

LESSON TWO

CHOSEN TO BE HOLY

SCRIPTURE READING

[All Sections]

Eph. 1:4 Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love,

[Section 1]

2 Pet. 1:4 Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.

Lev. 11:44 For I am Jehovah your God. Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. And you shall not defile yourselves with any of the swarming things that move upon the earth.

Exo. 3:5 And He said, Do not come near here. Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.

[Section 2]

Lev. 20:26 And you shall be holy to Me, because I Jehovah am holy, and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine.

Luke 1:35 And the angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore also the holy thing which is born will be called the Son of God.

Matt. 1:20 But while he pondered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife, for that which has been begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit.

[Section 3]

Heb. 9:14 How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

1 Cor. 6:11 And these things were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

1 Cor. 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.

[Section 4]

Rom. 6:19 ...so now present your members as slaves to righteousness unto sanctification.

Rom. 6:22 But now, having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end, eternal life.

2 Cor. 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

Phil. 3:21 Who will transfigure the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of His glory,

Eph. 5:26 That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word,

Eph. 5:27 That He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish.

OUTLINE:

- I. THE FIRST ITEM OF GOD'S BLESSING**
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- III. BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD**
- IV. THAT WE SHOULD BE HOLY**
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 - 3. By Transfiguration of the Body
 - 4. Consummately to Be the Holy City
- V. WITHOUT BLEMISH**
- VI. BEFORE HIM**
- VII. IN LOVE**

QUESTIONS

SECTION 1

1. God chose us “before the foundation of the world” (v.4). What does it mean, “before the foundation of the world”?
2. What does it mean to be holy? What is the way for God to make us holy?
3. When is the first time this word “holy” is used in the Old Testament?

SECTION 2

1. Paul calls the believers in Ephesus “saints” (Eph. 1:1). What is a saint?
2. The term “Holy Spirit” was first used when the Lord Jesus was about to be conceived in Mary (Luke 1:35). What does this signify?
3. What is holiness? What does it mean?

SECTION 3

1. What does it mean when a Christian is saved, but not separated?
2. What does it mean to be separated? What are some signs of separation?
3. What are the three means for us to be separated unto God positionally?

SECTION 4

1. How is dispositional sanctification different from positional sanctification?
2. What is the result of dispositional sanctification?
3. For what purpose has God chosen us?
4. What does “love” refer to in Ephesians 1:4?

CHOSEN TO BE HOLY

----- [ALL SECTIONS] -----

God chose us that we should be holy. The words “holy” and “holiness” have been spoiled by today’s Christian teachings. Your understanding of holiness is probably influenced by these teachings. In the Bible the word “holy” should not be understood according to our natural concept. Many think that holiness is sinlessness. According to this concept, someone is holy if he does not sin. This thought is absolutely mistaken. Holiness is neither sinlessness nor perfection. Holy not only means sanctified, separated unto God, but also different, distinct, from everything that is common. Only God is different, distinct, from all things. Hence, He is holy; holiness is His nature.

The way God makes us holy is to impart Himself, the Holy One, into us so that our whole being may be permeated and saturated with His holy nature. For us, God’s chosen ones, to be holy is to partake of His divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4) and to have our whole being permeated with God Himself. This is different from mere sinless perfection or sinless purity. This makes our being holy, like God Himself in His nature and in His character.

*“Even as He **chose us** in Him before the foundation of the world **to be holy** and without blemish before Him in love”*

~Ephesians 1:4~

III. BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD

Verse 4 says that God chose us before the foundation of the world. This was in eternity past. God chose us according to His infinite foresight before He created us. The book of Romans begins with fallen men on earth, whereas Ephesians begins with God’s chosen ones in the heavenlies.

God’s selection was not made in time, but in eternity. Before the foundation of the world, God chose us. Among millions of people, He foresaw us before we were even born and selected us before the foundation of the world. The expression, before the foundation of the world, implies the entire universe, not only the earth. This indicates that the universe was founded for man’s existence to fulfill God’s eternal purpose. Without such a universe, it would be impossible for man to exist. Man’s existence is for the fulfillment of God’s eternal purpose. Thus, man is the focal point of God’s eternal purpose. The universe was founded so that man could exist to fulfill God’s eternal purpose.

IV. THAT WE SHOULD BE HOLY

A. God Being Holy

To be holy is to be separated from everything other than God. It also means to be different, distinct, from all that is not God. Thus, we should not be common, but different. In the universe God alone is holy. He is different from everything else and is distinct. Therefore, to be holy means to be one with God. To be sinless or perfect is not the same as being holy. To be holy we need to be one with God because only God is holy (Lev. 11:44; 1 Sam. 2:2).

B. Wherever God Is Being Holy

The word “holy” is not found in the book of Genesis. The first time this word is used is in Exodus. In a sense, man in Genesis was still not brought into God. It was in the book of Exodus, not in the book of Genesis, that God began to have a dwelling place on earth, and to bring man into the Holy of Holies. No matter how high were the spiritual experiences of those in Genesis, there was not on earth the Holy of Holies for man to enter. But in Exodus something extraordinary took place: on earth among men there was a place

I. THE FIRST ITEM OF GOD’S BLESSING

Ephesians 1:4 says, “*According as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blemish before Him, in love.*” Following verse 3, verses 4 through 14 present a list of all the spiritual blessings with which God has blessed us. God’s choosing is His first blessing bestowed upon us; it is the first item of God’s well-speaking concerning the church. God’s choosing is His selection. From among numberless people, He has selected us.

II. IN HIM

God chose us “in Him,” that is, in Christ. Christ was the sphere in which we were selected by God. Outside of Christ we are not God’s choice.

called the Holy of Holies, and God was there. Men could go to that place and meet God. There in the Holy of Holies, God spoke and administrated. Because such a place is not to be found in Genesis, the word “holy” is not used in that book. When God came in to charge His people to build the tabernacle with the Holy of Holies, the word “holy” began to be used.

The first mention of this word is in the calling of Moses in Exodus 3. As Moses was shepherding the flock, he saw a bush burning in the wilderness. When he turned aside to see why the bush was not consumed, God spoke to him out of the bush, saying, **“Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground”** (Exo. 3:5). This indicates that wherever God is, that place is holy. Remember, only God is holy. If you have nothing to do with God, then you are not holy, no matter how sinless or perfect you may be. You may be sinless and altogether perfect, but if you are not related to God, you are not holy. But once you are related to God, you immediately become holy.

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C. Whatever Is of and for God Being Holy

Any place, any thing, any matter, and any person that is related to God is holy, for whatever is both of God and for God is holy (Lev. 20:26; Num. 16:5; Neh. 8:9; Exo. 30:37).

D. The Spirit of God Reaching People Being Holy

Furthermore, when the Spirit of God reaches us, He is holy (Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:20; 28:19; see Rom. 1:4). This is the reason that the term “Holy Spirit” is not used in the Old Testament. (The occurrences of this term in Psalm 51:11 and Isaiah 63:10 and 11 should be rendered “the spirit of holiness.”) This term was first used when the Lord Jesus was about to be conceived in Mary (Luke 1:35). This signifies that holiness brings God to man and man to God. To go further, it also means to bring God into man and man into God. When God gets into

us, we are holy. When we get into God, we are more holy. But when we are mingled with God, we are most holy. Thus, we become holy by having God in us, we become more holy by being in God, and we become the holiest by being mingled, soaked, and saturated with God.

The book of Ephesians calls the believers saints (1:1). Everyone who has believed in the Lord Jesus is a saint. But some saints are holy, some are holier, and some are the holiest. There is no doubt that we all are holy, but it is open to question whether or not we are holier or the holiest. The purpose of this illustration is to point out that when we are in touch with God, we are holy, for then we are under His saturation. But when we are away from God, we are not

holy. To be holy is not to be perfect or sinless; it is to be one with God. When we are saturated and soaked with God, we shall be the holiest.

We have seen that holiness is God Himself. The first time the word “holy” was used was when God began to have a people on earth among whom He might dwell and who might come into His presence in the Holy of Holies. From that time onward, this word is used again and again in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. So many things found in these books are called holy because in these books God has come among man and man has been brought to God; thus everything related to the tabernacle and the priesthood was holy. Everything related to God’s ordination in the Old Testament was holy because it involved the meeting together of God and man.

We have pointed out that the term “Holy Spirit” was used the first time when the Lord Jesus was conceived in the virgin Mary. This was something far greater than God’s dwelling in a tabernacle among men. The tabernacle was God’s dwelling place. But Christ’s incarnation was God’s tabernacling among men. John 1:14 says, **“The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us.”** This began when Christ was conceived within the womb of Mary. His conception was not only a matter of holiness, but also a matter of the Holy Spirit. Although many things in the Old Testament were holy, there was not anything that was of the Holy Spirit. Only in the New Testament time, when God came into man and became man, do we have something that is of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:20).

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In the Greek text of the New Testament many times the expression “the Spirit, the holy” is used (1 Thes. 4:8; Heb. 3:7). The New Testament emphasis is not only on the Spirit, but also on holiness. The Spirit is holiness. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is sometimes called the Spirit, the holy. Where the Spirit is, there holiness is also.

Today, the Spirit is not only in us; He is making Himself one with us and us one with Him. First Corinthians 6:17 says, **“He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.”** Therefore, holiness actually means to be saturated with God, to cause a common person to be fully saturated with the Spirit. When God came to dwell among men, the word “holy” was used the first time. When God came as man, the term “Holy Spirit” was first mentioned. In order for an article of furniture in the tabernacle to be holy, there was no need of the Spirit. Once the furniture was placed into the tabernacle for God, it immediately became holy. We are not like furniture that is for God; we are living people with the Spirit of God in us to make us one with Him. This is not merely to be holy, but to be saturated with the Holy Spirit. To be holy is firstly to be separated to God; secondly, to be taken over by God; thirdly, to be possessed by God; and fourthly, to be saturated with God and one with God. Eventually, the issue of this in the Bible is the New Jerusalem, which is called the holy city, a city that not only belongs to God and is for God, but a city possessed by God, saturated with God, and one with God. The New Jerusalem is a holy entity belonging to God, possessed by God, saturated with God, and one with God. This is holiness.

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E. To Be Separated unto God Positionally

In order for us to be holy, we first need to be separated unto God positionally. With respect to our family, neighbors, colleagues, and friends, we need to be separated. Many Christians, however, are saved, but not separated. Normally, once a person is saved, he should also be separated. This is the reason a believer is called a saint. Consider the majority of Christians today. They are virtually the same as the worldly people. With them, there is no separation. Many of their relatives and friends do not even know that they are Christians.

But to be holy is to be separated unto God. This, of course, is a matter of position.

1. By the Redeeming Blood of Christ

We have been separated unto God by the redeeming blood of Christ (Heb. 9:14). But we cannot see the power of the blood of Christ in many Christians today. All Christians believe that they have been redeemed, but in some there is no sign of the redeeming blood. The sign of the blood is a sign of separation. If you have been redeemed by the blood, then you should bear the sign of separation. Others may be free to say or do certain things, but you are not. Even if you can do those things, you refrain from doing them because you have been redeemed by the blood. With you there is a sign that you are different, separated. Other people may utter certain words, go to certain places, or buy certain things, but we cannot because we are separated and bear the sign of the redeeming blood. The blood has sanctified and separated us.

2. By the Holy Spirit

We also are separated unto God by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:11; 1 Pet. 1:2; Rom. 15:16). Because the power of the Spirit overshadows us, we cannot use certain words, go to certain places, or do certain things. But this does not mean that we are under regulations. No, it simply means that we are under the redeeming blood and in the Holy Spirit.

3. In the Name of the Lord Jesus

We have a sanctified position, not only by the blood and by the Spirit, but also in the name of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 6:11). Because we bear the name of the Lord Jesus, we should not shame His name by being common. His name must keep us separate. Do not ask whether a certain thing is sinful or not sinful. Separation is not related to whether or not something is sinful; it is a matter of whether we are common or separated. We must bear some sign that we are under the blood, in the Spirit, and in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Admittedly, separation is not a very deep matter; it is merely positional. But do not think that position is unimportant. It means a great deal. We have a position as saints, as separated ones, and we need to keep it.

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F. Saturated with God Dispositionally

1. After Justification

Now we come to dispositional sanctification, which comes after justification (Rom. 6:19, 22). This is sanctification not merely in our position, but also in our disposition. Hence, it is deeper and more subjective than positional sanctification.

God has chosen us for the purpose of saturating us with Himself; He wants to work Himself into our being. Then we shall be holy, just as He is.

In subjective sanctification we are saturated with God dispositionally. Separation can take place rather easily and in a very short time. But to be saturated dispositionally takes a long time. If we are faithful to the Lord, we shall be saturated with the nature of God day after day. God intends to saturate us with Himself, and we need to soak up God in our being. This requires time. This is the process of being made holy.

God has chosen us for the purpose of saturating us with Himself; He wants to work Himself into our being. Then we shall be holy, just as He is. At present, we are all in the process of saturation. We have been more and more soaked with God. The church life is a life of soaking up God. Whether we are willing or unwilling, we are being soaked with the divine element.

Do not care for outward correction; it means nothing. Being saturated with God and being soaked with Him, however, mean a great deal. In the church life, have you been corrected or saturated? Suppose someone is proud and adjusts himself to be humble. This means nothing. The only thing that matters is that we are saturated with God. What a joy it is for me to see that many brothers and sisters have been saturated with God, that they have soaked up so much of Him into their being! This is the holiness, the sanctification, revealed in the Bible.

We all have been chosen to be holy in this way. Firstly, we are separated unto God; secondly, we are saturated with God; eventually we become one with God. One day, we shall be just like Him. That will mark the completion of our sanctification, the process that begins with separation, continues with saturation, and is completed with the full

redemption of our body. At that time, from within to without, we shall be the same as He is. We shall be holy. It is for this purpose that we were chosen by God before the foundation of the world.

2. By Transformation of the Soul

Dispositional sanctification firstly transforms our soul by saturating every part of our inward being with the holy element of God (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:2).

3. By Transfiguration of the Body

Eventually, dispositional sanctification will transfigure our body into one as glorious as Christ's (Phil. 3:21). This means that God's holy element will saturate our body so that our body may be redeemed (Rom. 8:23).

4. Consummately to Be the Holy City

Through dispositional sanctification, all the saints will consummately be the holy city, permeated with the holy God (Rev. 21:2, 10).

V. WITHOUT BLEMISH

Verse 4 also says that we were chosen in Him to be without blemish. A blemish is like a foreign particle in a precious gem. God's chosen ones should be saturated only with God Himself and have no foreign particles, such as the fallen natural human element, the flesh, the self, or worldly things. This is to be without blemish, to be without any mixture, to have no element other than God's holy nature. After being thoroughly washed by the water in the Word, the church will be sanctified in this way (5:26-27).

Today, we still have a great deal of mixture. Many foreign particles, such as the flesh, the self, and the natural life, are still in us. But we are gradually being transformed. Therefore, eventually we shall be so holy and so pure that we shall be without blemish, without any foreign particles, having only the divine element.

VI. BEFORE HIM

We shall be holy and without blemish before Him. "Before Him" means to be holy and without blemish in the eyes of God according to His divine standard. This qualifies us to remain in and enjoy

His presence. We shall be holy and without blemish, not according to our standard or in our eyes, but according to His standard and in His eyes.

VII. IN LOVE

Finally, we shall be holy and without blemish before Him in love. Love here refers to the love with which God loves His chosen ones and with which His chosen ones love Him. It is in this love, in such a love, that God's chosen ones become holy and without blemish before Him. Firstly, God loved us. Then this divine love inspires us to love Him in return. In such a condition and atmosphere of love, we are saturated with God to be holy and without blemish as He is. In this love, a mutual love, God loves us, and we return this love to Him. It is in this kind of condition that we are being transformed. Under such a condition we are being saturated with God.

Holiness revealed in the Bible is absolutely different from that found in today's teachings concerning self-correction and improvement of behavior. Firstly, we are separated unto God and then we are continually saturated with God until all the mixture in us is swallowed up by the divine nature. When this takes place in full, we shall be wholly sanctified, transformed, and conformed to the image of God's Son, Jesus Christ. Then we shall be completely holy.