

The Holiness

by

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“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” (1 Peter 1:14-15 ESV)

The above passage is intimidating for most believers, for it gives us instructions to be holy, as God is holy. Now this says a lot. To be holy like God...come on now? That can't be done, can it? Can we really be holy as God? He is perfect. His holiness is so great that He can't even be looked upon without dying. We are corrupt by nature and the only way we can approach God's holiness is through the holiness of Christ being our substitute. But that is part of the answer isn't it? It is first to be in a right relationship with God through Jesus where His perfection becomes the substitute for our imperfection, and His holiness becomes our holiness. But it doesn't stop there, for the passage above says that we are not to be conformed, *or fitted*, into the old ways of our pre-Christ days. This means that we do not continue in our old ways. Rather, we are to be transformed and converted to have new ideals and a new strategy for life, and this is where *personal holiness*, or our part, comes to the front. It begins with the holiness of Christ in our life to give us the perfection that is needed to be adopted into His family, but then our *personal holiness* is required to allow us to walk closely (abide) with Him. In one sense, we cannot achieve the holiness of God by our own goodness and it requires His help, but in another we are to volitionally live our life dedicated to Him as He is dedicated to us. Since there might be some confusion on the word and its implication on our life, I feel that it is important to begin this devotional about being *holy* by understanding what the word means, and what it does not mean. Let's start with some common misconceptions and corrections:

ho.ly (defined) – *sacred / consecrated / blessed / set apart / dedicated to God*

- Holiness doesn't mean perfection – But it does mean Christ's perfection has made us perfect in His eyes.
- Holiness doesn't mean a higher form of spiritual status – But it does find a special place in God's heart.
- Holiness doesn't mean we are better persons, but rather we are simply ordinary people walking right with God, and this makes us better people.
- Holiness doesn't mean that God loves us more – But His favor falls on the man who lives his life for Christ, and this makes him holy.
- Not being holy doesn't mean that God loves us less – for He is a gracious God and His love surpasses our failures and disobedience.
- Being holy is not impossible – for being holy is simply a dedicated effort to be right with God. This dedication (or consecration) begins the process of becoming like Christ. We do not suddenly become holy because we become good. It is the reverse, because being holy grows goodness in us. We do good because we have consecrated our life to God and goodness follows. It is the fruit of a dedicated life.
- Achieving holiness is not the result of legalistic determination. It is an act of surrender, the admission of need for God's help to live our life for His glory, and the presentation of our life as a living sacrifice to

Christ.

- We can and should be holy. It is within our ability and our responsibility as followers of Christ.

Why do I bring this thought on holiness to your attention? If you are like me, at one time in my life I saw this passage to be for someone else, and not for me. I didn't have good examples of "holy people" to follow. I didn't want to be like them. I saw them as detached from society and irrelevant to the culture they lived in. They were icons, unreal, and frankly, boring. There was nothing exciting about a "holy man or holy woman." I mean, who would buy a ticket to go watch a holy man be holy? The fact is, many of those "holy people" put on a show to impress other people, as they had created a false persona. They were not the real deal. But later I came to know a real holy man, and this gave me an example of what and why I wanted to be holy and to be like him. This man was different from all the stereotypes I had conceived in my mind or that was presented by counterfeits. This man was a simple carpenter, a mentor, a teacher, a worker of miracles, but He was also a real man, while still being Holy God. Unlike the counterfeits, He didn't parade His perfection around and isolate Himself even though He had the right and ability to do so. He didn't deny accessibility to Himself. He was and is approachable and welcoming of "lesser people" like me. I liked that about Jesus and I wanted to be like Him. He is the "Holy Man" that I want to emulate, to seek to be like. But can we really be like Jesus? After all, Jesus is Jesus and who can compare with Him? We cannot, but we can allow His inside out work to be done in our life by starting it in our hearts, and when the time is right our personal holiness will emerge.

Too many of us get the wrong idea and the wrong approach to being holy. If we want to be holy like Jesus' holiness, we are not to become the stereotypical "holy man" that distinguishes himself as holy because of his outside appearance, his title, his position, his knowledge, or spiritual pedigree. It is not our claim to fame that makes us holy. In fact, I am very unimpressed with the celebrity Christians who present an outward appearance of holiness, but behind the scenes are shallow, and even corrupt. I believe God would much rather that we be the real deal inside, and what shows on the outside of our life is authentic and real, even if it is obscure and unimpressive. I do not see creating a contrived persona for attention to have the holiness of Jesus, and unfortunately this example is often what we think of when we try to define holiness.

When I think of Jesus, I see in Him all the things that holiness represents. But I also see a regular looking guy walking a road with His disciples, sitting around a campfire with them and teaching ordinary folks from a fishing boat. Nothing pretentious. Nothing artificial. No special wardrobe. No collar denoting clergy. No entourage. No special transportation perks. No glamor, just Jesus and His guys. I see Him looking up and lifting up those guys when He was washing their feet. But I see Him talking down and shaming the "holy guys" of that day because of their pretensions of being holy. I am convinced that Jesus hates pretend holiness.

Jesus was the real deal when it comes to being set apart, consecrated, and holy. He is the model of holiness that is our example. He shows us how to be that person, by Him living in us, and Him doing His work through us.

I guess you know what I am going to say next. When we abide in Jesus, and He abides in us, the work of holiness is completed in our life. That is what it means to be holy. It happens when we abide in Christ. So if your question is, "How close am I to being holy?" The good news is that He's waiting for you to come to Him so He can give you the answer. Go and find Him, abide in Him, and you will find holiness.