

Pursuing Holiness

Victory Life Church, Durant (Central) — Sunday, November 05, 2023

Introduction

Jesus is calling us to be the light of the world as He is the light of the world, and to let our light shine for the world to see, not let it be hidden.

Matthew 5:14-16 (ESV) *“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, **let your light shine** before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”*

John 8:12 (ESV) *Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “**I am the light of the world.** Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the **light of life.**”*

The light we are called to shine is our character transformed by the character of Christ.

1 John 1:5-10 (ESV) This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that **God is light**, and in him is no **darkness** at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we **lie** and do not practice the **truth**. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son **cleanses** us from all **sin**. If we say we have no sin, we **deceive** ourselves, and the **truth** is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to **forgive** us our sins and to **cleanse** us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his **word** is not in us.¹

<u>Light</u>	<u>Dark</u>
Good	Evil
Life	Death
Truth	Error
Right	Wrong
Holy	Sin

Life marked by Love // Life pursuing Holiness // Life shaped by Wisdom // Life filled with Power

Holiness

1 Peter 1:13-16 (ESV) Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the **revelation² of Jesus Christ**. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as **he who called you is holy³, you also be holy** in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy⁴.”

Holy — *qadosh* — unique, set apart, designated

Frame to Understand Holiness

Positional Holiness — before God (state, status, identity, proximity, relationship)

Practical Holiness — before people (behaviors, words, actions)

Metaphor: the sun — unique, powerful, source of life = HOLY. Further, the area around the sun is holy as well — the power and goodness that generates this life is also dangerous. It

doesn't make the sun mean, it's just its nature. It creates a paradox: that which is *good* is also *dangerous*.

God's holiness is good, but also dangerous.⁵

God's holiness is so pure and good that it poses a **paradox** for humans living in a world ruined by sin. His power and purity can become dangerous to mortal humans corrupted by sin.⁶

God's holiness is not a personality disorder, as if He is just obsessive, uptight, prudish, and excessively harps on our sin. We can become so used to our sin and brokenness and selfishness and pride that we become blind to it, we don't see anything wrong with it. And God's holiness is what confronts it and exposes it and judges it. And it's not God with the problem, it is me who has the problem.

Would we prefer that God is not holy? Would we prefer a God who is apathetic toward human evil and injustice, or who is inconsistent in His mood toward us? Then He would be like the pagan gods.

You only get to believe in "right and wrong" if you believe in a holy God, who defines what is right and wrong. God's holiness is the standard of morality and ethics.

The final reason why some things are right and others wrong, and why there are moral absolutes in the universe, is that God delights in things that reflect his moral character and hates what is contrary to his character.

1 Peter 1:14-15 (ESV) As **obedient** children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as **he who called you is holy, you also be holy** in all your **conduct**,

And when speaking about God's holiness, and our lack of holiness, and the call to be holy in all of our conduct (our way of life), it would be easy to assume we are talking about "positional holiness" before God, which would mean we are only going to hopelessly fall short. We will never be as holy as God. And so we need to understand the "process" of holiness so that we can fulfill this instruction and not fall into brutal legalism.

Process of Pursuing Holiness

God is holy and calls us to be holy⁷

[Jesus makes us holy]

Because we ARE holy, we should PURSUE holy lives

Jesus reveals the holiness of God.⁸ In confronting and exposing our sin, He judges it by taking upon Himself the consequences of our sin and takes it into death. And because He was the offering for our sin, His resurrection and our faith in Him has made us holy before God.

Colossians 1:21-22 (ESV) And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, **in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him**,

Ephesians 4:20-24 (ESV) But that is not the way you learned Christ!— assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, **created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.**

Our “position” (and “proximity”) before God is solely based on the grace of what Jesus has done for us. We can stand before a holy God, not because of how holy we can be, but how Jesus has made us holy by taking our sin upon Himself into death and forgiving us.

Hebrews 10:19-22 (ESV) Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the **holy places** by the **blood of Jesus**, by the new and living way that **he opened for us** through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, **let us draw near** with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

“When Jesus’ blood was shed on the cross, the veil before the Holy of Holies was supernaturally torn from top to bottom. That indicated that the way into the presence of God was now open to all who believe in Jesus. We can, therefore, enter with boldness and with no uncertainty as to our acceptance, since everything rests on the blood of Jesus.”⁹

Jesus makes us holy, we ARE “positionally” holy, before God not because of what we have done, but what Jesus has done for us, and us receiving that grace through faith.¹⁰ And now because we ARE holy, we should pursue (“practical holiness” before others) living holy lives.

God is holy and calls us to be holy
Jesus makes us holy

[Because we ARE holy, we should PURSUE holy lives]

Our lives are to reveal the holiness Jesus has made us. We are holy before God, in Christ Jesus. Because we are holy, we are to live out that holiness¹¹ as evidence before people that we have been made new and holy in Him.

Hebrews 12:14 (ESV) **Strive** for peace with everyone, and for the **holiness** without which no one will see the Lord.

We are called to “pursue” holiness. The second clause of this verse can be understood two ways: 1. Holiness is how we see God. 2. Holiness is how others see God through us. The legalist would use this as a way to threaten us that we will not see God unless we are holy. Well, that’s only half true. If our holiness had to match God’s holiness in order for us to see Him, then we would never measure up. But because we can see Jesus, when we see ourselves “in Christ” (“positional holiness”), receiving His holiness as our holiness, then in seeing Jesus, we see God.¹² But the second way of understanding that clause is more of what is in sight. How will people see God and His holiness if our lives do not reveal it to them? Our “practical” (or behavioral) holiness that we pursue (“strive for”) is how people will see God in our lives, seeing our “good works and give glory to our Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

Pursuing holiness is witnessing to the holiness of Christ.

Matthew 5:16 (ESV) In the same way, **let your light shine** before others, so that they may see **your good works** and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

How Christ Transforms our Practical Holiness

Ephesians 5:1-14 (ESV) Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And **walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us**, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But sexual immorality¹³ and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are **out of place**, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that **everyone who is** sexually immoral or impure, or **who is** covetous (that is, an idolater), has **no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God**. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore **do not become partners with them**; for at one time **you were darkness**, but now **you are light in the Lord**. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. **Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness**, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”¹⁴

Pursuing holiness is bringing our behaviors in line with our identity.

God is holy. Because of Jesus, we have been made holy before him. Holiness in our lives is the evidence of the transformative work of Jesus in us. When we walk in holiness, we reveal the character of the one who saved us and healed us and forgave us. Holiness in our lives is how others see God.

John 14:15–17 (ESV) ¹⁵“If you **love me**, you will **keep my commandments**. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another **Helper**, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even **the Spirit of truth**, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for **he dwells with you and will be in you**.¹⁵

Pursuing holiness is simply loving Jesus and obeying his word.

Ephesians 5:25-27 (ESV) Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with **the word**, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, **that she might be holy** and without blemish.

John 17:17 (ESV) “**Sanctify** them in the truth; your **word** is truth.”¹⁶

It is the work of Jesus through the power of His Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, that our behaviors are transformed. Jesus does this work, first by making us holy before God, then out of love and relationship, transforms our inner world by the Holy Spirit to one that loves Him in return and desires to obey Him and His word more than desiring to fulfill selfish desires. If we love Jesus

and allow His Spirit to work in our lives, then our behaviors will begin to conform to the holiness that we have been made in Christ. Jesus is making His Bride holy, and we as His Bride, in loving relationship with Him, He utilizes the truth of His word to transform us.

Conclusion

Holiness is the evidence of the transformative presence and work of Jesus in us.

Revelation 21:1-2, 9-11 (ESV) Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw **the holy city**, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a **bride** adorned for her husband.

Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you **the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.**” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me **the holy city** Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, **having the glory of God**, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

¹ He continues this line of thought through 1 John 2:1-11

² Greek: *ἀποκάλυψις* (apokalypsis) — to unveil, uncover; to reveal; Peter here is referring to the hope of the “Second Coming” of Christ, which he phrases as a “revelation” or “unveiling” of a reality currently unseen.

³ God’s nature is “holy,” the “most Holy One” — Psalm 71:22; 78:41; 89:18; 99:9; Isaiah 1:4; 5:19, 24; 6:3; 57:15

⁴ Cited from Leviticus 11:44-45; see also Leviticus 19:2; 20:7, and 20:26

⁵ Hebrews 12:29 (ESV) “for our God is a consuming fire.”

⁶ To Moses’ request on Mt. Sinai to see His face, God responds, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.” God’s holiness is so pure, it destroys what is contrary to His nature. Isaiah also experiences this in his vision of the throne of God in Isaiah 6. Isaiah is “undone” by the experience, but in this story, instead of God’s holiness destroying Isaiah because of his sin, it purifies Isaiah (through the burning coal) making him holy.

⁷ Again, re-reference 1 Peter 1:15, see also Ephesians 4:1, “walking in a manner worthy of our calling”

⁸ See Colossians 1:15, 2 Corinthians 4:4, and Hebrews 1:3

⁹ Ray C. Stedman, *Hebrews*, Hebrews 10:19

¹⁰ Ephesians 2:8-10

¹¹ Romans 12:1, our bodies as “living sacrifices” is “holy and acceptable” to God.

¹² See John 14:9, Jesus says, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.”

¹³ For Paul’s stronger emphasis on sexual immorality and a call to holiness, see 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

¹⁴ The quotation in Ephesians 5:14, the substance of which is scriptural (Isa. 9:2; 26:19; 52:1; 60:1), but whose words do not correspond precisely in the Old Testament Scriptures.

¹⁵ Read John 14:14-24 for this particular line of thought.

¹⁶ See also John 8:31-32. See also 1 John 3:1-3, we are “purified” as we see Jesus.