

Introduction

Sin knocks on the door of our hearts and wants to come in masquerading as our friend and servant, but once we let it in, it becomes our master and never wants to leave.

267 09 HH What We Do to Become Holy

You and I have a responsibility to become holy. We have some things to do. If you were with us in our previous broadcast, you know we looked at some of the most powerful doctrines in the Bible – the ones that tell us what Christ has done for us on the cross to bring us out from under judgment and into the favor of God. This is what enables us to come to God with confidence although we know we have areas to work on, that we sin and fall short.

This is the foundation for the many verses in the New Testament that tell us to pursue holiness. Let's look at some of these verses.

1 Thessalonians 4:7 - God has called us to live holy lives, not impure lives. [Paul said this right after he exhorted the Church not to engage in sexual immorality.] - NLT

1 Peter 1:14-16 – So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. ¹⁵ But now you must be holy in what you do, just as God who chose you is holy. ¹⁶ For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy." NLT

[We can see from this that we must take responsibility and not, as it says, slip back into old lustful patterns. In everything we are to be holy as God is holy. In everything. This means every part of our lives must reflect the image of Christ. We must allow God to speak to every aspect of our humanity and life experience. We must let him speak to our sexuality. We must let him speak to our finances. We must let him speak to our use of time and our entertainment. We must let him speak to our relationships, if we are married, especially to how we treat our spouses, if we have kids especially to our responsibility to raise them up as followers of Jesus.

Hebrews 12:14-15 – "Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵ See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."

That's a powerful passage. Without holiness no one will see the Lord! Now, don't fret. Some look at this verse and think, "I thought salvation was a gift? This seems to say that if we don't become holy we won't make it. That sounds like a lot of works and who can be saved by works?"

Salvation is a gift. But genuine salvation will cause God's people to seek God, to make changes, and to walk with him on the highway of holiness. The verse does not say, "without perfection no one will see the Lord." If it did, none of us would make it, and we must remember that Jesus has justified us and brought us into a right relationship with him. But a justified man will pursue peace with others and will pursue life change. If you are not pursuing this in your life, then you better check to

see if you have a relationship with God. If you don't, if you are not pursuing holiness in your life that would be a sign that you don't have a relationship with the living God.

Let me ask you today, what areas are you seeking to grow in? What areas are you praying about? Where do you need change? A few months ago, my wife and I were visiting someone we love very much who is in federal prison. To see him, guards must escort us. During our visit, guards are always in the common area, and when the visit is over guards must escort us out. As we were being escorted out, Kathy and I thanked the guards for helping us to be safe, but I noticed that they would never make eye contact with me. I had heard stories of the brutality that can take place in prisons, not just by inmates to other inmates but by guards to inmates. It is a corrupt system. But I wanted to reach into their consciences, so I boldly asked these two young men, they looked like they were in their late 20s or early 30s, "What can I pray for you men?"

I've done this before with people. I've done it often at restaurants where, when our waiter or waitress, brings us the food we say, "We are Christians and always pray before our meal. Is there something in your life we could pray for?" And when I have done that I have often received a very favorable response. But not on this day with the guards. I don't think it was because they were trained not to fraternize with the visitors of the inmates, I think it was because they were in sin and ashamed of their sin. And so, when I asked, "What can I pray for you?" they hung their heads, would not look at me, and barely were able to get the word out, "Nothing."

I thought about that for a while. "There is nothing I could pray for them?" I would bet if I had asked Billy Graham he would have given me a list of things to pray for him! I bet if I had asked Mother Teresa before she died, she would have given me things to pray about. But these young men said, "Nothing." They wanted nothing to do with me and with prayer and with God, and it really showed me that rather than pray for "nothing" for them, I needed to pray everything for them. It showed where they stood. They had no relationship with the Lord. They were not pursuing holiness. They would not see the Lord unless they repented of their sins.

What about you? Have you repented of your sins? Have you been purchased by God and do you now belong to him? Have you been justified? Have you been reconciled to God? If you have, then you are in some measure pursuing holiness in your life and you must understand your life purpose to be holy as he is holy for without it you will show that you don't belong to him, and without it you will never see the Lord. But with this pursuit of holiness we show that we are his.

All the apostles point to this need to say "no" to sin and "yes" to righteousness in our lives. Paul exhorted the believers in Romans 6:12, "Do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts." That is a powerful command. Do not let sin reign. Sin knocks on the door of our hearts and wants to come in. It masquerades as our friend and servant, but once we let sinful behavior in, it never wants to leave. Plus, we discover it is not our friend anymore. Sinful behavior takes up residence deep within us and starts getting bossy. We discover that it wants to be in charge. We discover that sin wants to reign as king and start giving orders that we must obey. Paul says, you must not let that happen. You must say no to sin. You must not let it enter the door of your hearts and if you have let it in, you must say, "the visit is over. You must leave, now."

With great earnestness, Paul in Galatians 5:16-19 warned the believers to walk by the Spirit lest they fall to the lusts of the flesh. Here is the greatest way to overcome sin in our lives. Walk in step with the Spirit. If you do this, you will avoid the fleshly desires that spring up within. Take responsibility for this in your life. Don't talk about how you are so easily overwhelmed by temptation all the time. Instead, focus on listening for and walking in tune with the Holy Spirit in your life and you will have greater victory over sin and greater holiness in your life. You will also have greater joy.

Let me share one more encouraging verse with you. This is from Philippians 2:12-13.

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

What verses these are! On the one hand, Paul tells them they must keep on obeying and they must *work out* the implications of their salvation with *fear and trembling* before God. It sounds like drudgery. It sounds hard, and it is hard at times to do what is right and say “no” to sin, but did you hear the rationale that Paul gives us to keep obeying?

First, let me tell you what he does not say. He does not say, “you must keep obeying because God is standing over you with a big stick to whack you.” He does not say, “you must keep obeying because if you don't God is going to forget the covenant and throw you into Hell.” No, he says, “you must keep obeying because God himself is at work in your heart to strengthen your will to say no to sin and yes to what is right. God is working within you to give you the strength so that you will pursue his good pleasure, his will in your life.”

God is inside you working because he loves you. God is inside you strengthening your will, your emotions, your thinking processes, every part of you. God is inside you giving you courage and fortitude and changing you into a man of God, a woman of God. God is graciously repairing you and making you whole and holy. He is like the wind in our sails that causes our vessel to go forward. We must lift the sails, but he is faithful always with the wind of the Spirit. He is like the wave that the young man on the surf board tries to catch and ride. The man doesn't have to generate the wave. He just must ride it. We don't have to generate the wave. We don't have to generate the wind. It is already there.

Yes, we have a responsibility to become holy – it is to catch the wave and ride the wind of God who loves us, is for us, and who is committed to make us whole, holy, and happy. He did the amazing work of sending his Son to die for our sins, to redeem us, to justify us, and to reconcile us. If he did that, he will work in our hearts so that we will become holy as he is holy.