

Subject: God's Call to Holiness

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:13-16

The Bible has a lot to say about holiness. We read about holy places (the Holy Land, the place where God spoke to Moses was holy ground, the tabernacle and temple, the holy of holies); holy days (the Sabbath, Day of Atonement); holy things (the Holy Scriptures, the furnishings in the tabernacle and temple, the incense and anointing oil); and holy people (priests, prophets, and all of God's people). If you are reading your Bible through this year using the guide we have made available, you will notice God's call to holiness in Exodus and Leviticus. Exodus is the story of redemption from bondage in Egypt. The last part of Exodus and the book of Leviticus contain instructions for worship and holy living. God's redeemed people are called to be a holy people. In the New Testament God expects no less of His redeemed people. We are called to be holy.

1. The desire for holiness

The first word in verse 13, "wherefore," points back to what Peter has written in verses 1-12 about salvation and our future inheritance in heaven. Our desire for holiness is rooted in humble gratitude for God's amazing grace in salvation.

This is much like what Paul wrote in Romans 12:1.

Romans 12:1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

Because of the mercies of God in salvation, this is how you ought to live. This is your "reasonable" service (from Gk. *logikos*, from which we get our word "logical"). It just makes sense, in the light of all God has done for you and given to you in Christ, that you give yourselves as a holy sacrifice to Him.

Again Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 6:17-7:1** ¹⁷ *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,* ¹⁸ *And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.* ¹ *Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

Our desire for holiness is rooted not only in humble gratitude for God's blessings, it is also rooted in the new heart we have from God as the result of being born again. We have a desire to obey God and please Him with a life of holiness. Privilege brings responsibility.

2. The description of holiness

A. **Be mentally ready** – (ESV, "preparing your minds for action")

Be mentally prepared and ready for a holy life. Holiness doesn't happen by accident. It is always intentional. We have to prepare for it.

When Christ was asked about the greatest commandment He said,

Matthew 22:37 *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

Psalms 86:11 *Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.*

- B. Be self-controlled – Be sober-minded, clear-thinking.
- C. Be hopeful – Look toward the future and the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Christ. Keep your eyes on the prize. Christian hope and holiness are connected.

1 John 3:2-3 ² *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.* ³ *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

- D. Be obedient – We must obey our heavenly Father. This is what John Owen called “gospel obedience” in contrast to legal obedience to the letter of the Law. We are motivated to obey by God’s love and grace in the gospel.
- E. Be different – “not fashioning” (not forming, molding, conforming) to our old desires when we didn’t know better.

Romans 12:2 *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*
A Christian’s testimony goes like this: “I’m not what I ought to be, and I’m not what I’m going to be, but thank God, I’m not what I used to be.”

3. The duty of holiness

The call to holiness is in the form of a command, not a suggestion or an option. It is a duty to be holy because God is holy. God is holy in two ways: He is separate from all creatures. He is in a class by Himself. He is God and we are creatures. He is also separate from all sin, and that is the kind of holiness we are called to.

We have a duty to be holy in all ways (vs. 15, “in all manner of conversation” = in all your conduct). We are to be holy at all times and in all places. We are to be holy at church, at home, at work, at school, and everywhere we are. Martin Luther commented: “You have now given yourselves to God as his own. Therefore see to it that you do not let yourselves be led again into worldly lusts. But let God alone reign, live, and work in you. Then you are holy, just as He is holy.”

4. The discipline of holiness

As we near the end of this message I want to make some practical applications and try to answer the question: “Now that God calls us to holiness, how can we live that way?”

- A. Think often about the cost of salvation – Jesus paid such a high price to save us from our sins. How can we be casual about sin when Jesus shed His own blood to forgive it? *1 Corinthians 6:20* *For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*
- B. Remember that you have been set apart for God – Christians are not to fit in with the world; we are to stand out and be separate from it.

C. Meditate often on God's holiness – Since we are called to be like Him, we must understand His holiness. He is our motivation and our example. Study the life of Christ and follow His example.

D. Cultivate habits that produce holiness

- Read and study the Bible – **John 17:17** Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. If you want to be holy spend time in the Holy Scriptures.
- Pray – As the old song says, “Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord.”
- Depend on the Holy Spirit – He enables us to be holy.
- Avoid sinful influences – Stay away from people, activities, and thoughts that may lead to sin.
- Develop strong relationships with holy people – Association develops character, both for good and for bad.