

BE YE HOLY, BECAUSE I AM HOLY

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As Christians, we have within us, the inherent, dynamic potential to greatly affect the world. But unfortunately, all too often, one can barely tell the Christian from the unbeliever. In the movies and television we watch, the books we read, in our daily interactions with those we work with, our attitudes, speech and lifestyle are indistinguishable from the unbeliever.

That's not God's plan or desire for His church. Only as we remain set apart from the world, only as we think, speak and behave in a manner drastically different from the world around us, can we have a powerful, spiritual impact on the lives of our neighbors, family, friends and coworkers.

For the Church to really affect the world, we must remember:

WHO we are: redeemed sons of God.

WHAT we have: God's spirit in us.

WHERE we reside: in the heavenlies.

The Bible calls this being "set apart" or "sanctified". The Greek word used is *hagios*, and it is translated as holy, sanctified, pure, chaste, clean and saints.

God commanded Israel to separate themselves from the unbelieving nations that surrounded them. They were not to marry the unbelievers lest they turn from the true God and worship strange idols.

For you are a holy people to the LORD your God: the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the people on the face of the earth.

The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples: but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers (Deuteronomy 7:6-8; all scripture verses are from the NKJV).

God tells them that His motivation for these instructions is His love for them. He had chosen

them, they were His "special treasure." Ephesians tells us that God also,

chose us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love (Eph. 1:4).

With the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, we were made "holy." Paul's letter to the Colossians also emphasizes this truth:

And you, who were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight (Colossians 1:21-22).

At one time we were unbelievers, outside the covenant with Israel. But now we are no longer "strangers and foreigners" but,

a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:22).

A dwelling place of God! Yet if our lives and actions do not reflect God's glory in all that we do, the world will see no difference between us and the pagans which surround us. The Bible clearly outlines for us what our behavior should be now that we are "sanctified ones" or "saints."

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body, and be thankful.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks

to God the Father through Him (Colossians 3:12-17).

The Word is to dwell in us richly, an overabundance of God's Word flooding our thoughts daily. This means reading our Bibles daily, and diligently memorizing scripture verses. If our sword of the spirit is the Word of God as Ephesians 6:17 tells us, we must have our weapons sharpened and ready for the daily spiritual battle.

Spending time daily reading God's Word is not a luxury, something to do if we have the time. It is essential to a believer's walk as a sanctified Christian. In John 17, Jesus Christ is pouring his heart out to his Father. In this prayer Jesus clearly instructs us on how to keep our lives and hearts set apart, ready to serve our God:

They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word (John 17:16-20).

In order to fulfill Jesus' prayer for us, that others will come to Christ by our words and witness, we must daily spend time reading our Bibles because God's Word is what sanctifies our hearts (John 17:17). We must memorize it, meditate upon it and then, most importantly, DO IT!

For most of us, it's not the earth-shattering, dramatic situations that pressure us; it's the small, daily irritations that grind us down - the bickering of our children that causes us to lose patience; the gossip at work that causes us to speak hurtful words; the rush hour traffic that turns our thoughts to extracting painful revenge on the driver in front of us. When we find ourselves in one of these situations, we can succumb to temptation or we can use one of the weapons in our spiritual arsenal. If we've previously memorized Ephesians 4:31,32, for example, the next time we're about to open our mouths to dish up the latest scandal we've heard about, we can instead think:

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4:31,32).

The powerful words of scripture, retained in our thoughts, then acted upon, can change those gossiping, hurtful words into words of encouragement and blessing. The renewed mind is a mind filled to overflowing with the truths of God's Word. It is essential to walking a holy life. Romans 12:1,2 tells us to offer all of our very lives as a living sacrifice.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:1-2).

We are to offer up all that we do as an act of service and worship to God. The emphasis here is on service; we sacrifice our lives to God so that we may do God's will, not our own. The whole purpose of setting ourselves apart, cleansing ourselves from wickedness, is to be "useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work" (2 Tim. 2:19-21).

When we try to keep one foot in the world and one foot in the Word, we lose all our effectiveness. We can't exercise dual citizenship. If we simply blend in with the worldly attitudes around us we lose all our impact for good. But as we spend lots of time with God's written Word, continually feeding our minds with Scripture, then as we speak and act accordingly, we'll be setting ourselves apart from the ways of the world. When we let the light of God's love shine through our lives, the world cannot help but notice. Let's continue in John 17 with the next three verses:

... that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one is Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have

sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me (John 17:21-23).

As we sanctify ourselves by the Word there are great results. First, we become one with God and Christ (v. 21); secondly, the world believes that God sent Christ (v. 21); and finally, the world knows that God loves us as He loved Christ (v. 23).

We will one day be "as He is" (1 John 3:1-3). But why not show this love and power to the world now? We are already God's children and we are called to walk, set apart from the ways of this present evil age. Our nature is holy, our destiny is eternity.

Paul's letter to Titus puts the holy life of the believer in perspective for us:

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works (Titus 2:11-14).

May we walk daily as God's chosen, sanctified, holy ones - blameless at Christ's coming.