in water to be a boat. But if the boat let water come into the boat, it will be sunk. We should stay in the world to tell about Jesus and His gift to mankind, but we cannot let the world come into us. Because it will corrupts us and sinks us to the bottom of darkness.

So, what is this "WORLD"? I am not talking about it as a planet, but a figure of speech for mind-set and morality of this dying generation.

1John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

This world system is manipulated by the pervasive hand of satan, who pulls the strings to achieve his wicked ends. That is why we should have no string attached to this world.

The bait that satan uses against us are designed to attract us with garbs of fame, fortune, power and pleasure. It winks at us, entices our carnal desires, fans our pride, and promises its secrecy. The problem I see among the rank of Christianity is that some Bible teachers embraces this worldly concept. They say, "God wants you to be healthy and wealthy and famous." No, God wants us to be holy and righteous, not necessarily healthy and wealthy. If you become healthy and wealthy, more power to you. Use your health and wealth for His glory. But if that is your goal in your faith, you are about to go 'hook-line-and-sinker' by satan's bait.

B. HOW TO BE HOLY

1 Peter 1:13-16 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, (1) be sober, and (2) 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."

The pull of the world is every bit as strong and subtle as gravity. So invisible, yet so irresistible, so relentless, never absent or passive.

The command of God "Be holy, for I am Holy" from Lev 11:44 seems like such a tall order that no human can fulfill. But our gracious God provides us how to strive for excellence in being holy.

Gal. 5:16-26 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Did you notice the contrast between ungodly and godly behaviors between v16 through 21 and v22-23?

The Holy Spirit through Apostle Peter's pen is giving us clear commands how to be holy.

(1) We need to be sober: Does this mean that we are drunk? No, Peter is telling us to be straight thinking people mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

(2) Rest your hope fully upon the grace: To rest our hope fully upon the grace of God, we must trust and have faith in Him. That translates to having absolute confidence in God's all knowing, all powerful sovereignty.

We need to walk by faith in the Spirit, not by sight.

1 Peter 1:17 And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, (3) conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;

We think that fear and reminder of pain are our enemies. In a way that is true. However, they can be used as helper for our walk in the Lord Jesus.

For an example, because we know fire is hot, we learned not to touch a range top when it is on or pick up a hot burning charcoal from BBQ grill. Fear and reminder of pain can be used to protect us from further injury.

It is the same spiritually. Godly fear that is the beginning of knowledge can prevent us from traps of satan who wants nothing more than stealing our joy, killing our testimonies of Jesus Christ and destroying our faith in Him..

Prov. 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

If we care about and love the Lord, we don't want to do anything to disgrace or displease Him. With that fear, we can come close to Him and get to know Him intimately.

1Pet. 1:18-21 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Jesus became the Atoning Sacrifice for our sins. Through His death and resurrection, we could have faith and hope in God. This plan was set up before the creation of the universe.

C. APPLICATIONS

I'd like to remind myself and you to go through this check list in our daily lives:

1) Let's pay closer attention to what we allow to come into our hearts. Because it is "Garbage In - Garbage Out".

Col. 3:1-2 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

2) Let's give greater thought to the consequences of sin rather than its pleasures.

Prov. 7:22-27 Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, till an arrow struck his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, He did not know it would cost his life. Now therefore, listen to me, my children; pay attention to the words of my mouth: Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, do not stray into her paths; for she has cast down many wounded, and all who were slain by her were strong men. Her house is the way to hell, descending to the chambers of death.

3) Let's start each day by renewing our sense of reverence for God.

2Cor. 7:1 Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

4) Let's focus fully on God with meditation, praise and prayer periodically during each day.

Hebr. 12:2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

5) Let's check our own hearts with the help of the Holy Spirit and keep short accounts with God regularly.

Ps. 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Then we can experience what it's like to be in the world but not of it. We can be holy, as our Father in heaven is holy.