



## Holiness is Essential

The Bible states quite unambiguously that where there is no holiness there will be no heaven. Paul writes in the plainest terms, *'Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord'* (Heb 12:14). Who are those who will not see the Lord? They are the ones who end up in hell, forever excluded from the presence of the Lord. Peter states: *'But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy'* (1 Pet 1:15-16). The prophet Habakkuk declares concerning God, *'Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity'* (Hab 1:13). God hates sin with a perfect hatred. Our Lord Jesus puts it positively, *'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God'* (Mt 5:8). The Pharisees had a kind of holiness. It was outward and showy. They craved the praise of men and got their reward. But God sees the heart and values what is inner and spiritual. Nothing unclean will enter paradise. *'Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie'* (Rev 22:14-15). So holiness is essential, but what is holiness?

### 1. The Fear of God

*'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'* (Ps 111:10). It is here that true holiness must start. Give God His place and all other things will fall into their rightful place. *'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth'* (Eccl 12:1). Think of your Maker and your responsibility to Him. *'Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire'* (Heb 12:28-29). God is great, glorious, majestic, magnificent. How awesome is the One who sits *'upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers'* (Is 40:22)! The Lord says: *'To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word'* (Is 66:2). Do you have great views of God? Do you tremble at His word?

### 2. Obedience

The essence of holiness is obedience to God's commandments. The holy angels in heaven are God's servants. Jesus taught us to pray, *'Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven'* (Mt 6:10). The law was given to us as a rule of life. Holiness is often described as separation from sin. It is the opposite of sinfulness and sin is defined as not conforming to God's law, not positively doing all God wants or breaking His commandments. *'Sin is the transgression of the law'* (1 Jn 3:4).

### 3. Love

There are two great motives for keeping God's commandments, first the wrath of God and fear of punishment, and second, the love of God and desire to please Him. Jesus said: *'If ye love me, keep my commandments'* (Jn 14:15). *'We love him, because he first loved us'* (1 Jn 4:19). The love of Christ constrains us to live holy lives. Holiness is not bare obedience but delighting in God and loving to please Him.

### 4. Hating Sin

God is holy and hates sin and if we are holy we too will detest sin. Sadly in this life we all continue to sin. *'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us'* (1 Jn 1:8). Because of this a holy person is one who is engaged in constant warfare. We are fighting against the sin in the world. *'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world'* (1 Jn 2:15-16). Even a

greater problem is the sin which dwells in our own hearts. The holy person strives with the Spirit's help to trample on sin: *'For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live'* (Rom 8:13). One of the great things about heaven is that we will never sin again.

## **5. Fellowship with God**

There is another element in holiness which is sometimes forgotten. Enoch walked with God and was so special that the Lord took him to heaven without dying. He pleased God (Heb 11:5). Truly holy people delight in God (Ps 37:4). They spend much time in prayer, fellowshiping with God in secret. They conduct family worship. They make use of the public means of grace, and are never missing from church services or prayer meetings unless it is impossible for them to be there. They enjoy the sacraments and feed by faith on the broken body and shed blood.

## **6. Serving God and man**

Jesus was perfectly holy and He said: *'I delight to do thy will, O my God'* (Ps 40:8). He set the perfect example when He washed the disciples' feet (Jn 13). Holiness involves acts of love, bearing one another's burdens (Gal 6:2). On the day of judgment, acts of love to the brethren will be highly valued: *'Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me'* (Mt 25:34-36).

## **7. Witnessing**

The holy person is like a city set on a hill which cannot be hid. They are the light of the world and the more holy they are, the more of the light of Christ do they reflect and radiate forth. *'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven'* (Mt 5:16). They share the love of Christ for the lost. Our Saviour wept over Jerusalem. He grieved over the lost sheep and was concerned about the fields white unto harvest: *'Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest'* (Jn 4:34-35).

## **8. Heavenly Minded**

Paul exhorts us: *'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth'* (Col 3:1-2). Sometimes the statement is made that an individual is *'so heavenly minded that they are no earthly use'*. One minister commented, *'I have never met anyone like that, but I have met plenty so-called Christians who were so earthly minded that they were no heavenly use'*. Afflictions are used by God to sanctify us by making this world painful and unpleasant so that we long for heaven where there are no sicknesses, pains or tears. The trials of the race and the stresses of the duties and the wounds of the battles make us long for the rest that remains for the people of God (Heb 4:9).

## **Conclusion**

Holiness is not just desirable, it is essential. None of us are as holy as we should be. Let us strive after holiness. *'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure'* (Phil 2:12-13). Press on towards the mark, the goal of perfect holiness. Make use of the means of grace, the Word, sacraments and prayer. *'But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen'* (2 Pet 3:18).