

Holiness in the Church

by Wayne Goff

Pat Jones had an excellent sermon on this subject during the meeting this past week. It contained so much information, that I thought it good to emphasize some of the points made in the sermon *again*, lest we miss what God has taught His people on the subject.

“Holy” means “to be set apart for God; different, otherness, sacred.” **“Holiness”** is “the process of becoming holy, or the state of being holy.” As Pat explained, “God had a plan to take ordinary people and set them apart to become extraordinary.”

Now in describing God, holiness speaks of the vast separation between His nature and man’s. *“There is none holy like the LORD, ...”* (1 Sam. 2:2). God’s power, knowledge, and glory **far exceed** man’s. In morality, God is not just good, but sinless! The angels of heaven worship God, crying out with the triune declaration: *“Holy, Holy, Holy”* (Isaiah 6:3; Rev. 4:8). Men who seek after God must be aware of this vast separation and seek to bridge that gap.

When Jesus came to earth, He was introduced as *“...the Holy One of God!”* (Mk. 1:24). He is such because He is sinless, before — during — and after His earthly incarnation! He shed His perfect blood on the cross as a *sacrifice* for our sins, *atoning* for that which **separates** us from God. 1 Peter 1:2 states, *“elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in **sanctification** of the Spirit, for obedience and **sprinkling of the blood** of Jesus Christ...”* This sanctifying blood is contacted in the death of Christ in the waters of baptism (Rom. 6:3-4). Once baptized, the Lord adds us to His church, the realm of the saved and sanctified.

This body of saved and sanctified are His **church**. Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:25-27, *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, **that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word**, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”* The church is those people purified by the blood of Christ, contacted by faith and baptism. As Christians, you and I need to keep in mind the fact that we are not only **clean**, but **separate** from the sinful world! Satan will ever and always try to *pollute* and *destroy* that which Christ has purified. Beware!

As a church, and as individual members of the church, we are called to **“be holy”** (Eph. 5:27). The present tense of the Greek verb translated **“be”** indicates this is an ever-present condition. It is not automatic, but it is a state of being which must be maintained! Peter explains this in 1 Peter 1:14-16, *“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.’”* Do you see that? **“Be holy in all your conduct!” WHY?** Because we are in a **relationship** with a holy, pure and perfect God. His Son’s blood was shed to make us holy and to help us maintain holiness! The church is called *“a holy nation”* (1 Pet. 2:9).

So when we read in Hebrews 12:14, *“Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord”* — God means it! We are to *“pursue ... holiness.”* That means to run swiftly after it, pursue it with all our might. Haphazard, lackadaisical living will not get the job done!

Christians are to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, **perfecting holiness** in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7:1). Maintaining our moral cleanliness is a life-long pursuit, and can only be accomplished as we *habitually* remove that which is sinful from our lives by repentance and confession (1 Jn. 1:7-9).

We are preparing ourselves for the Lord’s final return and the eternal judgment when we do these things. When Jesus returns, the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the earth and everything in it will be consumed in a mighty conflagration (2 Pet. 3:10). Peter’s warning is: *“Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to **be in holy conduct and godliness?**”* (2 Pet. 3:11). Are you saved — sanctified and holy? Are you striving to maintain that state of being?