

Deuteronomy (Part 7)

Holiness

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We are going to begin this sermon by turning to Romans 5.

Romans 5:9-10 Much more then, having now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

I thought it interesting when reviewing the subjects of my sermons given during the Feast, that the final one was on the faithfulness of God. Well, I in no way really attempted to directly do that at all, to have this sermon here, this sermon here, and this sermon there. It was just subjects that came to mind as I was preparing them, and I just put them in that order almost, I guess from my point of view, haphazardly. But I think that they were actually put in that order by the Great God.

These scriptures in Romans 5:9-10 clearly reinforce the faithfulness of God in a New Testament setting. We are saved by His constantly being available to us for forgiving and empowerment, or enabling, or gifts—whatever term that you might want to use.

Despite the difficulty of our trials, the length of time that we spend striving with the best of intentions and the greatest of efforts to do things right, we still fail miserably from time to time, and need whatever it is that God provides so that we can make it to the Promised Land—the Kingdom of God.

Even though we have a part, salvation—from our calling to our resurrection into the Kingdom of God—is truly a work of God's grace through His faithfulness to His promise to Abraham, His faithfulness to the covenant, and His faithfulness in providing us with our needs.

Deuteronomy, when combined with Exodus and Numbers, shows this from an Old Testament setting. Protestant and Catholic theologians clearly see this, and they seem to emphasize this to their church members. However, there is a downside to this in that it tends to reinforce the "once saved, always saved" doctrine.

The fruit of this emphasis is that the members over-emphasize grace, and then fail to

fulfill their responsibilities contained within the doctrine of sanctification. In other words, *works* are de-emphasized. Overcoming is de-emphasized. Growing and going onto perfection are de-emphasized, and in many cases outright neglected. In the Old Testament, this same doctrine—sanctification—is known as *holiness*. They are one and the same.

We are going to go back to the book of Deuteronomy, as we get our start here, to a chapter and a verse that we read a number of times during the Feast.

Deuteronomy 7:6 For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.

The first five verses of Deuteronomy 7 are commands, that if they are obeyed, will protect the holiness of Israel. You will notice that word "for." It is a conjunction leading to the reason why the first five verses were given; thus holiness in Deuteronomy is introduced rather abruptly through a series of commands to address something that without care can very easily be taken for granted, as this world's Christianity has done. This world's Christianity has taken sanctification for granted, or holiness for granted, because it is over-emphasizing God's faithfulness as shown through God's grace. It is almost as if He is going to save us *regardless* of what we do.

In this verse Israel is reminded that they are set apart. They are different because they exclusively belong to God. That can be said of no other people than those that God called. Their holiness was completely and totally His achievement when He separated them from the dominion of Egypt and took them into the wilderness, even dividing the Red Sea in order to achieve it. All they did was yield to the point of following Moses out.

They yielded to the point of keeping Passover. They got scared whenever they got to the Red Sea and saw Satan in the person of the Pharaoh coming after them, and they wanted to go back, scatter, but they got across the water and were protected because of God's grace. He was faithful to follow through with what He said that He was going to do through His servant Moses. They became holy in that sense, solely virtually on the work of God.

In relation to God, anything considered holy is set apart for a distinctive purpose and is not to be used for any less worthy purposes. The priests were set apart to serve God in and about the Temple. That was their responsibility. The Sabbath is holy because God set it apart for worship and for fellowship with Him and His other children. The sacrifices

are holy because they were to be used exclusively in the worship of God. Whether it is Israel the nation, or God's church consisting of His regenerated children, each and every one is *personally* set apart by God for His use.

Recognizing God's exclusive claim on our lives is *very* important to fulfilling God's purpose in our lives. This is a **major** problem that we so frequently minimize or forget. We have been set apart for *God's* purpose. In a sense, that is it! We are holy to fulfill God's purpose, and are really, when we understand it, to be used for nothing else, just like the Sabbath is not to be used for work. The sacrifices are not to be made to anybody except God, and the priests were not to work anywhere except in behalf of God at the Temple.

It is helpful to understand that anybody can and does make things holy, or sanctified, when one only considers the basic use of either the Hebrew or the Greek words. Now you too set things apart for special use. Everybody does this. It does not matter whether it is dishes that you use only on a certain day, or that you use only when there is company. The same can be said for silverware, or linens, or tools, or vehicles, or machinery, or clothing. The list can be almost endless, and you are in effect doing exactly in principle what God did with us, so this is not at all uncommon. These things that you set apart become *holy* to you, and for your purpose, and so you limit your use of these things to the purpose for which you set it apart.

God has done exactly the same thing with us, so this is not at all unusual. He set us apart to fulfill the purpose that He has created the earth for, and He created us for, and that purpose is to represent Him, as we will see. These holy things are things that one uses at a certain time and in certain ways.

You might notice here in Deuteronomy that we are not *urged* to *become* holy. Notice it again: "For you *are* a holy people." He did not say, "become holy." We are *already* holy. Now they, or we, are already holy because God set us apart. But they were not holy as God is holy, because holiness actually has two parts to it. The other part is generally more specifically addressed in the New Testament doctrine of sanctification. This is because holiness not only implies being distinctive because one is set apart, it also implies *being different* as God is different. That is the important part.

Just setting something apart makes it different from other things that might be similar. You might set apart two towels. The one is different because it is used *only* on special occasions under certain conditions, and the use of it is very limited by *your* purpose, whereas the other one is for common usage.

Holiness, as it is used in the Bible in relation to God, not only implies being distinctive because one is set apart, it also implies being different as God is different, and He is high above us in His holiness. His holiness is said in the Bible to be "*beautiful*." That is an interesting term. His holiness is *clean*, and His holiness is transcendently pure. It is this that we are to strive for in the doctrine of sanctification.

Sanctification includes going on in our lives to think, say, have attitudes, and *do* as God does. It is described in another way as to go on, to grow, to be in the image of God. Thus one commentator says that holiness not only implies being "cut out" and separated as one would a cow from a herd, but it also implies being "a cut above." We all know what that means. It means better than, superior to, something to be treasured, and that is the way it is with God. Every attribute of God is holy, transcendently above, and we are to *become* holy, because God is holy.

Hebrews 10:14 For by one offering He [Christ] has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

In one way this is a very confusing verse. It can be very misleading because of the way the translators of the *King James Version* chose to word it. But when it is properly understood, it clearly shows that sanctification is a process, showing that it has two stages to it. Thus we are not only holy, but at one and the same time we are *becoming* holy. We're going to spend a bit of time on this verse.

This translation, as it appears in the *King James*, seems to give the appearance that once one is saved one is already perfect. Is that not the way it appears? "For by one offering, [See, we are saved by the blood of Christ, or cleansed by the blood of Christ], He has perfected forever." Does it not seem as though once you come under the blood of Christ that you are perfected, and if you are perfected, are you not saved? It certainly looks that way.

The conclusion that many in their ignorance have reached is that the saved person therefore really has no responsibility to grow and overcome. Why do it? You are already saved. But, as we are going to see, the translators left out one word in their translation. It should be translated: "He has perfected forever them that are *being* saved. That one word "being" makes a big difference. It shows, does it not, that they are not already there, but rather on their *way* there. Now who are the "they"? It is the *perfected ones* that are on their way, but they are not there *yet*.

We can compare this to the example and type that is in the leaving of Egypt, as shown

by the Israelites. They were saved from Egypt once they got through the Red Sea. They had been baptized, Paul says in I Corinthians 10, in the sea, and when they got on the other shore, they were delivered. I am just changing the words around to other words that are synonymous with that word "saved." They were delivered. They were redeemed. They were free, but they were not to the Promised Land yet, were they? That stage of the journey had not even begun yet. All they were was camped beside the safe side of the Red Sea into which they were baptized. This statement clearly shows that Christ's creation in us has two stages. He both perfects *and* sanctifies us. One aspect is past and complete, and another aspect is running on continuously, and unfinished.

In the New Testament we sometimes see the English word "perfect" in reference to the Christian, or to the saints. We have been told many times that this word "perfect" does not mean "without flaw," but rather it does mean mature, or full grown, in contrast to being "babes in Christ." Even that begins to show you something. Babes do not stay babes, do they? They are born, but from that time on they continue to grow, but they grow *outside* the safety of the womb and now have to live life on the outside world, as it were, and so the process of growth has simply taken another stage once they are born. Is that not correct? It is that simple. But while they were *being* born, they were perfect to that point in time in development. They had reached a stage where they were now prepared to live outside the womb.

We begin to see that the word "perfect" in the New Testament does not mean "without flaw," but rather it means that they come to a certain level of development. The process was continuing on. They came to a certain level of development that was necessary, right, and good in God's eyes—He was pleased with what was occurring—but it was not ended. The process of growth had only reached a certain stage.

This usage of the word "perfect"—of being mature, or full grown, in contrast to being babes—is a correct application of that word in those contexts. But here in Hebrews 10, in this context, that Greek word's more literal meaning should be understood. Its more literal meaning is *that which has reached its end*.

Consider this in terms of the birth of a baby. It had reached the end of being a fetus. Right? And even while it was in the womb, it had reached another end. It was no longer an embryo, but it became a fetus; and then when it was born, it had reached the end—that which was intended by God—and now was ready for another stage. Growth continued, but when it came forth from the womb it was *perfect* to that point, to be able to handle the rigors of birth, and the rigors of life outside the womb, but it was far from finished.

Perhaps this definition will help you understand how "perfect" is being used in verse 14: "That which has reached what it was meant to be." That is clear. When a baby comes forth from the womb, it has reached that which was intended to be so that it was prepared to live in the world. Now you are beginning to see the parallel here. When we come under the blood of Christ, we are perfect. We have reached that which was intended to be, but the process continues.

We are going to drop back now to verse 10, and we will pick up a bit more of the context here.

Hebrews 10:10 By that will have been sanctified [set apart] through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Now what is the "once for all" referring to?

Hebrews 10:11-13 And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man [Christ], after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till his enemies are made His footstool.

Hebrews 10:15-18 But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them," then He adds, "Their sins and lawless deeds I will remember no more." Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.

The subject of verse 14 must be seen in relation to the work of Christ as High Priest and as the offering for sin, and our access to the Father and Son through the Son's sacrifice.

We have reached what we are meant to be, because through His sacrifice we now have access to the Father, we have made the New Covenant, and we now have communion with Them. We are involved in a relationship with Them, and have received the privileges and duties that come with these blessings. But sanctification is not over with. Only the initial stage has been made available to us. Because of these things, we are therefore *holy*—set apart—and that part of Christ's work is accomplished for us. And not only that, this sacrifice is of such magnificent quality it has achieved this by only having

to be done *once* for all time forever for all eternity, performing forever the same function for all the called who choose to yield to God. The pieces of this are beginning to come together.

Think of it this way: Suppose you had a potion of some kind that, if you poured it into a river, it would from that spot forth purify the water wherever the river went for as long as it went. Picture a river, and you are standing there on a bridge that goes over the river, and you have this vial in your hand, and you pour it into the river. Everywhere that potion goes, now it is part of the water, and the water becomes crystal clear and full of life, and it is so pure you can drink directly right out of the river. The river fills with fish, and on and on, and it just keeps right on going, purifying forever, as long as the river flows and wherever it goes.

The only difference between my illustration and this offering that Jesus Christ made, is that we are talking about the sacrifice of Jesus Christ's ability to purify those who are "the called of God" and to make them holy, and it will do this for all time, for eternity. But the verse is not saying that the purification is complete. It is only saying that the initial step of sanctification has reached what it was intended to be. It then goes on to say that it is being accomplished in those who are *being* sanctified.

The Greek term that is translated here "sanctified" is *hagiazō*, and it is written in the future tense, indicating a process—a work of making holy in the character sense—in progress. In other words, you come up to the present where it says there, "He has perfected forever," but then Paul quickly changes the tense. By the time you get to the word *hagiazō*, it is now future, demanding the understanding of a process, and the insertion of the word "being," because the sanctification that he is talking about there is something that is always off in the distance in a person's life. Even as in that river that I described, there is more always beyond where the present is.

Sanctification—holiness—comes in two parts. One is accomplished and opens up a relationship with God, and it is perfect to that point. But the second stage of becoming like God has yet to be completed, and it is a process that goes on and on into the future as long as God will permit it.

Much of the world has a very serious misconception of the word "saint" in the Bible, and this misconception can be laid right at the feet of the Catholic Church. As one Protestant author said, "'Saint' has nothing to do with character." That is correct! It has nothing to do with character. It has everything to do with *position* in relation to God. A saint is merely a called-out one who has repented and accepted the blood of Jesus Christ, and has therefore been set apart from the rest of mankind. A saint is merely a "set-apart

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one" at this time, but the purpose of being set apart is that he becomes holy in *reality*, not merely in legal standing or position before God. It is then, at that point, that we are becoming sanctified, as it appears here in Hebrews 10:14.

Now listen to these translations.

The New American Standard Bible:

Hebrews 10:14 "For as by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified."

Now that sounds very similar to the *King James Version*; however it has a marginal reference which says: "Being sanctified, rather than merely sanctified, thus indicating a process not yet brought to perfection."

In other words, the translators of the *New American Standard Bible* recognize that even their own translation was not really correct, and so after it was done they inserted the marginal reference so that it would read like this: "For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are *being* sanctified."

Listen now to what my *New International Version* says of that verse.

The New International Version:

Hebrews 10:14 "Because, by one sacrifice, He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."

How about that!

The Paraphrased Version:

Hebrews 10:14 "For by that one offering He has made forever perfect in the sight of God all those whom He is *making* holy."

This verse of course does not stand alone. There are other scriptures that show the same sense, the same usage in other places. We are going to turn now to I Corinthians 1.

I Corinthians 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

The Greek in this verse has the same sense that it does in Hebrews 10:14, and so what we have here is another scripture in which the proper tense of the verbs was not followed by the translators of the *King James Version*. The *NIV* translates it properly. "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are *perishing*; [It is something in process.] but to us who are *being* saved [something in process] it is the power of God." Again it shows that even "perishing," as well as "sanctification," is a work in process. It has to be that way because "perishing" is not a static condition, because somewhere down the road the person may repent, and so in the way that they are going, the process is continuing in that direction. They are on their way to death in the same sense those who are being saved have reached a point of growth, but more growth to being a fully mature person is in process, and so they are *being* taken toward that point.

Let us go Philippians 3. I think this scripture very clearly shows the sense of this. Now here is the correct approach to holiness, or sanctification, even though the word does not appear here.

Philippians 3:12-15 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected [But then you see he called people who were mere "babes in Christ" *perfect*, but you understand that they were perfect only to a certain point.]; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as be mature, .

..

He just said in verse 12 that he was not perfect! Are you beginning to see the usage of this word? Perfection is not static. "Perfection" in the biblical sense is something that is moving.

Philippians 3:15 . . . have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

You see, revelation is necessary in the future so that we can grow to different points.

Philippians 3:16 Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

Now I am going to read this out of the *New International Version* again. Just listen to this, because it is made very clear.

The New International Version:

Philippians 3:12 "Not that I have already attained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Jesus Christ took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it, but one thing I do, forgetting what is behind, and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things, and if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Don't slide backwards. Keep on going forward."

So again, holiness, or sanctification, clearly has two stages to it, and with that last sentence, "Only let us live up to what we have already attained," is the one that is ringing in Paul's mind, urging us to go forward.

With that thought in mind—"Don't slide back"—let us go to Deuteronomy 7. What have we already attained? One thing is sure. We have attained the first stage of holiness because we have yielded to God's calling. We have accepted His call. We have repented of our sins, and we have accepted the blood of Jesus Christ. Because we are under that blood, we have had the righteousness of Christ applied to us, and now we have access to the Father *and* to the Son in order to begin and to carry on a relationship.

Deuteronomy 7:1-5 When the LOORD your God shall bring you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you, and when the LOORD your God shall deliver them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no

covenant with them nor show mercy to them. Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn away your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly. But thus shall you deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire.

I read this scripture because I want us to look at the obligation that Israel came under as a **result** of their holiness. This leads right into verse 6 which says "For," indicating the "*why*" of the stipulation that God just made in verses 1 through 5. These are *very* stern judgments that the people are to carry out. **Stern**. I mean it. It is not something for the squeamish.

You might recall that in Genesis 15:16, when God was making this prophecy regarding Abraham's children that they would go to a place where they would be foreigners and strangers, and actually become enslaved by these people, He said that they would not come out until four generations. And then He said, "Because the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." By the time we get to Deuteronomy 7:1-5, the iniquity of the Amorites is now full, and God expected Israel to carry out their extermination. That was part of the obligation that holiness imposed upon them.

We think it is pretty tough to overcome, do we not? They literally had to kill everybody—men, women, children. God said, "Do not spare. Kill them all." But God does not think in the same way that we do. These judgments that He wants Israel to carry out on them is because they are holy. They are holy judgments made on the basis of love. Everything that God does flows from a nature of love, and these judgments are made on the basis of the Canaanites' horrible conduct against their fellow man and against the God of heaven as well. In addition, we are going to begin to see that the judgment was made for God's purpose, because the Canaanites were going to be against God's purpose.

The Canaanite religion was not only false, it was downright immoral. The practice of cult prostitution was a major feature of it. They sacrificed children in the fire. Those were two major features of it. I am sure that these people were spiritually, morally, and ethically perverted to an extreme that we modern Israelitish countries are just now beginning to approach.

There is a second symbolic and spiritual reason that these commands are so stringently

required. The people of the land can symbolically represent either two "destructive-to-holiness" factors. The people of the land can represent the demons whose territory is now being given over to us, or they can represent indwelling sin in each of us individually. In either case, we are to overcome and get rid of them. Sometimes doing this for ourselves can require significant sacrificial action on our part to overcome them—doing things that we do not want to do, that we may shrink from, and feel is abhorrent.

Can we understand that God does not want us to be tolerant toward demons, or tolerant toward indwelling sin? Can we understand why God does not want us marrying people outside of the church, as is addressed here? Do not parents sometimes tell their children, "I don't want you playing with so-and-so down the street because they do such and such"? We parents do that because we do not want those children to be an influence on *our* children. Is that not correct? You bet it is! That approach to childrearing is not wrong, because God shows that He does the same thing. We think God is being unfair when somebody out *there* looks attractive to us, but brethren, they just do not look at things the way we do. Marriage today is difficult enough without the ever-present influence of one right in the house who does not have the same perspectives on life.

These judgments given here in Deuteronomy 7 illustrate the sharpness of the division that God sees between the world, as represented by the Canaanites, and holiness, as He expects of us. There is a tendency in all of us to be tolerant, but during this age that we live in, intolerance toward sin is held to be evil by the world, and if one says homosexuality is wrong, *he* is the one who is held in derision by the world. This sort of intolerance had a solid beginning in the '60s, and is still rising in a crescendo. It began to be said that there were no absolutes, and that people ought to be free to do their own thing, and that the church, or society, or the government has no right to impose values of expected conduct.

Now look at where it has led in the last thirty or forty years. Today we have children—high school kids—packing guns and blowing one another away. AIDS is still spreading in quantum leaps because people will not change their conduct. The family structure is in disarray. Entertainment is so sexually violent and New-Age oriented, it is getting very difficult to find something positive and upbuilding to watch. Public education is losing its effectiveness. The economy is going into the tank again as governmental, corporate, and personal debt rises to alarming heights.

The government is in the hands of people who want to control your life as no other government in the history of America has ever thought of, let alone attempted. This thing that happened on September 11 has opened the floodgates on this, because they

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have almost now *free course* to peek into every crack and crevice of your life. In the name of "*security*" they are "doing you a favor" while they hem in your liberties. Government always does that.

The people are on the verge of running wild because we have, as a nation, become so tolerant, lacking in *moral* leadership. In these last several generations, parents have become increasingly tolerant in their childrearing procedures. "Boomer" parents have taught their children the immoral practices of their youth in the '60s. Each generation has become increasingly permissive, and unless something turns people around, I fear what the present elementary school generation is going to be like when they reach their teen years.

Why am I so concerned about childrearing within the subject of holiness? Because holiness laws are a very distinct portion of our Father God's rearing of us, and childrearing is an important theme in the book of Deuteronomy. Did you hear what I am saying? ***The holiness laws are God's childrearing laws.*** Even as human children become subject to what their parents are doing in rearing them, so *we*, because God has chosen to become our Father and make us holy, have become subject to *His* laws. His laws, His commands, have become obligatory. If God were not our Father they would not be obligatory, because this world's methods would be, and we would continue conforming to those procedures.

Let me show you something interesting in the book of Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 14:1 You are the children of the LORD your God.

Now what is going to be said is said because we are God's children, because we are holy.

Deuteronomy 14:1 You shall not cut yourselves, nor shave the front of your head for the dead.

That is what they do out in the world. Maybe this does not have a direct application today as it did then, but the principle does. Verse 2 gives the reason.

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.

And then after that come the food laws. Why do these apply to us? Because we are holy.

Deuteronomy 26:16-19 This day the LOORD your God commands you to observe these statutes and judgments; therefore you shall be careful to observe them with all your heart and with all your soul. Today you have proclaimed the LOORD to be your God, and that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments, and that you will obey His voice. Also the LOORD has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He promised you, that you should keep all His commandments.

Did you see that? We are to keep His commandments *because* we are His children. We are to keep His commandments *because* we are holy.

Deuteronomy 28:9 The LOORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LOORD your God, and walk in His ways.

Here He advances it to *becoming* holy. That is the sense there. They were already holy, but it shows here that keeping the commandments is essential to this.

In these scriptures that I have shown you, they are just a small example. In every case we are to keep His commandments because we are a holy people, or because we are His children. The purpose is so that we *remain* a holy people, and to mature. Remember, Paul said "Don't slip backwards from what you have already attained." "Keep going forward," he said. "I press toward the mark of the high calling in Christ Jesus."

Again, all this is showing that sanctification is a process, and that there are at least two stages within it. God does not want us conformed to this world because it contaminates our spiritual and moral purity, and it destroys our holiness. If we do not keep His laws, we will not then be distinctive, and there will be no witness. We will not grow and overcome and come away from the damage done to us from while we were still in this world and captive to Satan.

I want you to see how far reaching this is by going to Deuteronomy 23.

Deuteronomy 23:12-14 Also you shall have a place outside the camp, where you may go out; and you shall have an implement among your equipment, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and turn and cover your refuse. For the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and give up your enemies over to you; therefore your camp shall be holy, that He may see no unclean thing among you, and turn away from you.

What significance there is in this simple regulation! It begins with a simple statement that they were to relieve themselves outside the camp. At first it seems merely to be a sanitation law, but then it goes on in verse 14 to the real reason. That is because God walks in the midst of the camp and He does not want to step on any refuse. You understand that He is talking here as if He was a man. We know very well that He would not step on any, but He is making a point that He does not want to step on anything that is unclean.

Recall that in Exodus 3 He told Moses that he was standing on holy ground. This is "the burning bush" incident. The ground was holy because God walked on it too, and that was the only thing that really made it holy in that sense. God wanted the people of the land out of the land because they were defiling it through their idolatry and all the other immoralities that flowed from that sin. Far more serious than that is the fact that God *walked* in the midst of Israel, and if He expected that of them, how much cleanliness does He expect from you and me? Now we are beginning to get to the real point of this law.

Go now to Numbers 5 and we will just use this as an example.

Numbers 5:1-3 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Command the children of Israel that they put out of the camp every leper, and everyone that has a discharge, and whoever becomes defiled by a corpse. [All ceremonially unclean people were to be put out of the camp.] You shall put out both male and female outside the camp, that they may not defile their camps in the midst of which I dwell.

God was looking out for His *own* cleanliness as well as Israel's cleanliness.

Numbers 5:4 And the children of Israel did so, and put them outside the camp; as the LORD spoke to Moses, so the children of Israel did.

There are not many places where similar statements are made. What becomes clear when all these are taken together is that God very definitely sees the physical cleanliness, ritual cleanliness, and moral cleanliness as all related within *holiness*. This leads to a conclusion: "Cleanliness *is* next to godliness." It is an aspect of godliness, and right up there with cleanliness is orderliness. God is not a disorganized scatterbrain, and He does not want His children to be that way either.

But we still have not reached the real reason why cleanliness is so important. Cleanliness everywhere. God is clean. If you will remember, at the very beginning of this sermon I said that everything about the Holy God is that He is a "cut above." He is clean. He is pure in every aspect of all of His attributes.

II Corinthians 6:11-18 O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections. Now in return for the same, (I speak as to children,) you also be open. Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them, and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

II Corinthians 7:1 Therefore having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Did you notice how similar the context here in II Corinthians 6 is to Deuteronomy 7:1-5, by stressing things to avoid? We are to avoid marriage with unbelievers, and close fellowship with unbelievers, and idolatry. That is part of how to avoid spiritual contamination. Isaiah said in Isaiah 52—"Be clean, you that bear the vessels of the Lord." But why? Did you notice that He said He will not only walk among them, but also dwell *in* them?

The New Covenant steps up the seriousness of our calling in that God not only dwells

among us as He did with Israel, but He also lives *in* us. This steps up the seriousness of cleanliness a tremendous step. He is saying that He does not want *His* holiness defiled by us dragging Him in and through our sins. This is far more serious indeed than Him merely stepping on human waste thoughtlessly left in His path. Did you notice in verse 17 that He said there "to not even touch the unclean"?

This thought that Paul used in II Corinthians 6 is taken from many places in the holiness laws, because they show that contamination passes to that which is clean, but cleanliness does not pass to that which is contaminated. He warns of this because the pull to tempt ourselves into sin is so strong. Therefore Paul says that we are to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness, *perfecting* holiness. That is so clear that holiness is a process. John says, "Everyone who has this hope purifies himself, even as He [Christ] is pure."

James 1:27 Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

In Deuteronomy 7, the Canaanite world was the world that they were supposed to get rid of in order to keep themselves unspotted from the world. Anyone who understands holiness and sanctification, and understands human nature, knows that salvation must be by grace. It *has* to be, because we fall so far short of living up to the kind of spiritual, moral, ethical, and in some cases even physical cleanliness that the holiness laws require of us.

In summary, the order to execute the inhabitants of the land was given not merely to remove the powerful influence of the Canaanites' way of life from before the Israelites, but rather to instruct *us* of the far more serious obligation to stay clear of the influences of the world as much as lies within us. In one sense it is more difficult for us in this church era, because there is no way to completely extricate ourselves from the influence of the world.

We are not to become monks isolated from our cultures, or there will be no witness, and that responsibility cannot be met. For us then it becomes a matter of controlling ourselves, of self-government, to live out our lives making good choices regarding how to live it. With God's Spirit and grace enabling us, it can be done to His satisfaction. I am not saying though that it will be done without flaw.

At the same time, Deuteronomy 7 also represents indwelling sin which can also be

Deuteronomy (Part 7) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

successfully overcome, but it requires a great deal of sacrifice from time to time when temptations arise, or the possibility of just going along with the old engraved habits presenting themselves.

In Hebrews 12:1 we get this encouragement and admonition from the apostle Paul.

Hebrews 12:1-4 Therefore we also, since are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.

One of the major lessons here is that others, with God's help, have done it, and so can we. God is not asking the impossible, regardless of how stern it seems to be to us, perhaps times without end, in a process of sanctification. But with the combination of His grace and His Spirit, it can be done.

In short, we are made holy by being put legally into the first stage of holiness, given God's Spirit and His laws which are a guide to His way of life in order that the second stage of holiness, or sanctification, can take place, and the image of God be created in us, thus preparing us for entrance into the Kingdom of God.