

Lesson 2 - The Holiness of God (Chapter 2)

As we discovered last time, God has called every Christian to a holy life. Because God is holy, He requires that we be holy. As Christians, many times we practice a "cultural holiness", patterning ourselves to the character and behavior of other Christians. But God has not called us to be like other Christians, He has called us to be like Himself. Holiness is nothing less than conformity to the character of God.

Holiness is an essential part of God's character. It is one of His primary attributes, just as prevalent as His wisdom, omniscience or omnipotence. Therefore, He cannot act contrary to His nature. God's holiness does not only include the perfect freedom from all evil, but also His perfect conformity to His own divine character. In other words, He always acts consistently with His character – His actions are always perfect, just and holy. In contrast, we many times act in ways that are inconsistent with our Christian character.

God's hatred of sin

Because God is holy, He can never overlook any sin that we commit. We may try and justify to God some action which our own conscience calls into question, but we can never truly justify before Him even the slightest deviation from His perfect will. Because God is holy, He can never tempt us to sin (James 1:13). Probably none of us ever imagine that God is actively soliciting us to do evil, but we may feel that He has put us in a situation where we have no choice (King Saul – I Samuel 13).

We often say "God hates sin, but loves the sinner". This is wonderfully and mercifully true! But we are quick to gloss over the first part to get to the second part. We cannot escape the fact that God hates our sins. Therefore, ever time we sin, we are doing something God hates. We must cultivate that same attitude toward sin – we need to hate sin as something displeasing to God, not something that is defeating to ourselves. When we sin, we sin against God (Genesis 39:9, 2 Samuel 12:13).

If we do not develop a holy hatred of sin, the deceitfulness of our hearts will allow us to play with temptation by entertaining the thought that we can always sin and then confess later and ask forgiveness. Contemplating continuously on the holiness of God and His hatred of sin is a strong deterrent against treating sin lightly or superficially.

In the end, the love of God to us through Jesus Christ should be our primary motivation to holiness. But, a motivation prompted by an awesome realization of God's attitude toward sin and His consequent judgment is no less biblical.

The Holiness of Christ (Chapter 4)

The Scriptures tells us that "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Because Christ's righteousness is credited to us as our righteousness, it is therefore important to understand Christ's holiness.

1. **We need to appreciate His holiness in order to be firmly grounded in our security in Christ.** As we seek holiness in our lives, it is only a natural response to be more and more aware of our own sinfulness. We will see the deceitfulness of our own hearts and how far we miss the mark of God's perfect holiness. As this happens, the Christian will seek refuge in Christ. Because at this point, Satan will begin to attack your very confidence in your salvation.

Jesus, while on earth, lived a perfectly holy life – Hebrews 4:15, 1 Peter 2:22, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 John 3:5. But the holiness of Christ was more than just the absence of sin. It was also a perfect conformity to the will of His Father (John 6:38, John 4:34, John 8:29). Christ lived a life pleasing to God in action, motive and attitude. Holiness is more than just actions – our motives and attitudes must be holy, in other words arising simply from a desire to do something because it is the will of God.

2. **We need to consider the holiness of Christ because His life is meant to be an example of holiness for us.** Paul encouraged the Corinthians to follow his example as he (Paul) followed the example of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). Christ came into this world to do the will of God. We must strive to do no less. There is biblical truth is the slogan that became popular several years ago – **WWJD** "*What would Jesus do?*" Are we willing, as followers of Christ and believers in a holy God, to examine our activities, goals, plans, thoughts and actions in the context of *am I doing this to please God?* Is the guiding principle in our lives the desire to follow Christ in doing the will of God?

Now that we have examined the holiness of God and Christ and recognize the need for us to commit ourselves to following that standard, we must understand the **battle** that is raging between the **two kingdoms** that want to rule our lives – the **kingdom of the Spirit** and the **kingdom of the flesh**.