

Salt and Light – Holiness is part of God's Character – What Does That Mean for Us?08/30/26

I remember in High School, they had us do plays. In one of the plays, they had me play a drunk. I was to carry around in my hand an empty Tequila bottle and act drunk. Since I never played this type of character before and hadn't been drunk before, I didn't know how I was to act this out. So, I thought about what actor could I copy or learn from to play drunk. The first person that came to mind was Otis Campbell on Andy Griffith. I always thought he played a good drunk on that show. In reality, Hal Smith, who played Otis, was a Christian and did voice work for Focus on the Family and supposedly didn't drink. So, I was playing a character that I had never played before and I was uncomfortable with it. The same can be said with many Christians today in trying to live out holiness. Peter lands a bomb on us in 1 Peter 1: 15, "But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God – who chose you to be His children – is holy" (NLT). I never thought about being holy when I was a kid and when I got saved through the grace of Jesus, that term "holiness" still was far from my mind. How can I live something out that I never was before? It's like me playing a different character that I never played before or lived out. However, we can't run away from this because being "holy" is a command to us from the Lord Himself. Why is this so important for us today? Most Christians stay away from holy living like it's the plague.

All of this came from a devotion I was doing a week ago while studying Amos, one of the Minor Prophets. Amos was sent by God to the Northern Kingdom of Israel to give warning. In 4: 2, we read this from Amos to Israel, "The Sovereign Lord has sworn this by His holiness. (NLT)" Here we have the Holy One who cannot tolerate the unrighteousness of the rich. The rich were treating the poor very badly. The Hebrew term used here for holiness means set apart, dedicated to God, thing most holy or holy dwelling (Strong's Concordance). This term can be used for different things. Here, we can use this term to mean thing most holy. God is most holy. Now, there is some debate about how holiness should be viewed with God. I believe holiness is part of God's character / Divine Nature and He is the main source of holiness. Holiness is part of His Divine nature as is love,

righteousness, and forgiveness is. His love, righteousness, forgiveness, and holiness are of the purest form. I Googled what is considered the purest thing on earth and AI said it's ultra-high purity semiconductor-grade silicon. It is used to create computer chips and it's 99.999999999% pure. God is 100% pure. His holiness shows light on unholiness just as His righteousness shines light on unrighteousness. We know what is holy because of God. This holiness is part of Jesus as well since He is the Son of God. When Peter was preaching to the crowd in Jerusalem during the Holy Spirit movement within the young Church, Peter states this about Jesus in Acts 3: 14, "You rejected this holy, righteous one and instead demanded the release of a murderer (NLT)". Peter is talking about how the people treated Jesus during His trial by wanting the release of a murderer instead of Jesus and Peter calls Jesus the holy, righteous one. Jesus, the Son of God is holy and righteous. Jesus lived out this holiness. It was part of Jesus' DNA. The Lord's holiness affected how He lived, worked, and how He grew from baby to adult. It's interesting that even the devil and his demons know that Jesus is holy. In Mark 1: 23, a man that was possessed by an evil spirit was in the synagogue while Jesus was there and the demon makes this statement through the man it was living in, "Why are you bothering us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One sent from God. (NLT)" Jesus was holy. The Holy Spirit is holy and that is why the Spirit is called Holy. God is most holy and the sets Him apart from anything else and that holiness does not change.

Now, we've been talking about how we are to be salt and daylight to those around us. We do this by living out Jesus in our lives. We share in Jesus' divine nature. Peter tells us that in 2 Peter 1: 4, "And by that same mighty power, He has given us all of His rich and wonderful promises. He has promised that you will escape the decay all around you caused by evil desires and that you will share in His divine nature. (NLT)" Plus, the writer of Hebrews states this in Hebrews 12: 10, "For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always right and good for us because it means we will share in his holiness. (NLT)" If we go back to Acts and Mark where they tell us that Jesus is holy, we find that the Greek term used by both writers is the same Greek word. It means holy – moral quality and holiest of all (Strong's Concordance).

Think of that for a moment, because of our relationship with Jesus, we can share in His holiness – which is in the purest form. Jesus is the holiest of all – Three in One. Why does Jesus want us to be salt and daylight to this world? So that everyone will praise the heavenly Father (Matthew 5: 16). The people need to see the holiness of the Lord and the way they see it is through us. Since we share in Jesus' holiness, we are to live it out as Jesus did. His holiness will keep us safe from the decay all around us caused by evil desires. We will be set apart from the world because of this holiness we share through Jesus by the working of the Holy Spirit.

So, the first thing we have to understand is we are to be set apart in holiness. God wanted this from Israel in the Old Testament. They were to be holy by following all of the laws of God. Plus, Moses tells us this from God in Leviticus 11: 44, "After all, the Lord am your God. You must be holy because I am holy. So do not defile yourselves by touching any of these animals that scurry along the ground. I, the Lord, am the one who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God. You must therefore be holy because I am holy. (NLT)" Now, some may think God is requiring this from Israel just to be tough on them. However, God knows the only way Israel can find true freedom on this earth is to be in His holiness and live out His holiness. Now, another translation for this piece of Scripture is "Sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy". This is a little closer to the Hebrew translation. Sanctify here in Hebrew means to set apart and to be dedicated. Israel is to set themselves apart from taking part in the evils of the world and dedicate themselves in loving God with everything they have. This didn't change in the New Testament time. I've been reading Karl Marx and his early writings when he got out of college. He brought together the theories on socialism and communism, which he used both terms to mean the same. In his theory on socialism economics, the people are to be set apart for the state. The people pledge their wellbeing to the state and the state will take care of their needs. There was no room for Christianity or Judaism. Karl Marx did not like the Jews because of how dedicated the Jews were during his time period in serving God and His laws. He saw no hope in changing them and stated they should be "cut out" of society. Christians, he thought, were not as dedicated and some

could be forced into changing from serving God to serving the state. History proves that those who followed Karl Marx could use harsh measures to try to make a Christian lose one's faith in God. Yet, we are told to carry our cross daily. Jesus tells us this in Luke 9: 23, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must put aside your selfish ambition, shoulder your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for me, you will find true life (NLT)" True life is living the life we were designed for before the fall in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were set apart for God and they got to enjoy His holiness in pure form before sin. Then sin entered in and distorted the relationship. However, because of Jesus dying on the cross for our sins and if we allow Him into our heart, we get to start to enjoy the holiness relationship with Jesus. We get to enjoy His pure holiness through the working of the Holy Spirit. We then discover we have been set apart from this world for God as Israel was supposed to be in the Old Testament – even though Israel kept rejecting God.

How do we know that we are living out this holiness life? Number one is the measurement of how much we really love Jesus. Is He our life or is He something we pray to only when needed. It bothers me that Karl Marx thought it was easier to change Christians than the Jews in their relationship with God. I'm I really set apart for Jesus or do I only set apart some things for Jesus. If we only set apart some things, then that paints a picture of someone who does not love the Lord with everything they have – the Great Command. So, when Jesus tells us to carry our cross daily, doesn't that mean we live out Jesus daily? If that is the case, then the Scripture we read in Mark and Luke that described Jesus as being holy means the same for us. Remember, the Greek term used for holy to describe Jesus means holy moral quality and holiest of all. So, a good way for us to measure our holiness would be to measure our own moral quality. As we grow in our faith and love for Jesus and as we absorb more of Jesus' pure holiness, our moral quality will get better as well. The American Church as a whole has gone the opposite direction. In our desire to try to please our culture and try to fit in, we have allowed our moral quality to deteriorate to the point where the American Church morals are not that much different than the culture. I'm sure most of us remember when we first got saved through Jesus, how long it took for some of

our morals to change. If we used swear words before knowing Jesus, those swear words should no longer be used because of one's love for Jesus. I don't watch new secular movies or shows on TV because I don't want to hear swear words. The same goes with tattoos that have become a big thing in our nation today. A Christian needs to ask what is their motive for wanting a tattoo. If it's to fit into our culture, then does that mean one no longer wants to be set apart for God? Israel, in the Old Testament, was not to get tattoos because the pagan nations around them had tattoos. They were to be set apart for God. Again, what's the motive? How about being at a meeting filled with Church people where there is a cheer for abortion or for drug rights? Paul states this in 1 Thessalonians 4: 3-7, "God wants you to be holy, so you should keep clear of all sexual sin. Then each of you will control your body and live in holiness and honor – not in lustful passion as the pagans do, in their ignorance of God and His ways. Never cheat a Christian brother in this matter by taking his wife, for the Lord avenges all such sins, as we have solemnly warned you before. God has called us to be holy, not to live impure lives. Anyone who refuses to live by these rules is not disobeying human rules, but is rejecting God, who gives His Holy Spirit to you (NLT)". This is a love issue. The writer for Hebrews adds this in Hebrews 12: 14, "Try to live in peace with everyone, and seek to live a clean and holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord. (NLT)" Not only do we want to be holy out of love for Jesus, but we also want to be a holy people so that the unsaved around us can see the example of Jesus who is the holiest of all. Karl Marx didn't like real Christians because real Christians love Jesus with everything they have and the Holy Spirit gives them in return the holiness from Jesus through the Holy Spirit and they become set apart from the sin and evil around them. God wants us to be holy. Let's meet the challenge and ask Jesus to help us to be holy and let's watch our moral quality get better because of His holiness in our life. Always remember, our human natural doesn't want that divine nature of Jesus to mix in, so we need to ask Jesus for help to be a holy people. You can't do it on your own. The Holy Spirit will help you.

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.: Wheaton, 1996

The Strongest Strong's Concordance. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001