

The Life of Holiness

The pursuit of holiness is essential to the Christian life. “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). God commands us to be holy in all our conduct because He is holy (I Peter 1:15-16).

Being holy is a process of growth as we conform to the character and will of God. Although we are imperfect, we are growing into maturity. Throughout this process, we are holy in the sense of (1) separation from sin and (2) dedication to God. (See Romans 12:1-2; II Corinthians 6:17-7:1.)

Holiness is both inward and outward. (See I Corinthians 6:19-20; II Corinthians 7:1; I Thessalonians 5:23.) Thus, it encompasses thoughts and attitudes as well as conduct, speech, amusements, and dress. The practices of holiness separate us from the world’s value system, namely, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (I John 2:15-17).

Holiness is not a means of earning salvation but a result of salvation. We do not manufacture our own holiness, but we are partakers of God’s holiness (Hebrews 12:10). We are not saved by adherence to certain rules but by our faith relationship with Jesus Christ, which issues forth in obedience and produces spiritual fruit.

The Christian life is one of liberty, not legalism. Instead of following the external law, we are motivated internally by faith, love, and the Holy Spirit, which produce greater dedication and power than the law could impart. Christians have freedom to make personal choices in nonmoral matters, but liberty does not negate moral law or scriptural teaching. (See Romans 6:15; 14; Galatians 5:13.)

All true holiness teachings are based on Scripture—whether specific statements or valid applications of principles to contemporary situations. We learn holiness from the inspired Word of God, anointed pastors and teachers who proclaim and apply the Word, and internal promptings and convictions of the Holy Spirit.

Holiness begins in the heart, as we develop the fruit of the Spirit, put away ungodly attitudes, and embrace wholesome thoughts. (See Galatians 5:19-23; Ephesians 4:23-32; II Corinthians 10:5; Philippians 4:8.)

Holiness includes proper stewardship of the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit. We are not to become gluttonous or use substances that defile, intoxicate, or addict. (See I Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:12, 19-20.) We are to use our tongue for wholesome speech. (See James 1:26; 3:1-2; 4:11; 5:12.) We are to guard our eyes from evil. (See Psalm 101:2-3; 119:37; Matthew 6:22-23.) Because of the widespread display of evil in modern media, we must be particularly mindful of the dangers associated with television ownership, movies, and the Internet.

Holiness extends to outward appearance and dress. (See Deuteronomy 22:5; I Corinthians 11:13-16; I Timothy 2:8-10.) Biblical principles here include (1) modesty, (2) avoidance of personal ornamentation (ornamental jewelry and makeup), (3) moderation in cost, and (4) distinction between male and female in dress and hair. Women are to let their hair grow long instead of cutting it, while men are to cut their hair noticeably short.

Other important aspects of holiness include justice and mercy in personal and social relationships; the sanctity of marriage and sexual relationships only within the marriage of one man and one woman; the sanctity of human life; honesty and integrity; wholesome fellowship, unity, accountability, and mutual submission to godly authority in the body of Christ; and regulation of amusements.

Holiness is an integral part of our salvation from the power and effects of sin. It is part of abundant life, a joyful privilege, a blessing from God’s grace, a glorious life of freedom and power. The life of holiness fulfills God’s original intention and design for humanity. For the Spirit-filled believer, holiness is the normal—indeed the only—way to live.