



## Knowing God's Holiness

### The beauty of holiness

Did you enjoy going to church last Lord's Day? Did you agree with David when he said *"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'"* Psalm 122:1? I hope so. Our reason for going to church is not just to meet other Christians or to listen to a sermon, good as that is. Our primary aim is to worship the Lord in the splendour and beauty of holiness. (Psalm 29:2). When we think of God, we should think of His holiness – the perfection of His character – completely free from evil and infinitely pure – so different from us. This fact alone should cause us to worship and honour Him. What a privilege to delight in the glory of His holy Name. (1 Chronicles 16:10), love and use His holy Word, and remember His holy day.

### How can we be holy?

What about us? Can we be described as holy? Jesus prayed that His people would be holy. *"Sanctify them in the truth,"* He prayed. (John 17:17). Or set them apart for holy service to God.

In his letter to Christians, the apostle Peter instructs us *"to be holy, as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct."* (1 Peter 1:15). He then quotes from God's instructions in the book of Leviticus, *"Be ye holy, for I am holy."*

### How can we possibly be holy?

We are born sinners and we commit sin every day. By our nature we are anything but holy. Jesus 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 splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish."* (Ephesians 5:25-27).

### Where is perfect righteousness?

The believer is covered by Christ's perfect righteousness and because of what He has done, we are presented holy and blameless. (Colossians 1:22). Jesus takes us as we are and makes us a new creation, presenting us to the Father as a thing of beauty. This is so necessary and so wonderful when we recognise that the Bible tells us *"without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."* (Hebrews 12:14).

When you cook a meal for guests, you know that presentation means a lot. You take the raw meat, the dirty potatoes, the vegetables and make them into a beautiful meal to set before your friends and family. We in ourselves are not fit to be presented to God but Jesus' gracious work in us and on our behalf, changes all of that and makes us fit for heaven.

### The work of God's Spirit

Being made holy does not happen instantly, it is a work in progress. A godly old man called John MacLennan used to visit us often. In our home we would have lovely conversations with him. We thought he was such a holy man but one day he said to us, *"What a wave of holiness must come over me before I die."* We could not see any sin in John but John was conscious of his sin and his great need of Christ's cleansing power. The catechism tells us that *"at death the souls of believers*

*are made perfect in holiness.*” God requires that as Christians we should strive for holy living. *“Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God which is your spiritual worship.”* (Romans 12:1).

## **Signs of holiness**

What will holiness look like in our lives? It is not head knowledge about God and His Word nor religious observance nor outward respectability.

What questions should you be asking yourself to test whether holiness is evident in your life? Do you find yourself agreeing with God’s Word? Can you say “yes” to Jesus? Do you hate sin and try to keep away from it? Do you mourn the fact that you fall into sin so often? Do you love God’s Word and His ways and wish to be transformed by the renewing of your mind and discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect? Is your desire to be made more like Jesus, to be loving, unselfish, forgiving as He was?

## **Chastisement – what’s the point?**

One means of growing in holiness which we often don’t like very much is discipline or chastisement from our loving Father. *“He disciplines us for our good that we may share his holiness”.* (Hebrews 12 verse 10). Suffering is like the silversmith’s fire which refines the silver by removing the dross and impurities. *“The suffering will be painful and unpleasant at the time but later it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”* (Hebrews 12 verse 11). We are to pursue holiness all the time, recognising that that is what God would have us to do and that is what by His grace, He enables us to do.

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