

Living Out Holiness for Jesus

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We make choices every day. Look at the choices the President of the United States has to make right now. Should we attack the Iranian government or not? What if Hamas doesn't disarm? He has to make choices about our country's economics. He has to look at stats, hear from leaders who know about the situations, and at times he may have to listen to that gut feeling. We may think the choices we make may not be as big as the President's choices, but they're choices that may shape our whole life. What you eat, how you exercise, and how you live your life may affect the length of your life. The list can go on and on about the type of choices we have to make every day. Today, we'll look at the choice of living or not living a holiness life. Holiness is not a Nazarene item, it's a Biblical item. Nazarenes may focus on it, but Holiness can be traced back to the Bible. Holiness is an important topic because it is one of the ingredients of God's character. When Jesus, the Son of God, walked the earth, He too was Holy. We've been looking into Paul's letter to the Colossian Church. Paul was trying to make sure this church was on the same page as Jesus' teachings and commands. Last week, the sermon was about what really matters in our life. Paul wanted the church to understand the importance of focusing on Jesus, who is our life. We should want to become a mature Christian instead of remaining as a carnal Christian. A mature Christian wants to grow in faith and love in Jesus. A carnal Christian does not grow, but allows the world into the mix with their relationship with Jesus. They stay on milk and don't advance to meat. So, what is needed to draw us away from milk onto meat?

Let's continue in Colossians and let's turn to Colossians 3: 12 – 17 where we read this, "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your

hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (NIV)

In verse 12, Paul starts off by telling the Church they've been chosen to be holy just as Israel had been chosen in Old Testament times to be holy. We are set apart for God, not for this world. The Lord loves us and wants us to be holy to have a relationship with Him in holiness. We can't run from this. Paul adds onto this by saying we "must" clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Now, you may notice that the NIV translation does not have "must" as a requirement for these holy characteristics. The NLT adds the word "must" in their translation. Some may think this gives us the choice on how far we go on holy living. The NLT states, "you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience." The KJV does not have the word "must" as well. So, is being holy that important? Paul doesn't give us a choice here. He doesn't give us a second option. As Christians today, many believe they have the right to make a choice on being holy or not or make the choice on how far to be holy. Is it that important? Is holiness that important is following Jesus? In I Thessalonians 4: 7-8, Paul puts this question to rest by saying this to the Church, "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. (NIV-www.biblegateway.com)" So, the NLT translation of Colossian 3: 12 goes in line with Paul's teaching. Plus, Paul is only preaching Jesus. Jesus tells us this in Matthew 5: 48, "But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect. (NLT)" Our Father is perfect and holiness is part of that perfection. Paul taught that anyone rejecting holy living is rejecting the Father who gives us the Holy Spirit to help us to be holy. When we follow Jesus, there must be a desire to be holy. This is what helps us to go from milk to meat. I want to be holy because Jesus is holy. We talked about the carnal Christian and the mature Christian last week and a carnal Christian will take on some of the holy characteristics, but not

all of them. We like to pick and choose from Paul's short list that fits us at certain times. In other words, we don't live out these characteristics of holy living all the time. We're up and down like a seesaw. For God did not call us to live an impure life, but to live a holy life. Paul doesn't say "sometimes" live a holy life. There has to be a desire for holy living and again it falls down to the Great Command about really loving the Lord. You know, the Easter season is a good time to reflect on the health of our love for Jesus. As I have been looking at the Easter devotional that was given out a few weeks ago, the author uses Scripture that makes us think about sin. The author used Scripture from 2 Corinthians 5: 21 which states, "God caused the one who didn't know sin to be sin for our sake so that through him we could become the righteousness of God". That statement alone should drive us to want to be holy out of love for the One who went to the cross for us. As we follow Jesus, we should be motivated to be holy for Jesus. So, we want to clothe ourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. This is what helps us to stop being on milk as a Christian and move onto meat – holy living is the meat of life. What keeps us from wanting to be holy?

We may say it's our lack of knowledge of what holiness is. I think that is an excuse we like to use. What caused Paul to want to be holy for Jesus? Paul preached what Jesus wanted us to do, but Paul lived a holy life for Jesus. History and his writings prove this. I found this written in a book called *The Pursuit of Christian Maturity* by A.W. Tozer and he states this about Apostle Paul, "In fact, his confidence in God was because of his lack of confidence in himself. (A.W. Tozer, 140)" Read that a few times to yourself. Where did A.W. Tozer get this information to make such a statement? Turn to Philippians 3: 1-11 where we read this, "3 Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters,^[a] rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith.

² Watch out for those dogs, those people who do evil, those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved. ³ For we who worship by the Spirit of God^[b] are the ones who are truly circumcised. We rely on what Christ Jesus has done for us. We put no confidence in human effort, ⁴ though I could have confidence in my own effort if anyone could. Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more!

⁵ I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. ⁶ I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault. ⁷ I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. ⁸ Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ ⁹ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. ¹⁰ For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith. ¹¹ I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, ¹² so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead! (www.biblegateway.com)

Maybe what keeps us from wanting to be holy is our own confidence in ourselves. Here is Paul, a Hebrew from the Tribe of Benjamin, a Pharisee, and a Roman citizen. It could be safe to say that Paul was one of the most educated of all the disciples. Paul states in verse four that he had every reason to have confidence in himself. Our sinful nature wants us to have confidence in our own abilities. After Paul's first visit with Jesus, Paul became a new person in Christ. Paul states in verse 8 that everything else is worthless compared to knowing Jesus. His confidence in himself got less and less, but his confidence in Jesus became more and more. His confidence in Jesus replaced his confidence in himself. What a radical thought for today. This is part of being humble. Paul's confidence in Christ grew so strong that he wanted to know Jesus more and more and experience the mighty power of the Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. His confidence grew so strong that Paul wanted to share in Jesus' suffering and death because Paul had faith in the resurrection from the dead through Jesus. He had full confidence in Jesus. This shows the type of relationship Paul had with Jesus. We are taught to have confidence in ourselves. To be a good leader, we must have confidence in our own ability. If not, we will be seen as weak. Paul gave up that human thinking and changed the thinking to Godly thinking. Paul states this in 1 Corinthians 2: 16, "But we can understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ. (NLT)" This is holy living. For us to have the mind of Christ means to lose confidence in ourselves. The mind of Christ gains confidence in Christ. A pastor should lose confidence in themselves, but gain in

confidence in Christ. This way, they'll cling to Jesus for wisdom and guidance for leading His Church that He died for.

Let's go back to Colossians 3 and reread this, "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (NIV)" We have confidence that He will help us to achieve this with the help of the Holy Spirit. Paul believed in the full power of the Holy Spirit. I wonder if we do today as the Church. I don't think we have confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. If we don't have confidence in the Holy Spirit, how can we have confidence in Jesus? Does this mean our confidence in ourselves must weaken? We need to ask Jesus for the help of the Holy Spirit to transfer our confidence in ourselves to Jesus. We must become more reliant upon the powerful Holy Spirit every day. All we need to do is ask and believe He will answer.

Tozer, A.W. *The Pursuit of Christian Maturity*. BethanyHouse: Minneapolis, 2024

The NIV Study Bible. Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids, 1995.