

The title of this morning's sermon is "*The Need for a Holy Church.*"

Katie and I had a wonderful time in California last week. We were able to see many dear friends. Grace Baptist will always have a special place in our hearts. My previous mentor, Joe Gruchacz, left the ministry, but he still attended the conference with his wife, Janet, and spent an evening with us.

I met the new pastor, Tim Dinkins, at last year's Shepherd's Conference. We get along very well and were able to spend quite a bit of time together.

It was a wonderful time, but we are glad to be back.

I appreciate Pastor Nathan preaching for me, and I really enjoyed his sermon. If you haven't listened to it, I would encourage you to do so.

Let's pray.

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Last time I preached I shared that we were going to talk about the vision of our church. We haven't done so for over seven years.

In this morning's sermon, as you can tell from the title, we're going to talk about holiness. It is part of our vision to have a holy church, and I want you to understand why that's the case.

I'm going to back up and get a little momentum by asking you to consider that God always has an inside and outside...and this brings us to lesson one...

### Lesson one: God always has an inside and outside.

I know I've mentioned this before, but I think it's worth repeating, because it helps explain why holiness is so important.

God has always separated His people from those who are not His people by having an inside and an outside.

I'd say the devil – and the demons **with** him – were the first ones to learn God establishes an inside and outside.

The devil was inside heaven, but when he sinned he was cast outside...and the third of the angels who joined him were as well.

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Who were the next people to learn there's an inside and outside?

I'll give you a hint: they're the first people!

Adam and Eve were inside Eden, but then they learned there was also an outside.

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A few chapters later it started raining and what did everyone learn?

There's inside the ark and outside the ark.

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As you move through the Old Testament, you see every historical book deals with an "inside" and "outside":

- In Exodus, God unleashed the plagues on Egypt, and everyone learned there was:
  - Inside Goshen where the Israelites were safe.
  - Outside Goshen where the Egyptians were unsafe.
- Then God delivered Israel from Egypt and it was clear there was inside Egypt and outside Egypt.

- In Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy Israel traveled through the wilderness and there was inside the camp and outside the camp.
- In Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings and Chronicles there was inside the Promised Land and outside the Promised Land.

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If we leave the **Old Testament** and move into the New Testament, we reach the Gospels and the pattern continues...

What did Jesus bring **with** Him when He came from heaven to earth?

The Kingdom of God, and there was an inside and outside:

- **Matthew 21:31b** Jesus said to [the religious leaders], “The tax collectors and prostitutes go **INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD BEFORE YOU.**”
- **Mark 4:11** [Jesus said], “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but **FOR THOSE OUTSIDE** everything is in parables.
- **Luke 16:16** [Jesus said], “The kingdom of God is preached, and everyone **FORCES HIS WAY INTO IT.**”

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You reach Acts, and now there’s inside the church and outside the church:

1. **Colossians 4:5** Walk in wisdom **TOWARD OUTSIDERS.**
2. **1 Thessalonians 4:12** Walk properly **BEFORE OUTSIDERS.**
3. When Paul described the qualifications for elders in **1 Timothy 3:7** he said [elders] **must be well thought of BY OUTSIDERS.**
4. **1 Corinthians 5:12** What have I to do with judging outsiders? (Paul says we don’t have to worry about judging – or confronting the sin of – those outside the church) **Is it not those INSIDE THE CHURCH** whom you are to judge? **13 God judges those OUTSIDE.**

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The pattern even continues for eternity...

**Revelation 22:14** Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that **THEY MAY ENTER THE CITY BY THE GATES. 15 OUTSIDE** are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

Believers are inside. Unbelievers are **outside**...for all eternity.

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Now let me ask you to think about something...

In the Old Testament the boundaries were physical.

- Eden...
- The ark...
- Goshen...
- The camp in the wilderness...
- The Promised Land...

Had physical boundaries establishing the inside and outside.

But when you reach the New Testament, there’s no physical boundaries. The church is spiritual.

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So let me ask you this...

How do we create the boundary between inside and outside and the church?

This brings us to Lesson 2...

## Lesson two: holiness separates the inside from the outside.

Holiness is what allows people to recognize they have:

- Left the world and entered the church
- Moved from being among those who are not God's people to being among those who are God's people

But without holiness:

- You can't tell the difference between the church and the world.
- You can't tell if you're still among those who are God's people or among those who are not God's people

There is no separation. The inside looks like the outside.

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Briefly take your minds to the Old Testament...

There were moral commands, such as those forbidding lying, stealing, adultery, and murder.

But there were also amoral commands that were ceremonial to help God's people be holy. These are the commands we typically think are weird:

- The commands associated with clothing:
  - Tassels they had to wear
  - Fabrics they weren't supposed to mix together
- The commands associated with farming certain ways.
- The discussion of beards: **Leviticus 19:27 You shall not round off the hair on your temples or mar the edges of your beard.** Some of you are so unholy you don't even have beards :-).

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Now here's what you could ask:

- *What's the big deal about mixing fabrics together?*
- *Why did they have to wear tassels on their clothes?*
- *Why did God care how they gardened, or trimmed their beards?*

*How does that make Israel good or moral?*

The answer is it didn't make Israel good or moral...the moral commands did that.

But it did make them holy! All these amoral, ceremonial commands helped Israel be holy, or set apart, from the surrounding nations.

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The application for us is this...

Just like God called Israel to be holy in the Old Testament, He has called us – the church – to be holy in the New Testament...

**1 Peter 1:15 As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."**

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Now here's the question...

If Israel was holy by keeping those weird commands, does that mean we're holy by keeping weird commands? Do we need to:

- put on tassels?
- avoid certain foods?
- get rid of our clothing that mixes fabrics?
- farm certain ways?

No, that's not how we're holy. In the church we're holy by being separate from the world.

This brings us to Lesson 3...

### Lesson three: holiness in the church means avoiding worldliness.

I've told you a few times before, so I don't want to spend much time on it again, that:

- If something is holy we'll think it's good or moral or righteous.
- If something is unholy we'll think it's bad or immoral or sinful.

But it's better to think about holiness meaning set apart. For example:

- When Moses approached the burning bush, God told him he was standing on holy ground:
- Canaan – or the Promised Land – is the Holy Land:
- If you had two identical vessels, but one was used in the temple and one wasn't, the one in the temple was holy because it's set apart for God.

In the church, holy still means separate or set-apart...but from the world:

- Just like Israel was holy by being separate from the surrounding nations, the church is holy by being separate from the world around us.
- There are a lot of verses I could give you, but here are just three:
  - **Romans 12:2 DO NOT BE CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD** – which means be holy – **but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.**
  - **1 John 2:15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**
  - **James 4:4 You adulterous people! Do you not know that FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.**

I don't have to try to make these verses sound stronger.

- **If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him.**
- **Friendship with the world is enmity with God.**

That's strong language!

Or this...

### **Hebrews 12:14 Without holiness no one will see the Lord.**

If we're not holy, or set apart for God, we won't see Him!

We aren't saved by being holy, but I do take it to mean that saved people are holy.

So if we have a vision to be holy as a church:

- We don't focus on tassels, and foods, and fabrics.
- But we do focus on separation from the world.

The only way the church can be separate from the world is if there's a division between the two...and holiness creates that division.

If you think of the examples we discussed, God always made boundaries between His people and the world. It was never blurred:

- People in the Israelite camp never said, “Hey, let’s make sure the inside of the camp looks just like outside the camp.”
- People in the Promised Land never said, “Hey, let’s make sure being inside the Promised Land is just like being outside the Promised Land.”
- Jesus never said, “I don’t want to be exclusive, so let’s make sure people can’t tell if they’re inside the Kingdom of God or outside Kingdom of God.”

Hopefully you notice the application for WCC...

There must be a clear division. When people come into our church they should recognize they’re leaving the world. Several things should make this clear:

- Our music...
- Our language...
- Our actions...
- Our clothing...

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This is why it’s important to understand the difference between morality and holiness, because when we see the difference...

- The question isn’t just what is right and wrong, or good and bad?
- The question is also does it look like the world?

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Sadly, sometimes when churches try to reach the world they blur the line between the church and the world. They say, “We’ll look like the world to reach the world.”

But hopefully you can tell that’s not God’s plan. He wants a clear distinction:

- When I attended a Christian church for the first time it was the difference between the church and the world that made the church attractive.
- For many people, they turn to Christ because they’re sick of the world...but if the church looks like the world, they can’t leave the world because they encounter it when they enter the church.

And to ensure the separation exists between the inside and outside there’s something we must avoid, and that’s being seeker sensitive...and this brings us to lesson four...

#### Lesson four: seeker sensitive churches blur the line between the inside and outside.

We are introducing our discussion of seeker sensitive churches in this sermon, and we will finish it next week.

So what does it mean to be seeker sensitive?

The seeker sensitive movement would say, like the name implies, that it is all about reaching unbelievers or the lost.

To be clear, this isn’t the problem. We believe it’s very commendable to want to reach the lost, and we have the same desire. The problem is the way they often go about it: they bring the world into the church to make the church more attractive to the world.

In the process they blur, or even remove, the separation – or holiness – that God wants to exist.

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There is one passage we need to resolve, because it looks like it defends being seeker sensitive.

Please turn to **1 Corinthians 9:19**: Acts, Romans, Corinthians.

**1 Corinthians 9:19 For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.**

In this context **win** is synonymous with **save**, the same word Paul uses in **verse 22**.

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And how did Paul **win** these people?

He said he **made [himself] a servant to all**.

There were lots of slaves in the Roman empire. Some people speculate as much as one-third of the population were slaves.

Paul wasn't a slave to anyone but Christ. He had Roman citizenship. He was free. But he said he was willing to become a **servant**, or act like a slave, to see more people saved.

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He didn't mean this as literally as it sounds. It's not as though he got a master and became that person's slave. Instead:

- He made everyone his master.
- He became what people needed to better hear the Gospel from him.

He explains what this looked like in the following verses...

**1 Corinthians 9:20a To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews.**

Go ahead and pause here...

Paul wasn't bound to Jewish ceremonies or traditions, but he would participate in them if that made Jews more receptive to him. He acted as Jewish as possible to win Jews.

You see this throughout the book of **Acts** when Paul went into the synagogues to reason with the Jews.

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Look at the next part of the verse...

**1 Corinthians 9:20b To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law.**

Paul is referring to the Mosaic Law, or Old Testament Law. He put himself back under it to win those under it.

This is especially interesting when considering how much of Paul's ministry was spent trying to get people to recognize they were NOT under the Law!

Let me give you two examples...

**Acts 15:5 Some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, "It is necessary to...order them to KEEP THE LAW OF MOSES."**

But right before this, **verse 2** says when Paul and Barnabas showed up they...

**Had no small dissension and debate with them [about keeping the law of Moses].**

Paul and Barnabas got pretty heated when they said believers had to keep the law.

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Second, think of the whole book of Galatians...

Paul was gracious in his letters. He could be stern, but for the most part it seems like if there was something nice he could say, he said it. The only letter that didn't contain one single compliment is Galatians.

Why's that?

They thought they were still under the Law for salvation. They didn't get the Gospel right, so he had nothing good to say to them.

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But Paul was so afraid of the Corinthians thinking he was under the law that he added a parenthetical statement in the middle of the verse saying he wasn't under the law: **though not being myself under the law.**

Here's the point...

Despite this great aversion Paul had to being under the law, he said he would put himself under it if it meant more people would be saved.

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Look at **verse 21**...

**1 Corinthians 9:21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law.**

Paul talked about winning Jews **under the law**, and now he talks about winning Gentiles **outside the law** by not being under the law.

So you say, *“Does that mean he'd live sinfully and immorally?”*

No. And he was so afraid of his readers thinking that he said he's still under **the law of Christ**, so they'd know he wasn't lawless or sinful.

And this brings us to lesson 5...

**Lesson five: draw the line at immorality when being “all things to all people.”**

Listen to these two verses...

1. **Galatians 5:6a In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything...**
2. **Galatians 6:15 Neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision.**

It's clear Paul thought circumcision meant nothing spiritually.

But here's the question...

What did he do with Timothy?

He had him circumcised!

Here's why...

**Acts 16:3 Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him BECAUSE OF THE JEWS WHO WERE IN THOSE PLACES.**

He knew the Jews would receive Timothy better if he was circumcised.

Paul didn't just act Jewish, he made his traveling companions become Jewish too!

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Here's one more example...

**Acts 18:18 Paul...cut his hair, for he was under a vow.**

He cut his hair to win more people.

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Why did Paul do these two things?

Because they were amoral. He wouldn't have done them if they were immoral.

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Before we look at our last verse, look one chapter to the left at **1 Corinthians 8:7...**

You might remember when I preached on this chapter a few months ago. The context is food, which is amoral or non-spiritual. But some people don't know this. They think food is moral or immoral.

**1 Corinthians 8:7 However, not all possess this knowledge** (that food is amoral). **But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, BEING WEAK, is defiled.**

Skip to **verse 9...**

**9 But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to THE WEAK. 10 For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is WEAK, to eat food offered to idols? 11 And so by your knowledge this WEAK person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. 12 Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it IS WEAK, you sin against Christ.**

Paul uses the word **weak** five times in these verses. Here's describing people who thought they could NOT do things that they had the liberty to do. He says they have a **weak** conscience.

With this understanding of the word **weak** turn back to **chapter 9** and look at **verse 22...**

**1 Corinthians 9:22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.**

Paul knew the liberty he had in Christ, but not everyone did. So if people had a **weak** conscience that forbid them from eating certain things, he would have a **weak** conscience so as not to offend them and possibly ruin his witness.

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These verses are about the lengths Paul would go to see people saved, and it begs the question, "*How far would he go? What would he do, and what would he not do?*"

Think of the examples we've seen:

- Circumcision
- Cutting hair
- Food

And these are all amoral.

He would do those things that are amoral to reach the lost. But he wouldn't do anything immoral.



He still wanted holiness between himself and unbelievers...and it's our vision to have that holiness too.

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Let me conclude with this...

These verses are about the lengths Paul went to see people saved, but as I reflected on them this week, I couldn't help but think about the greater lengths Christ went to see us saved:

- Paul condescended to meet people where they were at, but think of how much more Christ condescended.
- Paul would come down to whatever level necessary to reach people with salvation, but how much further did Christ come to reach us with salvation?

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Look again at **verse 22**, but imagine Jesus saying this...

**To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.**

I would say that only Christ could say these words in the true and greatest sense.

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Paul said he **became weak to win the weak**, but think of how weak Jesus became...

**2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.**

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Paul said **I have become all things to all people**, but Jesus did so in a much greater way. He left heaven and became a Man....

**Philippians 2:6 [Even] though [Jesus] was in the form of God, [He] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.**

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Paul says **that by all means I might save some**.

But did Paul really ever save anyone?

No. God used him, but he didn't save anyone.

But Jesus did.

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Paul – and especially Jesus – did much to **win some**, but they did so while remaining holy...and so should we.

And shouldn't our appreciation for what Christ has done for us encourage us to strive to be holy as a church and set apart for Him.

Let's pray.