

Lesson 1 – Holiness (Chapters 1 and 3)

What is holiness?

God has called every Christian to a holy life. To be holy is to be morally blameless. The word signifies a “separation to God, and the conduct befitting those so separated”. In other words, to live a holy life is to live a life in conformity to the moral precepts of the Bible and in contrast to the sinful ways of the world. Let’s take a look at a few verses:

- I Thessalonians 4:3-7
- I Peter 1:14-16
- Ephesians 4:22-24
- Romans 12:1-2

Holiness is for you

If holiness is supposed to be the basic, fundamental, essential element to the Christian life, why do we not experience it more in our daily walk? Why do so many Christians constantly feel defeated in their struggle with sin? Three basic problems contribute to this dilemma:

1. **Our attitude toward sin is more self-centered and self-oriented than God-centered.**
We have become more concerned about our own “victory” over sin than we are about the fact that our sins grieve the heart of God. God wants us to walk in *obedience* – not struggle for *victory*. Obedience is oriented toward God, victory is oriented toward self. Victory is a by-product of obedience.
2. **We have misunderstood “living by faith”.** (Galatians 2:20) We assume that no effort at holiness is required on our part. We must face the fact that we have a personal responsibility for our walk of holiness.
3. **We do not take sin seriously.** Sin is an offense to God. All sin. Unfortunately, we are prone to mentally categorize sins into those which are unacceptable and those which are tolerable. We need to call sin...sin...not because it is big or little, but because God’s law forbids it.

Holiness is not an option

Hebrews 12:14 tells us that “*without holiness, no one will see the Lord.*” Does our salvation depend to some degree on our attaining some level of personal holiness? The answer to that is no. The best Christians can never in themselves merit salvation through personal holiness (Isaiah 64:6, Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 5:19, I Peter 3:18). Our holiness before God depends entirely on the work of Christ. However, there is a holiness which we have in Christ (our standing before God) and a holiness which we are to strive after, to which we are called to in our daily lives (I Corinthians 1:2, I Thessalonians 4:7).

True salvation brings with it a desire to be made holy. Ephesians 1:4 tells us that the purpose of our salvation is to be “holy and blameless in His sight”. To continue to live in sin as a Christian is to go contrary to God’s very purpose for our salvation. So, therefore, holiness is not necessary as a *condition for* salvation – but as an *essential part of* salvation that is received by faith in

Christ. The Holy Spirit who creates within us a saving faith also creates within us the desire for holiness. He does not create one without the other (Titus 2:11-12).

So, we see that holiness is not an option...it is a natural, required outcome of our salvation for a number of reasons:

1. **Holiness is required for intimate fellowship with God.** Who may fellowship with God? Those who live a holy life (Psalm 15:1-5). Prayer is a vital part of fellowship with God, yet Psalms 66:18 tells us that the Lord will not listen to our prayers if we cherish sin in our hearts. When we have knowingly sinned, it impacts our intimacy with God. Just like when we disobeyed our parents, and things were just not “right” until the issue was dealt with.
2. **Holiness is required for our own well-being.** Hebrews 12:6 tells us that *the Lord disciplines those He loves*, which presumes that we will, at some point, need discipline. To persist in disobedience is to increase our necessity for discipline. When God speaks to us about some sin in our lives, we need to heed and take action. God is serious about holiness in the lives of His children and, if necessary, disciplines us to achieve it – out of His incredible love for us. But in the end, it is for our good (Romans 8:28).
3. **Holiness is necessary for effective service to God.** Holiness and usefulness are linked together. Paul told Timothy that when a person cleanses themselves from sinful practices, they can be used of God more effectively (2 Timothy 2:19-21). It is the *Holy Spirit* who empowers us for service, and when we indulge our sinful natures, we grieve him (Ephesians 4:30). These are not times of falling into temptation, sin and then seeking God’s forgiveness, but a pattern of unholy living.
4. **Holiness ultimately assures us of our salvation.** When we believe in Christ, we become a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). That change becomes more and more evident by the fruit that is produced as we mature in our walk with Lord. If we know nothing of holiness, are not grieved by our sins, do not strive (even though failing at times) to live a life that reflects a deep desire to obey God, we may indeed be flattering ourselves that we are Christians.

We have taken a look at holiness and understand that it is a required and essential element of the Christian’s life and walk with the Lord. Commit yourselves to ask the Lord to clarify in your hearts His call to holiness for your life.

The Scriptures tell us that God commands us to be holy, because He is holy (Leviticus 19:2). Let us next examine the **holiness of God and Christ**.