

# STONE HARBOR

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Dear Readers,

What follows is one man's weekly attempt to know the truth of God's Word and bring it to His people for their good and ultimately for His glory. Please regard these only as notes belonging to a busy pastor uploaded as they stand (for better or for worse, complete or incomplete, almost always with grammatical errors, and always with room for refinement in content, structure, presentation...) to support the ongoing study of God's Word. I firmly believe that the community of faith which is the body of Christ can and should bring their gifts to bear for the good of the rest of the body and that any one teacher can be taught by the others with an understanding of the truth. Therefore, should you have insight that would sharpen any of the thinking expressed here, know that I would be pleased to receive it. Clearly, the input that is most welcome and most helpful is that which is more concise than verbose, Biblically grounded and expressed with the goal of displacing misunderstanding and apprehending the truth of God's Word. Your thoughts of that nature are most welcome, certainly appreciated and will be thoughtfully considered. You are invited to send those insights to me at [johnny@stoneharborchurch.org](mailto:johnny@stoneharborchurch.org).

In pursuit of truth and growing a shepherd's heart,

Johnny

## *Transformation Card*

*This page provides an overview of the message and resources for individual and group study.*

Date: June 6, 2010  
 Series: The Church of God's Intention  
 Part: Part 1 – What God Intends the Church to Be  
 Section: Holy  
 Topic: Holiness  
 Message Title: **God Intends the Church to be Holy**  
 Short Title: How Holy?  
 Text: Various  
 Key Words: Holy, Holiness, Sanctify, Sanctification

### *Message Outline*

**The Church is Holy (Deb, use in sideways heading.)**

“How Holy?” (Deb, use as heading of the Outline above the two points.)

- A. **Hear** God's Message Regarding **Holiness**
- B. **Know** the Meaning of **Holiness**
- C. **Execute** the Mechanics of **Holiness**

### *Related Scripture*

1. 1 Cor 1:2
2. 1 Peter 1:14-16
3. Lev 11:44ff; 19:2; 20:7
4. Isaiah 6:3
5. 2 Cor 6:16-7:1

### *Questions for Thought and Discussion*

1. Do you consider yourself holy?
2. Does God consider you holy?
3. What has God done to make you holy?
4. So are you holy?
5. In what sense are you holy?
6. Think about the un-holiness in you life. Why are you still living in that?
7. What work does the Scripture urge you to do to be holy?

### *Memory and Meditation Verse*

“...like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; because it is written, ‘YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY’” 1 Peter 1:15-16 (NASB)

## ***F. God Intends the Church to Be Holy***

Today's Christian Culture & Holiness

We have a general awareness that as Christians we are supposed to be holy, or at least supposed to behave in a holy manner. We generally recognize that there is something wrong with behaving any old way we want and something right about being kind and honest. Our society has enforced this by upholding certain moral norms. It is not OK to steal. It is not OK to agree to one price and pay another.

But what is required of us individually and collectively as the church by God in regards to holiness? What obligations regarding holiness does He hold us to?

- Legalists – What is most important is behavior, bottom line is our obedience to God's commands
  - Sincere – I have to obey all the commands of God if I really love Him
  - Insincere – I want to be seen as holy by my peers therefore, I'll make people think that I'm holy by doing holy stuff and living within all the religious rules. But even though I'm conforming to holy actions I know it is more of a show for my own purposes. It is the kid who is told by a teacher to sit down when he wants to stand up. Under compulsion he sits, but with the attitude, I'm sitting down on the outside but I'm standing up on the inside.
- Libertarians – What is most important is personal freedom, the bottom line is God's grace and my resultant freedom!
  - Sincere -- God has set us free from the law therefore I shouldn't be overly hung up on adherence to religious rules
  - Insincere – God has set us free, therefore I can live as I want. I have heard a Christian leader express this view as, "I'm not going to let some weak Christian hamstring my liberty." I have heard immorality excused by others who say, "God knows my heart" or "It's the thought that counts."

We will see today that God does intend the church to be holy. But in what sense are we to be holy? How holy? Is it good enough to do some holy stuff -- Go to church on Sunday, give, feed the homeless, don't swear, do pay taxes... or do I have to go to Bible studies, memorize Scriptures, pray, fast...? Just how holy do I have to be?

Well, let's listen to God's Word on holiness, try to understand what He means, and then look at what our role is. First, let's...

### **3. Hear God's Message Regarding Holiness**

#### **a) God via Moses**

Leviticus 11:44 -- For I am the LORD your God Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy.

Leviticus 19:2 -- Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

Trans. – I'm sure that is just OT talk. I'm so glad we are not under the Law any more. Can you imagine trying to be holy like God?

### **b) Holy Spirit via Peter**

To the NT followers of Christ Peter says in 1 Peter 1:15-16, "but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves in all your behavior; because it is written, 'YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.'"

TRANS. – So holiness is not only OT speak. Holiness is not only an obligation that fell upon those poor souls who lived before the time of Christ. NT Peter commands us to be holy as well! We can not escape such a simple clear calling. But what does that call us to? What is the meaning of that holiness? The second point on your outlines is that if we are to be the church of God's intention, if we are to be holy, we must...

## **4. Know the Meaning of Holiness**

### **a) Separate/Distinct Especially From Un-holiness**

#### ***(6) First Time we See Holiness***

##### **(a) God of Creation**

In the beginning God created ... (Gen 1). God existed before everything else and therefore, as I see it, He was distinct from all else. Nothing exists that God has not created (John 1). He existed outside of creation. He was holy, set apart, transcendent, distinct from creation which He created speaking it into existence out of nothing. It strikes me that this is the very essence of holiness. And after creation He was still Holy, separate, by His nature and function: He was Creator and the rest is creation.

The holiness of God in the sense of His distinctive "differentness" from His creation is easy to see. What object of creation compares with the subject of creation? How much greater and clearly distinct is the master painter than his paints or even his paintings?

Yet God our Creator created mankind in His image and likeness and not as an inanimate object of art, but as a living being. Of all the holy Creator's creations only mankind bore His image and life from the very breath of God. Only mankind was like Him. Doesn't that indicate that we were created holy? Certainly we were distinct from the rest of creation, even given the delegated responsibility to rule over the rest of creation. Holy in likeness, God breathed life, delegated authority over.

That the holy God shared the same space in the Garden of Eden with pre fall Adam and Eve also speaks to their holiness with God.

We are so familiar with the un-holiness of our fallen state that we can't even conceive of the thought of our 'likeness' to God being a likeness in regards to His holiness. When people say nice things about us we deflect and dodge because we are aware of our un-holiness.

Honest men and women know of their un-holiness apart from God. "All have sinned and fall short..." (Rom 3:23). David "**The man after God's own heart**" lamented in [Psalm 51:3](#) – For I know my transgressions, And **my sin is ever** before me. Paul called himself the "foremost of all" "sinners" (1 Tim 1:15), a standing he would likely have had to compete for with the likes of Peter and Isaiah.

- Remember in Luke 5 when Peter was just getting to know Jesus. He had been fishing all night long and caught nothing. Then the Carpenter tells the fisherman to put out into the deep water and let down his nets. When Peter reluctantly obeyed Jesus caused him to catch so many fish that it was breaking the nets and sinking the boats that had to be called in to haul the catch on board. Clowney helpfully points out that when Peter saw the distinct power of Jesus he "fell down at Jesus' feet" and said, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!" Luke 5:8. Peter recognized the holiness of Jesus and His holiness highlighted Peter's un-holiness.
- Similarly when Isaiah saw his vision of God the angels cried out, "...  
Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts,  
The whole earth is full of His glory."  
But Isaiah was compelled by the presence of God to say,  
"Woe is me, for I am ruined!  
Because I am a man of unclean lips,  
And I live among a people of unclean lips;"

The holiness of God highlights to the humble man his own un-holiness.

And of course the likeness of mankind to God was soiled and diminished as to holiness when our ancestors chose autonomy from God in the Garden. One theologian has rightly called mankind after Adam and Eve's sin, "tarnished image bearers of God."

We know first hand the result of Adam and Eve's rebellion against God – it was separation from the holy God. Via this separation God retained his holiness but man lost it's. Mankind was no longer separate/holy with God but separated from Him outside the Garden. Un-holiness had been divided from Holiness.

**(7) First Time we Read "holy" in the Scriptures****(a) God Appeared in a Burning Bush to Moses**

Read Exodus 3:1-6

What made that ground holy (v.5)? It was the presence of God in a blazing fire that burned in a bush that grew in that ground. That ground that had been just ground, became holy ground because it was the ground that touched the bush where God was revealing Himself.

Take off your sandals, God said to Moses, this is not ordinary ground where you can bring your ordinary dirty sandals, this ground is the ground of My appearance and warrants special distinct action, action that recognizes the holiness of this place because of the holiness of the One present here.

ILLUS. -- In Hawaii people take off their slippers at the door. To come into the house with your slippers, or worse yet your shoes, was a sign of disrespect. It brought in the sand and dirt of the outside into the place your host, or your mother, had cleaned for you.

This was that on steroids. Moses, un-holy Moses who was out in the desert in the first place because he had killed a man, stood there in his little dirty sandals before the living, burning, holy God. Take off you sandals..., absolutely. Moses was no dummy. Verse 6 says, "Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God."

Understandably so: A murderer before His Creator and Judge should divert his eyes in appropriate fear.

But Moses had NOT been summoned unto judgment, but unto deliverance. He would be the instrument of God's judgment upon those who worked against God's people. He was a man whom God purposed to use to accomplish redemption for His people from their bondage to harsh task masters in a land that was not their own and to bring them into a land that was – a bountiful land described as 'flowing with milk and honey', a land that God had promised to Moses' ancestor Abraham and his descendents, a land in which God would live with them again as in the Garden. When Moses sings of God's deliverance of Israel into the promised land he says, "In Your lovingkindness You have led the people whom You have redeemed; In Your strength You have guided them to Your holy habitation." Ex 15:13)

Moses was a redeemer of Israel from Egypt; and in his redemptive activity he pictured The Ultimate Redeemer who would deliver mankind from their estrangement from God into a place of ultimate and intimate communion with God. Implicit in the restoration of man

with God is the restoration of the holiness of man. Man was once again to be set apart with God, holy with the holy God.

***(8) First Time we See Holiness Spoken of in Reference to a Person other than God***

**(a) Exodus 19:6 Re: Israel as a Nation**

**“and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”**  
These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."

God intended Israel to be holy. Let me state that a bit more fully. God's prophetic redemptive activity was intended to cause the nation of Israel to be holy. They were to be different than all the other nations because they were the POG who are holy and distinct and separate from those who are not His.

Brothers and sisters, God's ultimate redemptive actions in Christ intend to have the church, the NPOG, be holy. Let me say that a bit more personally. God has redeemed you by the work of Christ on the cross and the gift of His indwelling Spirit that you would be holy and that we would be holy. It is a work that is already done.

Peter says to the church in 1 Peter 2:9, “But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, **A HOLY NATION**, A PEOPLE FOR *God's* OWN POSSESSION...”

We are holy because Christ has redeemed us and reconciled us (joined us) to the holy God. We are separate with the separate God. We are “aliens and strangers” (1 Peter 2:11) in this world. We are different because the different and distinct God separated us from the world and made us holy with Him.

My heart grows solemn and my spirit is convicted as I think of the cost of my salvation, the Divine transaction for my holiness, paid for in the blood of Christ, and any sin I still live in. How could I still live there, how could we live in a reality other than the reality of the holiness that Christ has secured for us?

Yet we do. To the degree we live unholy lives doing unholy deeds (anything other than loving God and neighbor the way Christ did) we live contrary to the reality that Christ has secured. We are either the unredeemed masquerading as the redeemed or we are redeemed but rebellious presuming upon the goodness of our Father like spoiled children.

Is this not true? Think of your selfishness, your anger, your drunkenness, your wondering eye, your ambition without regard for God, your inattention to His word... is that not living in the world

like the rest of unredeemed humanity? What place has it in the life of the redeemed or in the church? None what so ever! You are to be holy, separate, distinct because the holy God dwells in you and has made you holy.

TRANS. What are we to do with the unholiness we rightly perceive in our lives? What must we do to be holy? We must...

## 5. Execute the Mechanics of Holiness

And what are they? What must the believer do to be holy?

### a) **Nothing!**

There are no mechanics, there is just being what God has redeemed and reconciled you to be. Our righteousness is as filthy rags. There is nothing we can do to make ourselves holy. Redeemed by Jesus, you are holy. All that is left is for us to live out who we already are. If you will but be the new creation in Christ that you are your holiness will be evident.

We manifest un-holiness because we live as if the holy God has not saved us from our un-holiness. Whatever the unholy action is that you are aware of in your life, you live in it by somehow denying the work of Christ. He has redeemed you has He not!? He has sealed you as one of His by the indwelling Holy Spirit has he not!? Then by virtue of the holiness of that indwelling God you are holy.

What is left?

### b) **Kit**

Live into the reality of who you are in Christ.

### c) **Clowney**

In describing Paul's call to holiness in 1 Corinthians Edmund Clowney says, "First comes the statement of what God has done for us in Christ; then comes the command to live accordingly." P. 87

Here is the way this best settles in my mind: Know what God has done for you in Christ and live accordingly. What is our problem? Why do we find it so difficult to live holy lives? Why were the exhortations away from un-holiness needed in the NT to the church of Christ?

I'll take a stab at answering that.

We walk by natural sight when God would have us walk by supernatural faith. We see with our natural eyes the things we naturally want: that better job, that better relationship, better health, greater wealth, more free time, more recreation, more ease... we want what the rest of the world wants when we already have what is so much better but what is only seen through the eyes of faith. We are cattlemen who lust after one more cow instead of realizing that we have been adopted into the family of the one who owns the cattle on a thousand hills. So we look with our natural eyes, and consider with our natural minds, and make decisions as if we have not been



redeemed, as if we were still unholy with the rest of the world who live in the death of separation from God, and it does not satisfy.

I contend that we too often live as malcontents. We live in the KOG where perfect peace is available to us because the Prince of Peace dwells within us yet we look everywhere but to Christ for our rest. What is up with that?

What is our alternative? We can live the life separated from the world and in union with God that Christ has secured for us. As we do that we are living in the holiness that God has already secured for us.

Who are you? Are you the redeemed of the Lord? Are you those joined to Him by His grace through faith in Christ and His indwelling Spirit? You are holy. Live accordingly!

Easier said than done, I know. I give you one tool -- Your **thinking**.

- Prov 23:7a
- 2 Cor 10:4-5
- Phil 4:8-9

Paul learned the secret of being content in times of plenty and in times of want. To live is Christ to die is gain. That peace and rest comes only when we are actively conscious of who we are in Christ and the reality that He has secured for us. When can we lay our lives down for the good of others and the glory of God? The answer is, only when we trust the One who gave us our true life with that life. What difficulty is too great if God is with us? What temptation so powerful when we rightly recognize Christ in us?!

Brothers and sisters, lets come around the corner of our troubled world into the KOG seen by faith. Let's live in the reality that Christ has brought about. Let's fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. Let's pursue Him with Paul (Phil 3) and the result will be the living out of the holiness that God has secured and has called us to live in.

If we are to be the church of God's intention we are to be holy!

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