

BE YE HOLY; FOR I AM HOLY

1Peter 1:15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

1Peter 1:16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

Holiness is *to be* or *stay* in the Lord Jesus Christ constantly. While it begins with separation, the final destination is God himself. The main problem the nation of Israel faced was not to leave Egypt, that was something God alone could accomplish, but for Israel to stay in the Land of Canaan. The act of spiritual rebirth occurs relatively quickly. “Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children” (Isaiah 66:8). However, the challenge is to grow and live in God – dwelling and lingering permanently in God’s presence is the only way to become holy, and this takes a lifetime. How long did it take for Moses’ face to shine brilliantly? Forty days and nights alone with God on Mount Sinai!

Exodus 34:28 And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

Exodus 34:35 And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone: and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

There is no holiness or light outside of God; holiness is to borrow the light of God – and God generously loaned it to Moses. How gracious is the Almighty! He imparts his great holiness to mere mortals. “But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the vail off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded” (Exodus 34:34). Notice one very important point, however. Moses was not made holy by the Law, but by the presence of God. Many of the Jews did not understand this – up to this day! The do’s and don’ts of the Law have never made anyone holy. On the contrary, the Law demonstrates the total inability of the flesh to keep the commandments of God because the flesh is sold under sin.

Romans 7:12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Romans 7:13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

There is an element of geographic displacement or dislocation in holiness. God came in flesh to Galilee to live with his chosen ones – he came to live with us so we can become holy like him. When God comes to live with us, the first thing we notice is our sinful nature. “When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8). Either Jesus departs and Simon continues to be sinful Simon, or Jesus stays and Simon becomes Peter. If anyone is struggling with sin, let us say boldly, “Jesus, please continue to stay with me! I will soon be changed from Simon to Peter!” With time, our faces will shine as Jesus continues to abide with us, and we will become holy as he is holy. Holiness always involves moving address – God coming to stay with us or we moving to stay with God. Consider the Upper Room!

***Act 1:13** And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.*

***Act 1:14** These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.*

One Hundred and twenty disciples moved in to the Upper Room for ten days. They moved in with Jesus because this is where he appointed to live in them through the Holy Spirit. “And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). It is almost impossible to become holy without being filled with the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit is the Lord Jesus Christ himself, and he must abide in us for us to become holy. What does the Holy Spirit do? Remember the testimony of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus! “And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” (Luke 24:32). The Spirit of Jesus is divine fire that burns away the sins in our lives. As we walk and talk with the Lord Jesus Christ, we find ourselves becoming holy – his words are fire, holy fire. “For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God” (Deuteronomy 4:24). This is precisely why we are gathered to hear the Word of the Lord Jesus Christ! Do you feel his words burning in your hearts? He is consuming the dross of sin – give the Lord the liberty he needs to burn away that which hinders us from becoming holy as he is.

Consider the analogy of moving to a new country; everything is strange in the beginning. When I first moved to Norway in 1989, I was rattled when informed that no one ate hot meals for lunch. The custom was to eat an open bread sandwich with some kind of

food topping such as cold cheese, mackerel in tomato sauce or liver paste (pålegg). I remember thinking this was a major crisis; the weather was down to -20 in the winter and I was going to be fed a cold lunch. You will be relieved to know that I enjoy this cold lunch now and then after 30 years – I have become Norwegian. The apostles must have felt it very strange to be with the Lord Jesus in the beginning in Galilee. His speech, his kindness, his purity, his character and his unconditional love must have shocked them initially. Slowly, they became like him – they became used to him, were influenced by him. On the Day of Pentecost, the Spirit of Jesus dwelling in them accelerated the process of becoming like him – becoming holy. Hallelujah! This is why the New Covenant is greater than the old one – God is in us and will accelerate the process of holiness.

Hebrews 10:15 *Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before,*

Hebrews 10:16 *This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;*

Hebrews 10:17 *And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*

Once again, the critical difference is that God comes to stay in us – holiness is to *be* in God. It is precisely for this reason that the first King of Israel, Saul, was commanded by the prophet Samuel to abide with the holy prophets of God.

1Samuel 10:5 *After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy:*

1Samuel 10:6 *And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.*

1Samuel 10:7 *And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serve thee; for God is with thee.*

Notice that Saul could only become a changed man after he abode with the prophets who in turn constantly abode in the presence of God. The tragedy of Saul was that he never came back of his own free will to seek renewal and change in the company of the prophets who always abode in God. This is why he became unholy and an evil spirit entered him eventually. On the other hand, David said, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me” (Psalm 51:10, 11). David actively sought to *stay/to be* in the presence of God. His address was God!

Psalms 71:3 *Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress.*