

Sermon Mark S. Aites

A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THAT WHICH IS HOLY AND THAT WHICH IS COMMON

(Outline based on article by Dan Owen, *Christian Bible Teacher*, March 1987)

INTRODUCTION:

1. One seraphim cried to another, *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory (Isa. 6:3)*.
2. Tony Evans once wrote, "Holiness is the centerpiece of God's attributes. Of all the things God is, at the center of His being, God is holy, Never in the Bible is God called, 'love, love, love,' or 'eternal, eternal, eternal,' or 'truth, truth, truth.' On this aspect of His character, God has the most stress."
3. **Exod. 15:11** *Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?*
4. Here is a wonderful truth, that there is no counterpart to God. God is unique; higher and holier than any other being that exists.
5. Because God is holy, He commanded the Israelites *Thou shalt have no other gods before me (Exod. 20:3)*.
6. **Lev. 19:2** *Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.*
7. When we come to the New Testament, we find that principle reiterated again to God's people:
1 Pet. 1:15-16 *But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation (behavior or conduct);*
1:16 *Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.*
8. In this we are challenged, and it is important that we understand what it means to be "holy."

DISCUSSION:

I. DEFINED.

- A. Holiness is a recurring theme in sacred lit. used more than 500 times.
 1. The Hebrew term is *kadosh*, which means "separated or consecrated."
 2. The Greek term is *hagiazō*, which means, "set apart." This fits the terms holy, holiness, and sanctification, which means to be "set apart for a holy purpose."
- B. Basically, these terms refer to distinguishing or setting apart that which is sacred, consecrated, and hallowed, from that which is common.
 1. For example: under the Mosaic law, the children of Israel were told:
Exod. 20:8-11 *Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy...*
 2. We find another example in the priesthood, as those from the tribe of Levi were "set apart" from the rest of the nation so they could minister before God.
 3. We recall that Israel had 12 tribes, and Levi was the one selected of God to this sacred service.
 4. In **Exod. 29** we read of a ceremony to sanctify these priests, and read of its fulfillment in **Lev. 8**.
 5. These individuals wore a special type of clothing that was designed by God *for glory and beauty (Exod. 28:2)*.
 6. Only priests could enter into the sanctuary or holy place, that portion of the tabernacle designed to observe rituals commanded by God.

7. Even in this place, was there another place known as the most holy place, or holy of holies.
 - 1) In **Exod. 26** we learn of the separation of the holy place from the most holy place.
 - 2) It was in the most holy place that God had instructed the ark of the covenant to be placed.
 - 3) Only the high priest could enter this place, and then, only once a year as prescribed by God on the day of atonement (**Lev. 16**).
8. The rest of the nation was warned: *And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death (Num. 3:10).*
- C. The priests were to respect then those things which were referred to as holy things by God.
 1. These were items which were so designated by God for use in worship to Him.
 2. This would have included the tabernacle, the furniture that was in it, the garments which they wore, the showbread, incense, and anointing oil.
- D. Israel, as a nation, had to learn to apply the concept of holiness to the nation itself.
 1. They were a people who were set apart from other nations.
 2. They learned that they could have nothing to do with the practices of the other nations.
 3. God even placed upon them a prohibition to not intermarry with other nations to prevent them from becoming common -- that is, to prevent them from being like the other nations instead of being different and unique (**Deut. 7:1-3**).
- E. In applying holiness to today, we look at the process of how one becomes holy or set apart for a holy purpose.
- F. Holiness begins when one makes the choice to be the offspring or child of God.
- G. As we become His child, we partake of His divine nature which is holy (**2 Pet. 1:4**).
- H. The process actually begins when we are born anew (again).
 1. Jesus--Nicodemus: *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God...Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (John 3:3,5).*
 2. But we later learn in Peter's writings that the process of being born again involves being born of an incorruptible seed (**1 Pet. 1:22-23**).
 - 1) Just as we physically are born of human seed, so too we are born spiritually when we receive the spiritual seed.
 - 2) Parable of sower: seed-Word (**Luke 8:11**).
 3. **James 1:21; Rom. 10:17**
 4. The Word of God is holy for it contains a holy message--a message of salvation, and sanctification.
 5. As a fruit or a response to its message, we turn from our sins in repentance, demonstrate our faith in Christ as we confess Him before men, and in obedience are baptized for the remission of sins.
- I. As an evidence of our reception of God's word, our lives then change drastically.
 1. Jesus becomes the Lord of our lives (**Matt. 16:24**).
 2. In an effort to respond to Him, we willingly distance ourselves from the world.

- 1) Rightly so: the things of the world are evil (**1 John 5:19**).
- 2) Our friendship with the world and ways of the world must change.
Jas. 4:4 *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*
3. This helps us then understand what it means to be holy, to be set apart for a holy purpose.
4. **1 Cor. 6:20** *For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

II. DISTINCTION.

- A. Holy living demands that we deny ourselves of the evil things of the world.
 1. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him (1 John 2:15).*
 2. It is not that we cannot enjoy some of the things in this world, but that we cannot love and cling to the things of this world and put them before God.
 3. Anything that we put before God is something which we worship and value more than God.
- B. If we are really serious about seeing God, then we must distance ourselves from worldly living (*Blessed are the pure in heart...Matt. 5:8*).
- C. If we are to be distinctive from the world, we must strive, as Paul states, to *perfect holiness (2 Cor. 6:17-18; 7:1)*.
 1. As one expressed it: "Christians are to cleanse themselves from the filthiness of the flesh because sinning in the flesh does cause one to be lost."
 2. **1 Cor. 6:9-11** *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? ...And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*
 3. The context of this discussion, based upon previous thoughts from chapter 6, and Paul's reference here to the Spirit, seem to indicate that Paul was referring also to sin committed in the mind.
- C. The holiness for which we must strive, if we are to be distinctive, must be evident in our actions, words, and thoughts.
 1. It is for this reason that some misunderstand the concept of holiness.
 2. To many, Christianity and holiness are simply going through the motions.
 3. For example: some will make donations or contributions to the Lord's work, thinking that being generally good, and making occasional contributions will ensure a home in heaven.
 4. Others think that by filling a pew that it will ensure salvation.
Matt. 7:21-23 *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*
7:22 *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?*
7:23 *And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

- D. Even one's motives need to be determined:
For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again (Matt. 7:2).
1. Sometimes one may appear to be righteous, even doing righteous deeds, but their motive is wrong (cf. **Phil. 1:15-17**).
 2. Holiness then is not only outward, but inward as well.
 3. We can fool others, but not God: the Lord looks on the heart (cf. **1 Sam. 16:7**--*for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart*).
- E. If we are going to *perfect* or complete our holiness, and to be distinctive, then our entire being must be changed.
1. Our dedication and love for God must be complete:
Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind... (Luke 10:27).
 2. Our minds must be like the Lord's (cf. **Phil. 2:5**).
 3. Jesus gave His all in service to God. His going to the cross was evidence of His love and commitment to God and man.
 4. We have been urged to follow His steps in every aspect of our life (**1 Pet. 2:21-24**).

III. DEMONSTRATED.

- A. We are striving to be more holy: song, "More Holiness Give Me."

"More holiness give me, More strivings within,
More patience in suffering, More sorrow for sin,
More faith in my Savior, More sense of His care,
More joy in His service, More purpose in Prayer.
More purity give me, more strength to o'er come,
More freedom from earth stains, more longings for home
More fit for the kingdom, more useful I'd be,
More blessed & holy, more, Savior, like Thee."

- B. To attain the goal of a greater holiness, it requires several things on our part: (these are not just suggestions, but necessities)!
1. More time in prayer:
 - 1) Jesus--our example: **Mark 1:35** *And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.*
 - 2) Paul admonished the church at Colossae to *continue in prayer (Col. 4:2)*.
 - 3) Thessalonica: *Pray without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17)*.
 - 4) Prayer is direct communication with God; the opportunity afforded us as His children to talk to Him; to express our love and adoration and thanksgiving and petitions.
 - 5) Key: The more we communicate with God, the closer we will draw to Him; and the fruit of that is that we will become purer and more holy.

2. More time in study: (not just saying this for something to say, but to genuinely encourage you to take this seriously).
 - 1) Not just in reading the Bible, but in study.
 - 2) The definition of study includes the idea of research (**Acts 17:11**).
 - 3) One dictionary: study -- "attentive scrutiny"; "to apply the mind in acquiring knowledge."
 - 4) We are fast approaching the new year: some have a goal: read Bible through in one year.
 1. That is good for a broad picture of biblical events.
 2. Study: much slower process: learning about a book or subject, why it was written and by whom; what applications can I make? what do the Scriptures teach in other parts of the Bible on this subject? etc.
 - 5) It is evident that to do this, it will require time; setting aside time every day (20 or 30 minutes); may involve getting up earlier, staying up a little later; revising your schedule. (priorities)
 - 6) The more we spend time in the study of God's word, again, the closer we will draw to God, for the word contains His will for us.
 - 7) Brethren, it is a concern when members of the Lord's church can tell you more about the characters and story of a TV show than the characters and stories of the word of God.
 1. *Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against Thee (Psa. 119:11).*
 2. **Psa. 119:105** *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*
 - 8) It is also through a closer study of God's word that we learn more about God:
 1. **Illus.** personal example: for years, I did not understand the concept of the Godhead or "Trinity."
 2. I learned that the Father, Son, and Spirit are all Divine, that they make up the one God.
 3. I learned that Jesus existed before His earthly birth in Bethlehem; in fact, that He always has existed (**John 1:1**).
 4. I also learned that He was not a created being as some erroneously teach.
 5. But such was possible, not just through a simple reading; but an intense study!
 - 9) It is important also to avail ourselves to the various tools available to help us in our study:
 1. Valuable investment: good concordance; dictionary, and encyclopedia.
 2. Sometimes having different translations for comparison will help.
 3. If the proper caution is exercised, a good set of commentaries can be of a great help. (need to use care as you want conservative scholarship).
 - 10) Your objective is to learn; to acquire more knowledge. This will help bring more holiness.
 - 11) Instead of seeing how many worldly things you can possess, invest in those things which will help you in your relationship to God.
3. More fellowship with Christians.
 - 1) When Jesus sent His disciples into the world: *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as*

doves (**Matt. 10:16**).

- 2) Paul--Corinthians: *Evil companions corrupt good [morals] (ASV, 1 Cor. 15:33); Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. 6:14).*
- 3) The mistake that many Christians have made and continue to make is that they spend far too much time with those who are not Christians.
- 4) This mistake has caused some to leave the faith; some to have doubts about God; and yet others to live a worldly lifestyle while professing to be a Christian.
- 5) Again Paul tells us: *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works...* (**Eph. 5:11**).
- 6) *Wherefore come ye out from...(2 Cor. 6:17).*
- 6) The apostle John encouraged Christians to fellowship one another (**1 John 1:7**).
- 7) In fact, the book of Acts talks of the daily fellowship of children of God.
- 8) To make this a reality:
 - 1) Plan to attend every service.
 - 2) Plan activities with Christians.
 - 3) Invite Christians into your home.
 - 4) Talk to other Christians when you are having difficulty instead of turning to the world.

C. In this we will then learn to demonstrate what it means to be holy in all that we say, and in all that we do.

CONCLUSION:

1. **1 Pet. 2:5,9** *Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*
2:9 *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*
2. God admonishes you to be holy, to be distinctive and separate from the world.
3. If you are not a Christian, you are afforded the opportunity right now to make a change.
4. Christians, is your life such that it is truly distinctive from the world?
5. Are you holy in your living, or common and unclean?