

## JUNE 26: **AUDIO-VIDEO** SEEKING AFTER HOLINESS

What do the Words Holy, Holiness, or Holy Life Bring to Mind? *Many envision Someone or a Church that is Old-Fashioned, Rigid, Legalistic, and Judgmental.* When I first Became a Christian that was My Understanding of Holiness. The Concept of Holiness is Woven throughout the Bible and Central to the Christian Faith! In Leviticus 19:2 God says, *Be Holy because I am Holy*". And More than 2-dozen times in the New Testament God's People are Described as Holy.

A Nationwide Survey Conducted by The Barna Group Indicates that Most Adults Remain Confused, if Not Daunted, by the Concept of Holiness...Pressed to describe what it means to be holy, adults gave a wide range of answers. The most common reply 21% was "I Don't Know". 19% said, "Being Christ-like" 18% said, Making faith your top priority in life 12%. Was Living a pure or sinless lifestyle 10% said, Having a good attitude about people and life. Focusing completely on God and Being Guided by the Holy Spirit were each 9%. Being born again was 8%. Godly character 7%. Exhibiting a Moral Lifestyle and Accepting and Practicing Biblical Truth were each 5%.

- However...*God's Word Presents A far Different Picture, Where a Holy Life is Grace Filled, Joyful, Attractive, Deeply Satisfying—and God's Chief Goal for His children.*
- Holiness is Definitely Not Fashionable in America's Church Today. SO...*How has Something so Central to Authentic Christian Life Become So Neglected?* John Stott suggests that Holiness "has been Replaced by an Emphasis on Experience". Outward Abilities VS Total Surrender To God!
- KEY: Holiness is Christlikeness, and Christlikeness is God's Eternal Purpose for US.

*Today We Take a Close Look at What Holiness Is. Why Holiness Is Important. And How We Attain Holy Lives that Please God!* To Understand Personal Holiness...We Begin with Looking at "God's Holiness".

- When Referring to God...The Word Holiness Means "SEPARATE"!
- Holiness Stresses God's Separateness and Transcendence Over His Creation...His Sovereign Power Within it...And His Moral Perfection in Relating to it. Nothing in the Universe is Like God. He is Unique, Eternal, Omniscient, Omnipotent, Lifted Up and Holy!*Totally Separate From His Creation!*
- *Each of Us Along with All of Creation are Dependent on Him for Our Moment-by-Moment Existence.*
- There is NO Evil or Moral Flaw in God's Character; these are completely Antithetical to His Nature. Holiness is the most fundamental and dominant characteristic of God.
- Exodus 15:11 *"Who Among the gods is Like You, Lord? Who is like you—Majestic in Holiness, Awesome in Glory, Working Wonders?"*
- *In God's Word We See that God's Holiness Evokes Awe, Fear, and "Conviction of Sin" in human beings. The Prophet Isaiah Describes his Encounter with God:*

Isaiah 6:1–5 *"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." 4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. 5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."*

John's Encounter with the Ascended Christ in His blazing Holiness had a Similar Effect: Rev. 1:13–15,17 *"13 and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man,[a] dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. 15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters." 17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last."*

How Does God's Holiness Relate to Us Today? There are 2 Aspects to Holiness in God's People. The First is Being Delivered from Spiritual Death unto Spiritual Life in God's Kingdom or New Birth. SALVATION by Receiving the FREE Gift God Provided through the Death, Burial and Resurrection of His Son Jesus.

**The Second, Is to be Our Primary Focus...Separation from Sin unto Holy Living.** All Throughout Scripture, Paul Continually Urges Believers to Pursue Holiness:

- **Ephesians. 1:3–4** “3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.”
- **Romans 12:1** “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”
- **2 Corinthians 7:1** “Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

The Apostle Peter Emphasizes Holiness as Well 1 Peter 1:13-16 “Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. 14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”

- Holiness is a High Priority with Peter. He includes the Entire Church When he says: 1 Pet. 2:9 “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a Holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light”.

Here’s Why We are to be Holy: God’s Goal is to Restore His Image in Our Lives and Conform Us to the Likeness of His Son, who is the firstborn of many brothers (Rom. 8:29). In Genesis Before the Fall into Sin...We See the Holiness God Intended for US.

- Gen 1:26a “Then God Said Let Us Make God in Our Image, in Our Likeness”
- God is HOLY...That Was His Plan for All Mankind...To Make Us in His Likeness!
- In Ephesians 4:22-24 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness..

As We Pursue Holiness—We Become More Like Christ. *Which Brings Glory to God as others see Christ in Our Lives. It also Prepares Us to Live with Him in the World to Come.*

- These Passages Make Clear that Holiness Is Essential...Holiness Is NOT Optional!
- Holiness focuses on Our Separation from Sin and Consecration to a Holy God.
- Hebrews 12:14 says we are to “Strive for Peace with Everyone, and for the Holiness Without which No One Will See the Lord”.
- Sadly, Many Believers Are Unaware of the Necessity to Strive for Personal Holiness.
- I say Necessity NOT in the Sense of Doing Works to Earn Salvation...*But in the Sense of Living to Please and Glorify the God Who Created and Loves Us.*
- Paul, the Apostle of Grace, Emphasizes the Necessity of Holiness when he Reproves some in the Church in Corinth, which was the Most Immoral City in the Roman Empire:

*1 Cor. 6:9–11 Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men[a] 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

- Before their Conversion, the Corinthians had been Enslaved to Various Sins, many of them Sexual. But they had been Set Free “by the Spirit of the Living God.”
- Some, however, were still committing sexual sin. To them, Paul says, if they continue to practice sexual immorality, adultery, and homosexuality, they will Not inherit the Kingdom of God. (NOTE: This Applies to Any of the Other Sins Mentioned as Well.)

The church in Thessalonica is also Exhorted: *1 Thess. 4:3–8 It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should learn to control your own body[a] in a way that is holy and honorable, 5 not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; 6 and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister.[b] The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. 7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. 8 Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.*

These Verses Teach Us that those who Continue to Deliberately Practice Sin will NOT Go to Heaven. The Greco-Roman world of Paul’s day was a moral cesspool. And We See this Same Spirit In America today.

We live in a Self-Seeking, God-Ignoring Culture, and it is Corrupting the Lives of Many in the Church, as it did in Paul's day. According to a new survey by Pew Research, Half of Self-Identified Christians in America say *Casual Sex Outside of Marriage* is Acceptable.

- NOTE: It would be Misleading to Assume from My Preceding Comments that Holiness is Mostly about Sexual MIS-Behavior. BECAUSE...IT IS NOT!
- We see from the Other Sins Included in the List Provided in 1 Cor. 6:9–11, Holiness Addresses EVERY AREA of OUR LIVES!
- *It would also be Dangerously Misleading—to Assume that the Pursuit of Holiness Contributes in Any Way to God's Gift of Salvation in Our Lives.*

He does Not Save Us Because We Pursue Holiness. Ephesians 2:4–5, 8 *“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—*

*The Pursuit of Holiness is About the Process of Sanctification...As we Choose to Surrender to God and Not Follow Our Natural Sinful Desires!* So the pursuit of holiness is the fruit (evidence) of God's saving grace in us, Not its Cause Eph. 2:10 *“for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them”*. UNDERSTAND: *Indifference to Holiness Raises the Question of Whether a Person has Truly Received the Grace of God and Been Born Again.*

What is to be Our Motivation for Seeking Holiness? It's NOT Fear, Guilt or Duty. These are Powerful Motivators of Behavior, to be sure, and they Drive some Believers But they are Not God's Way and Eventually Produce Bitter Fruit. The Proper Motivation for Pursuing a Holy Life is “Gratitude to God” for His Amazing Goodness, Grace, and Love Toward Us.

- *We Naturally Seek to Please the One we Love, and it is “Grateful Love for God” that Should Move Our Hearts to Please Him in All We Think, Say and Do.*
- J.I. Packer puts it this way: *Holiness Starts Inside a Person, with a Right Purpose that Seeks to Express Itself in a Right Performance. It is Not Just a Matter of the Motions We Go Through...But the Motives that Prompt Us to Go Through Them.*
- *A Holy Person's Motivating Aim, Passion, Desire, Longing, Aspiration, Goal, and Drive is to PLEASE GOD, Both by What One Does and What One Avoids Doing.*
- *The Ultimate Source of Holiness, which Alone can Make Our Discipline and Willpower Effective, is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity.*
- John Stott: *“There is No Greater Secret of Holiness than the Infilling of Him whose name is Holy.”*

Every True Child of God has Been Born Anew of the Holy Spirit and has the Spirit Dwelling Within. The Work of the Holy Spirit, as His name suggests, is to Make Us Holy.

- Rom. 8:13 says, *He Empowers Us to Overcome Sins as We Earnestly Seek to Put them to Death.*
- **KEY:** We Can Not Do it Without Him, and He Will NOT Do it Without Us.
- *In Many Christians, the Spirit is Resident...But Not Ruling.* Often...We do Not Submit and Yield to His Rule in Our Lives, Or...to His Guidance and Direction of Our Daily Attitudes and Behaviors.
- That is why Paul exhorts the Christian in Ephesians 5:18 *“Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be “Filled” with the Spirit.* The Greek verb for “Filled” is a *Present Passive Imperative*...It's A Command to Let the Spirit Fill Us Continuously.
- We are to Continuously Yield Ourselves, Be Obedient, to the Spirit's Control.

Paul gives Similar Counsel In Galatians 5:16: *“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will Not gratify the desires of the flesh”*. *When we are Filled with and Yielded to the Holy Spirit, We have His Power to Overcome the Desires of the Flesh and to Live in Holy Obedience that Pleases God.*

We're able to *“Walk by the Spirit”* (Gal. 5:25), which *produces in us the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.* This a Beautiful Portrait of the Character of Jesus—of Holiness.

Daily, as We Study Gods Word, And Obediently Submit to what It Says, God the Holy Spirit Will Fill Us and Lead Us to Holiness! Which Is the Path into the Joyful, Abundant, and Fruitful Life Jesus Offers Us.

- Pursuing Holiness Must Be Intentional! John Stott: “No One *Ever Drifted* Into Holiness”. *Again in the Scriptures we are Exhorted to Respond to God’s Free Grace by Earnestly Pursuing Holiness.*
- Such Vigorous Effort is the Fruit of God’s Grace In Us, NOT an Attempt to Earn it!

Heed Paul’s instruction **Romans 12:1** *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”*

- *Until we do this, we will Not Yield Ourselves to the Leading of the Holy Spirit and Will Not Experience His Enabling Power to Overcome Sin.*
- Once we have Surrendered Wholeheartedly to God, we can Go Forward in Holiness.

**Romans 12:2**, *“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

- 2 Corinthians 7:1 *“Cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God”.*
- **Philippians 2:12–13**: *“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”.*

J.C. Ryle says What Holiness Looks Like on a Practical Level: *“Holiness is the habit of being of one mind with God, according as we find His mind described in Scripture. It is the Habit of Agreeing in God’s Judgment, Hating what He hates, Loving what He loves, and Measuring Everything in this World by the Standard of His Word.”*

- A Good Immediate Step to take Toward Holiness is to Pray, *“Lord, Make Me as Holy as a Pardoned Sinner Can Be Made,”* Then ask God to Convict You of Any Sin Hindering Your Growth in Holiness.

Following King David’s example **Ps. 139:23–24**: *Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!*

- As We’re Convicted of Sin, We Repent, Confess, Forsake It and Accept God’s Forgiveness... *This Restores Our Fellowship with God and Our Joy...*
- **1 John 1:9** *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

Then We Ask the Holy Spirit to Fill Us Afresh as We Continue Yielding Ourselves to Him in Obedience. This is the Path of True Holiness and Joy in the Holy Spirit! However, It’s Easy to get Discouraged when We Feel like We’re Not Making Progress.

- Remember God’s Promise in **Philippians 1:6**: *“Being Confident of this, that He who Began a Good Work in You Will Carry it On to Completion Until the Day of Christ Jesus.” If God has Begun a Good Work in You Through Christ, You Can Be Confident that He Will Bring it to Completion.*

In Closing Here are 5 Ways to Pursue Holiness in a World that Minimizes Sin: 1.) Take Your Sin Seriously and Call Sin – SIN. 2.) Confess Your Sin to God and to Others. 3.) Strive to do what is Right in God’s Eyes and Obey His Word. 4.) Say “NO” to Ungodliness and Worldly Passions. 5.) Pursue Holiness Over Happiness.

**“LIFE” POINT: Growth in Holiness is a Life-Long Process To Pursue Daily!**