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Can you ever be holy?

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CORE VERSES

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."

1 Peter 1:15-16

When Peter wrote these verses, he wanted us to understand two important ideas. First, God is holy. He is the very definition of purity and perfection. Second, it's possible for us to be holy.

While our efforts can never accomplish this, God has made a way for us to return to Him by grace through faith in Jesus.

READ HEBREWS 9:18-28.

When God made humans in the beginning, He created us perfect. In that perfect state, Adam and Eve enjoyed an ongoing, loving relationship with Him in the garden. They were whole and complete, lacking nothing (Genesis 1). It must have been amazing!

But when they sinned, God had to separate Himself from them, allowing pain and death to enter the world (Genesis 3). He wasn't simply punishing them for rejecting Him. He did it because He loved them. God in His very nature and presence is holy and perfect. Much like our body's defense systems respond to an illness, the holiness and purity of God's presence would have reacted aggressively to sin (Isaiah 6:1-5). If their sin came near God's perfection, it would have meant destruction for Adam and Eve. So God distanced Himself from them because He loved them in spite of their rejection.

Over time, God revealed parts of His plan to rescue us by offering agreements to faithful people like Noah and Abraham (Genesis 9:1-17; 15). These agreements were called covenants. They were legal and binding for both God and the person to whom He offered them.

When God made a covenant with Moses and the children of Israel, it had some specific expectations (Exodus 19-20). In fact, it included a whole list of things to do and not to do (like the famous Ten Commandments). In return, God promised to take care of His people.

However, God knew the people of Israel would continue sinning. So He provided a temporary solution. He instituted a system of sacrifices (Leviticus 16). He made it clear that the only way to pay for the mistakes of their sin was for them to shed the blood of an animal in sacrifice (Leviticus 17:11). However, this never really fixed the sin problem (Hebrews 9:1-10).

So how would humans ever be holy enough to get back to God's amazing presence if these sacrifices didn't cut it? The only way to finally deal with all of humanity's sin was for a perfect sacrifice to be made (Hebrews 9:11-14). One perfect sacrifice would fix everything forever. But no one had ever been perfect. Who could possibly rescue us?

When we had exhausted all attempts to rescue ourselves, God stepped in and did the one thing nobody ever expected: He sent His one and only Son to be our perfect sacrifice and save us (John 3:16)!

Jesus lived a perfect life. He never sinned (Hebrews 4:15)! After three years of ministry, teaching and proclaiming the kingdom of God, Jesus was betrayed, tortured, and crucified. His death was not for His own sins since He never did anything wrong (1 Peter 2:24). Instead, His death served as the perfect sacrifice for the sin of all humanity (Hebrews 9:24-26). One death saved everybody!

However, we couldn't share in Jesus' holiness and return to our relationship with God if Jesus stayed dead (Romans 6:9-11). So God raised Him from the dead, proving once and for all that the effects of sin and death no longer had power over Him (1 Peter 3:18). And to all of the people who place their faith in Jesus' one-time, perfect sacrifice, God has counted Jesus' death as payment for their sins (Romans 3:24-26). They are justified before God so that now God acts "just-as-if-I'd" never sinned (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Jesus paid it all! You don't have to be separated from God by your sin anymore. You can be holy once again, not because of any actions or works on your part, but because of the perfect, sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross. You don't need to do anything further to experience the eternal life that God has planned for you.

CORE CONCEPTS

Mankind was created to be holy.

HOLINESS:

To be set apart for God's purposes and to begin to live accordingly

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE OVER THE NEXT TWO DAYS

- » BASED ON DESCRIPTIONS FOUND IN THE SCRIPTURES, HOW WOULD YOU ENVISION BEING IN GOD'S PRESENCE?
- » HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH?
- » WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS ON YOUR BEHAVIOR OF HOLINESS IN YOUR LIFE?
- » WRITE YOUR OWN QUESTION: