

Peter the Great was once quoted as saying, “I have conquered an empire, but I have not been able to conquer myself.”

1. Review of Last Week:

a. What holiness is not:

- i. Last week, I introduced the subject of Holiness, and we discovered that we tend to have a misconception about what holiness is.
- ii. Holiness to many people means “sinless,” “perfect,” and “boring.”
- iii. It means to many people a list of “don’ts.” “Don’t touch, don’t use, don’t go there, don’t do that”.

b. What it is:

- i. But we learned last week that at the foundation of the concept of holiness is something completely different.
 1. We learned that it is something or someone being set apart to God, being made un-common, exceptional, and unlike anything else.
 2. We found that holiness gets its primary quality from God, who is the ultimate in holiness. And when we speak of God’s holiness, we understand Him as totally other, exclusive, unlike anything in existence, utterly uncommon and apart. He is unlike created things because He Himself is the Creator.
- ii. We also learned that holiness occurs when God touches something or someone and sets them apart for Himself.
 1. We also learned that Holiness involves “setting apart TO” and “setting apart FROM” something.
 - a. Sin: results in the separation FROM God to our own self-rule
 - b. Holiness: results in the separation from Self/Sin TO God.
 2. The entire people of Israel were called to be set apart, to be un-common, unlike their neighbors, that they were to be called holy.
 3. They were to be unmixed, and their actions were to reflect this unique position and relationship that they had with God, of being special, peculiar, and belonging to Him.
- iii. Biblical threads of Holiness:
 1. Between the Old and New Testaments there exists a fundamental shift in the way God's holiness is expressed through his people.
 2. In the Old Testament, the holy is that which is set apart from the common so that it is isolated for God's service.
 - a. It can be said that in their perfect, prefallen state Adam and Eve were holy, since they were created for and set apart to God.

- b. However, their sin of disobedience soon resulted in a wall of separation between God and humankind. And since the earth was under the domain of Adam and Eve, it too became scarred by sin and separation from God.
 - c. Today both humans and the created order still testify to the existence of a Creator, although by itself such testimony is hazy and incomplete—kind of like a jigsaw puzzle with some important pieces missing.
 - d. This is due in large part to the fact that we humans are born into this world "skewed, broken, fallen, dysfunctional, and 'unsanctified", separated from God.
 - e. In one respect, the Bible is God's story of his love-filled efforts to resanctify the human race...to once again make us His own people.
 - i. While still in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve received God's pronouncement of punishment for their transgression. And yet in the midst of his judgment, God hinted at a future deliverer.
 - ii. It was through the promise of a Messiah, that God revealed his refusal to allow sin to thwart his plan to have a people set apart to himself, to have a people who in response to his love would love and serve him
 - iii. The history of humankind is the history of God's working to bring about our salvation through sanctification (holiness).
 - 1. When he flooded the earth, God set apart Noah and his family.
 - 2. When the earth was being filled with nations, God set apart Abram through whom to establish a nation uniquely his own, set apart to serve him and be a witness to a lost and dying world.
3. In the New Testament, holiness is a dynamic process.
- a. Jesus came
 - i. The holy is actually the common, infused now by God's Spirit and transformed from the INSIDE OUT for his service. Thus, our holiness has to do with God's transforming us into persons whose actions in daily life are expressions of Himself.
 - b. .Holiness is **Setting Apart. Uncommon, unique, exceptional = holy!**
- c. Then we discovered that holiness exists in three stages:
- i. **Positional Holiness** - occurs when you are "saved" (it is about your position before God). *Past Tense.*
 - 1. **involves a change of relationship.** The word *holy*, particularly in the Old Testament, does not refer to a moral state, but to a relationship.
 - a. There were holy cities, holy vessels, holy buildings.

- b. When the Old Testament spoke of Jerusalem being holy, for example, or the nation being holy, it did not mean that they were good or morally pure.
 - c. It meant that they stood in a special relationship to God.
 - d. They were set apart from a common to a holy use.
 - e. They were consecrated. They were separated to God.
2. Christians are set apart from a common, ordinary, self run life to an extraordinary, God centered, God led life.
 - a. We are no longer common or profane.
 - b. We belong to God.
3. This is what happens when we receive the gift of eternal life from the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We become friends with God, having moved from the POSITION of enemies to the position of friends.
4. Essentially, this is about God's mind being changed about us. He sees us as Holy, because Jesus has taken our sins and we have received the goodness and righteousness of Jesus.
5. Even though our lives don't match up to our position at this point, in God's mind, He sees us as holy. This is why the Bible calls all believers in Jesus Christ SAINTS, and not just ones who a church hierarchy declares.
 - a. Explain Saints if necessary here.

- ii. **Presentational Holiness** – occurs when you “surrender” (is about your consecration to God) *Present Tense*
 - 1. Presentational Holiness is best described in Romans 12:1 and is an action that occurs over and over again in our lives as we are motivated by the love of God and through gratitude to give ourselves, and surrender our lives to God.
 - 2. We found that we will not surrender our lives to God on the basis of duty or responsibility, but rather out of appreciation. That is, reflecting regularly on God’s mercy that we have received that we didn’t deserve.
- iii. **Progressive Holiness**– occurs as you become Christlike – (is about your cooperation with God). *Future Tense*
NAS: 1 Peter 2:9-12
 - 1. *they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this {doom} they were also appointed. 9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR {God's} OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY. 11 Beloved, I urge (beseech, plead with) you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. 12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe {them,} glorify God in the day of visitation.*
 - a. Peter is urging his readers, not unlike Paul’s “beseeching” “urging” and “pleading” with his readers in Romans 12:1, to put off and abstain from the things that wage war against the soul.
 - b. This passage is explaining what you and I were called to be in our lives... what the fruit of the progressive holiness is supposed to be...It’s about becoming a unique people, a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession.
 - c. And our conduct (behavior) is to be EXCELLENT.
 - i. By excellent, he is not just talking about what we don’t do but about the actions that show the love of God to others.
 - 2. **You won’t’ become Christlike by “imitating” Christ.**
 - a. That will only result in failure. You are not Christ, you cannot imitate Him.
 - b. You need to have Christ IN YOU. He alone can produce Himself in you.
 - c. And progressive holiness is about Christ possessing and owning ALL of you. It is how His character is produced in us.

- d. Every command and exhortation to holy living concerns progressive holiness.
 - i. Just as a newborn infant is fully expected to experience physical growth until reaching mature adulthood, so too a newborn Christian is to grow spiritually until reaching complete Christlikeness (see Romans 8:29).
- 3. **Progressive Holiness means transformation. (Romans 12:2)**
 - a. *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect*
 - b. What happens is that we are radically altered. Our whole being is changed.
 - i. Not just our behavior. But what makes us do what we do is changed.
 - ii. That is at the root of “being transformed by the renewing of your mind.”
 - iii. He is speaking to people who have already had their HEART changed by a faith filled encounter with Jesus Christ. And the author of this book of the bible is telling us that now our minds must be changed, reprogrammed, the tapes of all the lies we believe about ourselves and life must be re-written.
 - iv. He is saying that from the world’s perspective, we have been brainwashed and now have to have our values, thoughts and beliefs re-written to match God’s values, thoughts and beliefs. And when we do so, we will know and understand God’s perfect will for our lives.
- b. Progressive Holiness must be viewed in the light of this next truth:
 - i. **Holiness requires the "dynamic presence" of God, which results in his attributes being manifested in and through us.**
 - 1. This is why Christ being reproduced in you and I is so important. We will not exhibit EXCELLENCE, UNCOMMONNESS, CALLED-OUT LIVES that are radically different from the world in which we live without an intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ.
 - ii. Thus relationship between us and God is the most crucial component in the sanctification process. **Anything which hinders that relationship—i.e., sin—will also hinder our growth and maturity and our ultimate holiness or separation from our world of no.**
 - 1. This is the means for which leaving the world of “no” exists. We leave behind the things that hinder our fellowship with God.
 - 2. Sorry to say that many Christians focus on the “no” as the purpose of their lives,
 - a. As if living sinless lives is what God made them for.

- b. But avoiding sin is not the end, but rather the means to our end.
 - c. The purpose of our lives is to have INTIMATE fellowship with God. And in the process of that fellowship, we are made extraordinary people, people who are so different from the rest of the world that the world sits up and takes notice and says, “We want this too!”
 - d. We leave the world of “no” in order to enter the world of “yes”. That yes is the presence of God in our lives through which God alone produces in us the fruits of the Spirit.
 - e. Hebrews 12:1-2 *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress. And let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish. He was willing to die a shameful death on the cross because of the joy he knew would be his afterward. Now he is seated in the place of highest honor beside God's throne in heaven.*
 - i. Did you see it? The weight that slows us down, that keeps us from getting close to God, the sin that hinders our progress, the self-stuff that prevents us from becoming exceptional and set apart, uncommon and holy. That’s what we are to strip off.
 - ii. And we are to seek to do the positive...that is, run with endurance our race of life (not giving up)...by keeping our eyes on Jesus, and not on this world.
3. I am hesitant to spend a great deal of time on the “world of no”...because we are so introspective, and if one spends too long on this area, we will consume ourselves with trying to live clean lives and miss out on the real goal, which is the intimate relationship with God.
- a. But the New Testament is filled with exhortations for Christians to “stop allowing the flesh to control their lives,” to “put off sin” and to PUT ON Christ.
 - b. The exhortations are there to call us not just to purity, but to intimacy with God.
 - c. And just like if you have a broken relationship with your spouse or a friend, until you clear up the offense, you cannot have the intimate relationship again.
 - i. That is the purpose of looking at your life and how you have lived before God.
 - ii. Colossians 3:8, 12-13 says it similarly: *But now is the time to put off anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language.*

Since God chose you to be the holy people whom he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. You must make allowance for each other's faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

- iii. We tend to look at the negative commands in these passages, but you have to look at the positive ones as well.
 1. Imagine, taking off dirty clothes but not putting on clean ones?
 2. We are called in this passage to “put off” the things that keep us from becoming uncommon, unique and extraordinary...AND to put on, clothe ourselves, with the goodness He provides us.
 3. A statement that should separate us from the world: ...
.”You must make allowance for each other’s faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you MUST forgive others.”
 4. Last week we noted only a 9% difference between Christian’s attitudes, actions, and character from the rest of our culture. Could it be that we are missing holiness? The uniqueness, the uncommonness that God is calling us to?
- iii. Sin cannot be taken lightly by the Christian...we should not say to ourselves, “Oh, I just slipped up.”
 1. Whenever we rationalize sin, or we defend our actions, it is because we really haven’t made the choice to rid ourselves of it. We are tolerating it.
 - a. When you become sick of your sin, you will do anything you can to avoid it ever gaining control over you again!
 - b. You will take extreme measures to protect yourself from its power because you have learned to HATE IT.
 - c. Ask an recovering alcoholic or an ex-smoker about how much they HATE their old sin? They know its destructive power and will do everything they can to ensure that it never finds a crease or a crack in their lives to gain a foothold again!
 - d. Your feelings about sin (or a particular sin) have a great deal to do with whether you will choose to sin.
 - e. We need an attitude of hating sin...because every sin, every self-seeking, self-die-fying action separates us from intimacy with God. It will push Him farther and farther away.

- f. Remember, though our goal isn't just getting rid of a sin (so that we can boast of how holy we are)...but so we can resume an intimate walk with God our Father!
 - iv. We need to acknowledge it as a break in our relationship with God and ask for a purging and cleansing from it, confessing it and turning from it.
 1. Some Christians reject cleansing experiences due to their hardness of heart. They have grown accustomed to their lifestyle of a self-run, self-ruled life, and really don't grasp the value of being close to the Lord.
 2. Others will experience sporadic, occasional cleansings by God when some painful experience or a powerful preacher touches his heart, but while he responds with genuine repentance, he does not change his life to any lasting degree.
 3. But the Christian who has a hunger for closeness to God will work through three areas of cleansing:
 - a. external (cleansing of conduct),
 - b. the internal (cleansing of character) and the
 - c. core (cleansing of the why we do what we do).
 - i. The deeper the cleansing, the more painful and difficult our sins are to deal with. To deal with the core and root issues of our character and the motives of our heart require a passion and love for Jesus. We won't intentionally experience pain unless supernaturally motivated.
 - 4.
- c. Can you say, "I'm clean?"
 - i. The founder of Kraft Foods was an outstanding Christian. Mr. Kraft spent the last few winters of his life in Miami. He had an invitation to address a convention in San Francisco, and the newspapers of Miami made note of it. The night before he left for San Francisco, the telephone rang. A woman's voice, filled with sadness, said, "Mr. Kraft, I see by the paper that you are going to San Francisco tomorrow. I want to ask a favor. My son is in Alcatraz for life I write him and send his gifts, but he has never responded. Would you please go see him, and ask him just to write me a note? Kraft agreed to the lady's request. He went to the prison and was granted permission to visit the young man. He started down the corridor to where it turned right, to the visiting room. Just as he made the turn, a big hand shot out in front and clamped him by the chest, and a voice said, "Stand perfectly still, Mr. Kraft, don't move for a moment." Kraft said he heard a buzzing sound... then a voice said, "OK, Mr. Kraft, you're clean."
 - ii. Offended, he asked, "What do you mean, 'I'm clean?'" Of course I am!"
 - iii. "I mean," said the guard, "that you don't have anything that you should not take to the visitor's room."

- iv. He went on down the hall thinking to himself, "Suppose Christ would stop me around the next corner and say, "Stand still, Kraft, let me see if your heart is clean inside.'" Said James Kraft, "I stopped where I was and asked God to examine me."

- d. The greatest barrier to holiness isn't motivation but accumulation...that is, the frustration and defeat one feels from the build-up of unnoticed or unconfessed sin.
 - i. Because intimacy with God is necessary to become Christlike, we must realize that our intimacy/fellowship with God is dependent upon the cleansing of our hearts before him – a pure, blameless relationship in which we receive cleansing of our hearts by the blood of Christ.
 - 1. Confession is the primary tool here. It is where we agree with God that sin is sin. That He is God and we aren't. It may require asking God to SHOW US our sin.
 - 2. One should begin with a quiet time, and pray and thank God for all He has don in your life.
 - a. Open a journal and ask God to reveal the specific sins in your life.
 - b. List all that come to mind.
 - c. Then confess them one at a time, asking specific forgiveness for each occurrence of that sin as well as for cleansing of the motive that caused it.
 - d. Make restoration or humble yourself to the offended party if there is one.
 - 3. Repentance (turning from it, leaving it behind).
 - 4. Staying right before God – enjoying fellowship and maintaining it.
 - ii. Sin will keep you from prayer and prayer will keep you from sin. (by prayer, I'm not talking about petitions, but quality one-one time with Jesus.
 - iii. By forming the habit of choosing God's counsel instead of the world's, and God's strength instead of our own. As we do so on a real and consistent basis, the fruit of the Spirit will be increasingly manifested in our life. (ie. Romans 12:2)

- e. As C. S. Lewis so wisely notes, our maturity as Christians is of monumental importance to God. Whereas we may at times be tempted toward complacency regarding our spiritual growth and development, God has a "quite different plan."
 - i. I think that many of us, when Christ has enabled us to overcome one or two sins that were an obvious nuisance, are inclined to feel (though we do not put it into words) that we are now good enough. He has done all we wanted Him to do, and we should be obliged if he would now leave us alone. As we say "I never expected to be a saint, I only wanted to be a decent ordinary chap." And we imagine when we say this that we are being humble. But this is the fatal mistake.
 - ii. Of course we never wanted, and never asked, to be made into the sort of creatures He is going to make us into. But the question is not what we intended ourselves to be, but what He intended us to be when He made us.

- iii. He is the inventor, we are only the machine. He is the painter, we are only the picture. . . . We may be content to remain what we call "ordinary people": but He is determined to carry out a quite different plan.
- iv. To shrink back from that plan is not humility; it is laziness and cowardice. To submit to it is not conceit or megalomania; it is obedience. [There is] no possible degree of holiness or heroism which has ever been recorded of the greatest saints [which] is beyond what [God] is determined to produce in every one of us in the end. The job will not be completed in this life: but He means to get us as far as possible before death.

II. Closing

1. The great percentage of folks in America today claim to be Christian.
 - a. Some have even said that they believe that Jesus died for their sins.
 - b. But their lives do not match their profession, and the world says to them...we don't believe you!
2. The world is looking for God...and God has chosen to set apart for Himself, people, to be EXTRAORDINARY, UNIQUE, PECULIAR, UNUSUAL, UNCOMMON...so much so that when they come in contact with Us they will have had their taste for God increased.
3. This is a decision time:
 - a. If you have never tasted for yourself, the intimate relationship with comes with trusting Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, then you can make that decision today. The bible says, "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, then you shall be saved."
 - b. You have your heart changed today by asking Jesus Christ to take your sins...every one that you have ever committed or will commit...and you will become a brand new creature.
4. Others of you may have been Christians for many years, but today you have had your heart stirred by an awareness that you have been living an all too ordinary life, one that does not reflect the extraordinary, holy, set apart nature that God created you for and gave His Son's life to give to you.
 - a. You can change that today as well. In a moment, we will stand and sing a song of response and you can respond to God out of a grateful heart and ask Him to make you holy and uncommon.
 - b. Or perhaps you have realized you are ordinary because you have neglected your relationship with God and need a deep cleansing in your heart. The bible says "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
 - i. Won't you ask Him, during this response time, to show you your life, Ask God to show you what is standing in the way of an

intimate relationship with Him. As He shows you, confess and turn from those areas.

- ii. If you need me to pray with you, you can come up here and I will join you in praying to ask God's help or deliverance for your need.

- c.
- 5. I am not saying that one can forfeit genuine salvation at a point of sinfulness, but that if the Christian never displays holiness then he never was a Christian in the first place.
 - a. Jesus said, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness” (Mt. 7: 21).
 - b. It is not that He knew them once, but now does not know them.
 - c. These folks who profess Christ but their by their lives deny Him, may even have had a variety of supernatural experience to speak about.
 - d. But they law-breakers at heart and did not pass the litmus test of being Christian, the test of holiness. “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven” (v. 21).
 - e. If you have simply taken out fire insurance by acknowledging Christ as Savior, but have not had a transformed life, then you should be asking God if you ever belonged to Him in the first place.