

## **Be Holy, As I Am Holy**

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Last time I spoke, I started by asking the question, What does it mean to be holy?

And even though the term holy or holiness appears about 900 times in the Scriptures, the mass majority of Christianity—and even those in the church—have little or no concept of what it means.

The term means to be set apart. And especially when it comes to holy, it means to be a cut above, separated for God's use.

And if you remember, the first time the word holy appears in the Scriptures is in Exodus 3. This is when God appeared to Moses in the burning bush and He told Moses to take off his shoes because he was standing on holy ground. He was standing on holy ground because God's presence was there.

The same thing happened with Joshua.

I mentioned, if you remember, also that the priests would go about their duties in the Tabernacle without their shoes. They were barefoot. And by the way, a few people have asked, well, when we come to church, are we supposed to be barefoot? And of course the answer is no. You know, that veil was rent from the top to the bottom, and that we have God's Spirit inside of us today. And so, the conditions there were a little bit different than they are today.

But one of the things that God does when He sanctifies something, He makes it holy. And as I said last time, that He sanctified the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made a cut above the other days of the week. And the reason why that is, is because it is for God's use.

God has a purpose for everything that He does. God did not need to make the seventh day special unless He had a purpose for it and that is because He has called *us* to be holy. He has set us to be individuals that are set apart for His purpose, just as He sets aside individuals, nations, and anyone for His unique purpose.

And so the Sabbath is holy. It is a sign between Him and His people, His chosen people.

**Ezekiel 20:12** Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them [or makes them holy].

The word sign here means a beacon, a signal, the evidence. And so God sanctified the Sabbath so that it may be a beacon, the evidence of the covenant that He has made with us. And that we would know that we are His people.

You know, there are many religions and beliefs today, countless churches over the earth. And many of them are good people. They are good. But it is interesting that they feel that we should keep the Ten Commandments, except for one. The one that signifies, it is that beacon, it is that evidence that you are part of Him.

We are called to be separate, a cut above. And that has everything to do with God, not with us.

**I Peter 1:15-16** But as He who has called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

Yes, holy means to be set apart. But it also means to be set apart from our sinful nature and dedicated to God. This separation is not solely about a physical separation or isolation, but rather a spiritual change and a change from our moral perspective.

You see, when it uses the word for God, His holiness, it means it is all talking about His quality. Holiness speaks of His majesty, His immeasurable power, and His perfect righteousness. That is what He wants to see in us.

To be holy is much more than simply being moral. There are many people, again, that are good out there, that are really nice people. They live their lives to the best of their abilities.

But holiness refers to a set of attributes and qualities that reflect God's character, to be godlike. And to truly reflect godlike character and His qualities, one must possess His Holy Spirit.

Please turn to Genesis 12. I am going to start here. Here the Lord is speaking to Abraham.

**Genesis 12:1-3** "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Here, God made Abram holy. He separated him from his family. And He told him if he would just to be faithful to Him, that He would make a covenant with him, and He did. Abraham is the father of the faithful.

And in chapter 17, just read a little farther here.

**Genesis 17:1-7** When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. [Be perfect.] And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly." Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make

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nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you."

The relationship between God and Abraham was remarkable. We see Abraham taking that step out. He trusted God. He stepped out on faith. He left his family. And I do not know, I have this feeling that he had probably a very powerful and good position back where he was. But he trusted God.

And not only did he step out on faith, but he lived by every statute, law. He kept the Sabbath. Abraham walked before God, blameless. It does not say it, but I think it could say, Abraham, he worked to be holy as God is holy.

**James 2:23** "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." And he was called the friend of God.

Let us go to Isaiah 41, verse 8. I want to read this from the *Young's Literal Translation*. I think the wording is interesting.

**Isaiah 41:8** (YLT) Then thou, O Israel, My servant Jacob, whom I have chosen, seed of Abraham, My lover.

I think this could also be translated "Abraham, who loved Me." Abraham showed his love, his faithfulness, his devotion to God by his actions. And he was willing and did walk before God blameless.

You know, Abraham was just more than acquaintance to God. It says that he was the friend of God.

You know, when you think about a friend, it is a reciprocal relationship between two people. There is a bond there, there is something special there. Friends can be described as one who knows and understands each other. They like each other. They share similar interests. They want to spend time together. They want to help and protect each other.

That is a relationship that God wants with us. And He wants us to have that with Him as well. To be His friend, to love Him, to be interested in what He

is interested in. That is why He wants us to study the Scriptures, to become close to Him. And He wants to protect us.

So you are seeing how special it is and unique when God calls and makes holy His people.

You know, God kept His promises to Abraham. He separated him and He made him holy. And he was faithful to Him, and so we see that going through in his generations.

There are a few scriptures here I want to read that will encapsulate what He did regarding the children of Israel. This is some 430 years later and it really shows you how much God loved them.

**Deuteronomy 14:2** "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."

Of all the people on the earth, He chose them.

**Exodus 19:5** "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special [particular, a peculiar] treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine."

Here, God is saying if you will obey Me, if you will love Me, if you will trust Me, if you will have faith in Me. Moreover, He is saying if you will take My covenant to heart, you will be a special treasure to Me.

It says "all the earth is Mine." Everything on the earth is His and He chose them.

You know, I think as parents, we love our children. We want the best for them. But we do want them to obey us, trust us, because we know what is best for them. We do not want them to get hurt. We love them so much that we are willing to sacrifice for them. And our heavenly Father loves us the same way.

God chose Israel out of all the nations of the world, of the earth, to be His holy nation, to be His holy people, to represent Him on the face of the earth to be His model nation. They were called to live a life of obedience to God's commandments and to live a life of obedience to His covenant that they made a promise to do. They agreed to it.

They were to maintain a distinct identity as the people of God. And that was by living uprightly. They were to serve as a light to the other nations. And that is because they were to have a covenant of the heart with the Almighty God.

As we know, there were times that they were trusting God and they did rely on Him. But for the most part, they did not take His covenant to heart. And even though they observed commands, rituals, they kept the Sabbath. But because it was holy, did they really take it to heart? Or was it just a tradition for them?

I was thinking, He made them holy, He chose them. He gave them so much. And all He asked in return is for their loyalty to Him. I think it gives an idea how much Satan has a pull on us in this world. And they did not remain faithful to God.

You know, today, we are given the same promises. You have been made holy. You have been set a cut above. So we need to think about that.

And Deuteronomy 14:2 also refers to you. You are a holy people to the Lord. You have been chosen to be His people for Himself, you have been chosen to be a special treasure. You have been chosen above all the peoples of the earth to be a light, an example.

I was thinking, a few years ago a group of us went to a NASCAR race together. And I remember sitting there looking at all these thousands of people and I was thinking how many here has God set apart. Of all the thousands that were there, it had to only be a few. And it is an overwhelming thought.

But I also had to remember it is not because of us. It is not because of our accomplishments. There is nothing that we could do in this physical life to earn to be chosen by God.

In fact, in I Corinthians chapter 1, verse 26 and 27, most of us know. And by the way, I am using lots of verses that we already know, but they are wonderful.

**I Corinthians 1:26-27** For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty.

We are the weak. I know that I am. And He does this so we will not glory in ourselves.

There is nothing in this world. There is no power, there is no influence. We do not have anything like that. All we have is our flaws. But He still chose us.

It is really overwhelming to know how much God loves us and how dedicated He is to us. And what is interesting is that He chose us long before the foundations of the earth.

Turn to Ephesians 1, verse 3. Again, these verses, when you take them to heart, they really are overwhelming. And I apologize, it is coming out a little bit more than I thought it would actually at this moment, so please bear with me.

**Ephesians 1:3-6** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to the adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

You know, from Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, to Moses, to us today, God was preparing all this before the foundations of the world. He was working. God chose you long before you were even born.

I want to keep moving forward here. Please turn to John 15, verse 16. I hope you see a little theme here that I am doing here. The words holy and chosen.

**John 15:16** "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you."

You were chosen to be the light of the world. You were chosen to demonstrate the character of God. Maybe not before nations, but before our families, our friends, our coworkers, everyone we know that they may see God's love, God's character in action in you.

Bearing godly fruit is a visible sign of the life that you are living, rooted in your obedience to God and in your conduct toward Jesus Christ.

Are we loving?

Are we patient?

Are we kind?

Are we humble?

Are we forgiving?

Every day we should ask ourselves those questions because that is how we know that we are growing in Him, growing closer to Him.

Brethren, it is daunting. Being holy is daunting. It is a challenge. But this is what we are commanded to do. Becoming holy means a consecration to

work toward a higher standard, the standard of our Lord and Father. Sanctification is a process. Conversion is a process. And growing and overcoming is a process.

It came to my mind when I was baptized many years ago and I do not know what I was thinking at the moment. I did come out of the Pentecost Church and after I was baptized and came out of that water, I thought, I am going to feel different, you know, and I kept waiting for this feeling. And I did not feel it.

You see, God just gives us a little bit of His Spirit as we begin. He starts working with us in a very small way. Again, sanctification is a process, conversion is a process. We here are all in the process right now.

Our testing, our trials can be overwhelming at times. But our trials will make you stronger. And that is how we will proceed on to perfection.

Peter adds in I Peter 2:9, which is one of the greatest verses in the New Testament, I think.

**I Peter 2:9** But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light.

That word here given, the chosen generation, is a word that means kindred or offspring or a descendant of a particular people. I think what we see in here is that we are seeing God's promise to Abraham in action.

I just have a few more verses. Again, I am going to keep chasing the same thought.

**Titus 2:11-14** For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of

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our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

Again, think of this. From before the foundation of the earth, God knew that He was going to die for us. He knew that He was going to die a horrible, horrible death that He may purchase you so He could make you holy. It is humbling when you meditate on this thought.

The other day, I was watching YouTube and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir video came up. And they were singing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Their arrangement is quite moving, and it really is amazing. And I sat there and listened to it over and over, and I just kept playing it over and over again. I cannot tell you how many times I played it. And I would always wait patiently for them to get to the third verse of this song.

Now, all the verses are wonderful, but when they got to the third verse, they started singing very, very softly. And the words here are beautiful, very extra special to me.

That verse says, "In the beauty of the autumn, Christ was born across the sea, with a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me. As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free, while God is marching on."

I was telling Richard about this a few days ago as I was preparing this sermon. And he goes, "You know, we changed the words in our hymnal. We changed the words from dies to lives. Christ lives to make us holy."

You know, that is actually right. Christ's death made it possible for us to be holy. But it is His life, it is His interaction with you and I that helps us to actually become holy. He has invested in us. We are a treasure to Him. And He is going to do whatever it takes to make us holy.

He wants us to be blameless before God, to be complete in perfect righteousness.

You know, as we live, we will not be there until He changes us. But He wants us to grow, and to get closer and closer and closer.

**I Peter 1:13-15** Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

I think it is interesting this phrase in the first verse here. It says, "gird up the loins of your mind." I was really curious on what this means. In Bible times, they wore tunics and this was basically a robe that was probably a one-piece garment that basically went down to their ankles, similar to a very, very long shirt. And with the length of these tunics, it would be very hard for them to move quickly because of the restraints.

And so the phrase "gird up your loins" refers to a special way that they would tie the tunic up, converting it basically to a shorter dress, you might say, or a shorter robe. But what it did, it freed up the legs so it could prepare them if they want to work, they want to travel, or even go into battle. The wearer, though, was preparing themselves for action of one type or another.

Peter is saying, be prepared both mentally and spiritually for action or challenges that come your way, because they are coming. It means to focus your thoughts, eliminating distractions, and readying yourself for a spiritual challenge and be prepared for any resistance against temptation.

That is why it says, "Be holy, for I am holy."

I want to finish in II Peter chapter 1, verse 10. And I am going to read this from the Amplified Version.

**II Peter 1:10** (AMP) Therefore, believers, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you [be sure that your behavior reflects and confirms your relationship with God]; for by doing these things [actively developing these virtues], you will never stumble [in your spiritual growth and will live a life that leads others away from sin].