



BE THOU HOLY

The word “holy” (hallowed, holiest, holiness) appears over 600 times in the Bible. Considering the fact that “holy” is mentioned 431 times in the Old Testament (not counting the word “holiness”), I think God is concerned with His holiness. Here is what the Bible gives as a definition of holy. The Hebrew word for holy is “qodesh” which means “apartness, sacredness,” or “*separateness*” showing that God is altogether holy, sacred, set apart or separate from His creation. The idea is that God is the most separate of all beings and there is no one like Him. In fact, God is the only uncreated being. Not even angels are like Him! He is separate from all else. The Greek word used for holy or holiness is “hagios” and means much the same thing that the Old Testament word “qodesh” means -- which is “pure, morally blameless” or “*set apart*” as in *set apart for holy use* -- which is what the saints of God have been called to. The word “holy” is found in the New Testament 180 times and if you used holiness, then it is almost 200 times that holy or holiness is used. **IT IS OBVIOUS FROM THE SCRIPTURES THAT HOLINESS IS IMPORTANT TO GOD AND THAT WE SHOULD REGARD HIM AS HOLY AND THAT BELIEVERS HAVE BEEN CALLED TO HOLINESS.**

God has called believers to a separated and holy life, which is called **SANCTIFICATION**. Believers have been set apart by God for His sacred use. Dr. John Snyder [Author of *Behold Your God--Rethinking God Biblically*] defines Sanctification as follows: “Sanctification has two parts. **FIRST**, the believer is *set apart* to God by the purchasing work of Jesus and regeneration. Thus, the believer belongs solely to God and no longer to the world. **SECOND**, the believer is daily being *set apart* in heart and life by the work of the Spirit, making the believer holy in his practice.”

In the modern evangelical church, the idea of Sanctification is typically not taught in the biblical context of holiness. Instead, the idea tends to focus on the believer being like Jesus in service to others; or being like Jesus in order to be prosperous and have a better life now; or being like Jesus by making right choices and keeping away from sin so that our goals and dreams can be achieved; or simply to being like Jesus in order to be healthy and happy. But God has not called us to be happy [though a fruit of the Spirit is joy]. Again, **God has called us and set us apart unto Himself to be holy vessels for His holy use.** The modern evangelical church has become so man-centered that sanctification and holiness has become a forgotten and foreign doctrine!

When someone starts telling the modern evangelical church to be holy and sanctified, one is immediately labeled a prude, a legalist and a Pharisee! But sanctification is not about a bunch of rules to follow or boxes to be checked! It is about being set apart for God in total surrender to God, to Christ and to the Holy Spirit -- and walking according to the Spirit (**Romans 8:4**). The modern evangelical church declares people saved (**BUT ONLY God can do this**), and then sends them out to do service while ignoring the biblical call to sanctification. The Bible teaches us from both the Old and New Testaments, to ***be holy just as God is holy***. But how can we do that since we're fallen creatures and our nature is anything but holy (**Rom 3:10-12, 23; 6:23**)? Part of that growth toward holiness is to not be conformed to this world (**Rom 12:1-2**). It is an ongoing lifetime process of being set apart in heart and life by God for holy use. **1 Peter 1:14-16** says “*As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”*” **Lev 11:44; 19:2** “*You shall be holy, for I am holy*”. *These are not suggestions these are commands from the Lord to his regenerated saved ones to be on the road to sanctification.* **2 Peter 2:9** says “*but you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a HOLY nation, a people for His own possession.*” This road of sanctification has had many names over the ages: the way of the cross, the crucified life, the exchanged life, the abiding life, the sanctified life, the surrendered life, the way of holiness, etc.

How can we, who are of such a fallen nature, ever be holy in the practice of our daily life? Is it fair for Jesus to demand us to be holy? The answer is Yes! It is fair because **GOD has given us everything we need in Christ to walk the road of sanctification. The key to sanctification is the Holy Spirit** that dwells in the true believer. If you have not been truly regenerated, there is no possibility of being holy. But if you have been truly regenerated, than **Christ IN you** is the hope of glory (**Col 1:27**)! As Christ glorified His Father by His holy life on earth, so believers can glorify the Christ by surrendering to Him and allowing Him to make us holy in heart and daily life! **2 Thess 2:13** says “*we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.*” **THIS LEADS US TO VERY IMPORTANT QUESTIONS: Have I truly been regenerated? Do I possess the Holy Spirit?** **Ezekiel 36:22-27** illustrates God's supernatural work of regeneration: **He gives the regenerated believer a new heart and a new human spirit. He places the Holy Spirit in the believer Who then writes God's law on the heart and causes the believer to walk in holiness!**

Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit to implement this road of sanctification in us. ***The only hinderance is us!*** The rebel god that Adam worshipped and we inherited from his fall, is the small “g” god of “self”. Our fallen nature is the “self-absorbed” nature; and this is the nature that much of the modern, broken evangelical church preaches and teaches. Because it appeals to the lost nature of fallen man, self-pleasing preaching draws large crowds to large churches and steers them to the wide road of religion (**Matt 7**). But their message has nothing to do with real Christianity! The wide-road-lost church members are not on the road of sanctification! They can't be holy as God is holy because they do not have God the Spirit indwelling them! Even the truly born-again believer struggles daily on the sanctified road because the small “g” god of “self” always wants to raise it's ugly head. Thus, believers must die to self daily and surrender to the indwelling Holy Spirit who works to make us holy in practice. In **Luke 9:23**, Jesus was saying to them all: “**If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.**” Surrender and dying to self is part of the sanctified daily abiding in Christ. In **John 15:5**, Jesus said “**I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing..**” We can do nothing holy apart from Christ! Our death on the cross daily to sin and self is key to the Spirit's work of holiness in heart and daily life!

The regenerated believer is to live for God by God. In **Philippians 2:12-13**, the Apostle Paul wrote these words: “**So then, my beloved...work out your salvation with fear and trembling; [Why?] for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.**” In **Galatians 2:20** the Apostle Paul proclaimed his sanctified life with these words: “**I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.**” The sanctified walk is a daily walk which requires believers to die to self daily and to continually seek and surrender to the indwelling Holy Spirit. As I stated in the beginning of this blog, **ALL regenerated Christians are called to the sanctified, holy life and walk. QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Do you desire to live holy? If so, is there evidence in your life that the Holy Spirit is making you more and more holy? If not, either God has not saved you, or self is ruling you. Go to God and ask Him to make you holy in Christ. Repent and embrace Christ and His cross and walk in a sanctified life set apart by God for God to the praise of His glory!**

