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MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Sermon

God Demands Holiness in His People



Part 1/4

Beauty of Holiness
By Derek Prince

The theme of our study today is the beauty of holiness. This is the first in a series of four studies on this theme and there is a printed outline available entitled 'The Beauty of Holiness.' I am assuming that the people that hear this study have the outlines available because I will be referring to these outlines continually throughout these series of studies.

Holiness is one of the great themes of the Bible and it's a unique theme of the Bible. There is no other book in the world that reveals the nature of holiness. However, it has been somewhat neglected amongst many groups of God's people over the past few decades. There have been relatively very little teaching on this theme of holiness. And the result of this neglect is always disastrous to God's people. There are, of course, certain groups within the total body of Christ that have a denominational title which is linked up with the word *holiness* such as Pentecostal Holiness, Pilgrim Holiness and other groups. However, I have to observe that in many cases their presentation of holiness has been essentially a list of rules which have to be observed. And often there's been very little scriptural basis offered for these rules. My personal conclusion is that holiness has almost nothing whatever to do with the observing of rules. And I trust that this will be one thing that you'll be able to learn from these studies.

There are certain words which are linked together in the original language of the New Testament which are not clearly linked in translation. These words are *holy*, *saint* and *sanctification*. If you are able to read the New Testament in the original Greek, the direct connection between these words would immediately be obvious. But in the English language, the words used to translate what are the same root words in Greek are completely different in English. So for this purpose I've begun by bringing out on the diagram an illustration of how these words are linked.

The basic Greek word that we are using or concerned with is the word *hagios* (you don't need to remember that), which is normally translated 'holy.' But wherever you read in the *King James Version saints*, that is simply the plural of the adjective *holy*. So, *saints* means 'holy ones.' I'm sure many, many sincere believers have never realized the true meaning of the word *saint*.

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Then we have in the English language the word *to sanctify*. And I'm sure without being a teacher of English you realize that almost any word in English that ends in 'i–f–y' means 'to make whatever goes before the 'i–f–y.'' For instance, *to purify* means 'to make pure.' *To clarify* means 'to make clear.' *To rectify* means 'to make right.' And so *to sanctify* means 'to make *sanct*.' Well, that doesn't mean much until you realize that *sanct* is actually the same word as *saint*. Any of you that are familiar with German or any of the Scandinavian languages, you know that St. John, St. Luke and all that are Sanct Johanna, Sanct Lucas and so on. So *to sanctify* means 'to make *sanct*, to make saint,' and *saint* is 'holy,' so *to sanctify* means 'to make holy.' It's very simple. And so we get the abstract noun *sanctification*, which means 'making holy.'

See, a lot of believers are scared of a word like *sanctification*. It sounds so theological, difficult and unpleasant that they want to avoid it. But when you use the word *holy*, at least to me, this has a beauty to it that attracts me. So remember that *saints* are 'holy ones.' *To sanctify* is 'to make saint, or saintly, or holy.' And therefore, *sanctification* is simply 'making holy.' And I'm going to use these words interchangeably from now on. In other words, when I use the word *sanctify*, I expect you to understand that it means 'to make holy.'

Now we come to that tremendous question, What is holiness? Through the ages, preachers and theologians have offered many interpretations and definitions of holiness. I would say, first of all, this: That holiness is a unique aspect of God's nature, which is without parallel anywhere else in the universe. Now the Bible tells us many different aspects of the nature of God. We are told that God is wise. He is knowing. He's just. He's powerful. He's loving. So we have these attributes of God's nature: wisdom, knowledge, justice, power and love. But when we look around in the world around us, we can see things that in some way exemplify these characteristics. We can see people whom we esteem to be wise. We can see people who obviously have a high degree of knowledge.

We have an idea of justice. We recognize the concept of power. And in some measure, we're all familiar with love. But when it comes to holiness, this is not true, because there is nothing on the human plane, outside of God and the people of God, that have any claim to the title 'holy.' The holiness of God is unique. There is no one else who is holy but God. Therefore, in order to understand holiness, you have to know God. A person who does not know God has no concept of holiness whatsoever. This is really one good way to distinguish between people who know God and people who do not know God. You cannot distinguish by their denominational title. You cannot always distinguish by the kind of language they use, because some people are professional religionists; they have all the religious phrases. But when you find someone who has a conception of holiness, then you find someone who's met God because without God, there is no holiness.

If you turn to Proverbs 30 for a moment, you'll find there a rather strange prophecy by a man named Agur. This whole 30th chapter of Proverbs is the prophecy of Agur. We know nothing more than what is told about him in that chapter. But in verses 2–3 he says this of himself:

> "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy. (KJV)"

You see, the knowledge of the holy (that is, the knowledge of God) is essential to knowing holiness. And no matter how educated or cultivated a man may be, without the knowledge of the holy, in some sense, he's just an animal. He's brutish. As Agur said of himself, 'I am more brutish. I'm just living on the animal plane.' It's really the revelation of the holiness of God that lifts man onto a higher plane.

Now the whole Bible, from beginning to end, emphasizes the holiness of God. And we'll just, for a few moments, look at some of the key passages of Scripture that speak about God's holiness. Turn in your Bibles, or follow in your outline, we'll turn to Isaiah 6. Now in Isaiah 6 we have a vision that was granted to the prophet Isaiah of the Lord on His throne, in His glory. As I understand the book of the prophet Isaiah, Isaiah was already a godly man, far above the level of the people of his day, before this wonderful vision was granted to him. But you'll see this vision had a tremendous impact upon him. I think I'm going to read from Isaiah 6, the first 8 verses:

> "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with [two] he covered his face, and with [two] he covered his feet, and with [two] he did fly. (KJV)"

Let's pause there for a moment to consider the significance of these creatures whom Isaiah saw. We'll see they're also revealed in the book of Revelation. *Seraph* in Hebrew means 'that which burns.' They are the burning ones. Each one had six wings. We'll see the parallel passage in Revelation 4 in a moment. And notice the emphasis is on worship first, and service second. They have six wings: four for worship, two for service. With two they covered their face in worship and reverence, with two they covered their feet in worship and reverence, and they used the remaining two wings to fly in service. This is the right order and this is the right proportion. Worship comes before service. In the majority of professing denominations today, there's really no appreciation of worship, and therefore, very little effective service. Now let's read on. Isaiah 6:3:

> "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts [or the foundations] of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. (KJV)"

You see that day and night, continually, all heaven is reminded of the holiness of Almighty God. Throughout eternity this continual reminder of God's holiness is given forth in heaven, and the impact of it is such that even the heavenly temple vibrates and trembles at the holiness of Almighty God. 'Holy, holy, holy,' threefold for the triune God: Father, Son and Spirit. Now notice the reaction of Isaiah, verse 5:

> "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. (KJV)"

As I pointed out, Isaiah, by human standards, was a very godly man. But this revelation of the holiness of God caused him to see himself in an entirely new light. He realized how far he was below the standard of God's holiness and heaven's holiness. And you'll notice that there's one particular part of his own personality of which he was most acutely conscious, that he came short. What was that? His lips. The Bible says, 'If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.' He was brought face to face with the fact that he needed much more than he had hitherto received. And this is something that God normally does with you and me; He brings us to a sense of need, then He reveals His provision for the need.

And we'll see, as we go on in this study, that this is true with the need of holiness. When we acknowledge the need, then God is ready with His provision. And as soon as Isaiah made this acknowledgement of his need, God's provision came to him. Verse 6:

> "Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. (KJV)"

It wasn't by his own works, it wasn't by his own effort, it was by the direct intervention of God. And that coal from off the altar is, of course, the picture of the Holy Spirit. It's by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit that man is made holy. And then when he had had that experience, then he heard the call to service.

> "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. (KJV)"

Basically I think it's true, and most Christians don't realize this, God does not use volunteers. We'll see this a little further on in this study. You have to come to the place where you realize that you're ineffective and helpless. As long as you think you can do the job and God is rather lucky to have you working for Him, there isn't really much that you can do of any permanent value for God. When you come to the place where you realize that you're totally unfit, unable and unworthy, then God may reach out His hand and touch your life. Every man that was called to a special job in the Bible that I've ever been able to find, in Scripture, felt he was unfit to do the job. If you ever meet a person who says he is called of God and he's able to do the job, you can be almost sure he wasn't called of God. So Isaiah had to be humble, he had to be brought low in the presence of God's holiness before he was qualified for the task in which the Lord wanted to call him.

Now for a moment, let's turn to the New Testament Scripture that lines up with this which is in the 4th chapter of Revelation. Now, Revelation 4 is a very glorious chapter. The Scripture reveals elsewhere in Colossians that there

are four main orders of the invisible, created world. Not the visible, but the invisible. And Paul lists them as follows: thrones, dominions, principalities and powers. The highest level of the created order of the universe is the throne level. And in this fourth chapter of Revelation, the apostle John is lifted up onto the throne level. And actually, the key word, the central theme of this fourth chapter of Revelation is the word *throne*. It would be interesting sometime to count how many times it occurs in Revelation 4. Bear in mind certain things: I'm going to change the *King James Version* in one or two places. First of all, where it says that the elders sat on *seats*, the Greek says *thrones*. Secondly, where the *King James* says *beasts*, I prefer to say 'living creatures.' Let's read this whole beautiful chapter together, it won't take more than a few moments.

> "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven [the first thing he saw was the throne], and one sat on the throne."

Check off on your fingers if you can, I'm too busy to do it, just how many times the word *throne* occurs in these verses.

> "And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne were four and twenty thrones [not seats]: and upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes before and behind. And the first living creature was like a lion, and the second living creature like a calf, and the third living creature had a face as a man, and the fourth living creature was like a
> flying eagle. [These correspond to the seraphim that Isaiah saw in Isaiah 6.] And the four living creatures had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when those living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. (KJV)"

Did anybody come up with an answer on the number of *thrones*? Thirteen, fourteen. I believe fourteen. It's usually the number of God's blessing and perfection. Twice seven. I'm not saying the other is wrong, but my guess would be fourteen. So in that one chapter of 11 verses, that one word *throne* occurs fourteen times. See, this is the highest level in creation. And on that level, there is one theme that continually is given forth: Holy, holy, holy. This speaks of the triune God: Father, Son and Spirit. Holy is the Father, Holy is the Son, Holy is the Spirit. All heaven is continually reminded of this fact. And surely it would be appropriate if earth were a little more mindful of the same fact. And the church, in particular.

Now let's look quickly at some other Scriptures in the Bible that speak about the holiness of God. Just going through them in order and not dwelling on any of them. Exodus 15:11 says this:

> "Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness,

> fearful in praises, doing wonders? (KJV)"

God is glorious in His holiness. And when we see His holiness He becomes fearful in His praises. And we praise Him, then He does wonders. There's a beautiful revelation there. When you appreciate the holiness of God, you praise Him as He should be praised. And when you praise Him as He should be praised, the wonders begin to flow. That's the divine order. Then we move on to Joshua 24:19, the last chapter of the book of Joshua. In this last chapter of Joshua, Joshua is challenging God's people Israel after they had come into their inheritance, in the Promised Land. And the challenge that he puts before them is this: Which gods are you going to serve now that you're in your land? And he gives them the choice. He said, 'You can serve the gods that your fathers served on the other side of the river Euphrates

in Mesopotamia. Or you can serve the gods of the Ammorites whose lands you have now come into. Or you can serve the true and living God, the Lord.' And he says, 'Choose whom you will serve.' And the people said that they would serve the Lord. Verse 16:

> "And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods; . . . (KJV)"

And then they give this recital of His greatness and His victories and His blessings. And Joshua comes back with a rather surprising answer. Joshua 24:19:

> "Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. (KJV)"

This is what I meant when I said God isn't looking for volunteers. See, there's so much in the contemporary church, 'Well, I think I want to serve the Lord. I wonder if God's got a job for me?' But as long as you approach God in that attitude, you are not going to make contact with Almighty God. I think most Christians today have the impression that God was rather lucky to get their services. God doesn't see it that way. I remember for a good many years, because I had been something in the professional and academic world, I thought that when I got saved God was rather lucky to get me. But years later I began to see that it was a totally different story. God accepted tremendous responsibilities when He accepted me. And you cannot just walk up to God and say, 'God, I think I'm going to serve you.' God says, 'You can't do it; you're not qualified; you're not equipped. You'll fail and then you'll be worse off than you were before.' This is a thought that we need to bear in mind: Before we offer service to God we better remember what kind of a God it is that we're serving; a holy God. A glorious God, a fearful God. We can't fool around in God's service. It's not playing little religious games. It's not a little church attendance when it suits us. It's either a total commitment or it has very little value.

In 1 Samuel again this theme of God's holiness is brought up. This is the song of Hannah after she knew that she was going to have that much longed-for baby. Just make this observation in passing, it's

Samuel 1, Hannah is fretting. You know, a fretting woman is so often a barren woman. But when she got the victory in faith and ceased fretting, she conceived and became a mother. And in chapter 2 she has this note of victory and she begins this song of praise. We'll just read the first two verses. First Samuel 2:

> "And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the Lord: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God. (KJV)"

In a moment of real victory and spiritual discernment, we always come to see this, that God is unique. He is holy and there is no other one like Him in the whole universe.

And then in Psalm 22 we have another beautiful revelation of this holiness of God and our reaction to it. I understand that Brother Judson Cornwall has been speaking on the ministry of praise, and this fits in so beautifully. Psalm 22:3, the psalmist says:

Now the *King James* says, 'O thou that inhabitest the praise of Israel.' But you'll see that I've given a different translation.

> "Thou art holy, thou who art enthroned upon the praises of Israel."

And some of the modern versions have that. I was talking to Brother ?Spen Bjork? the Swedish singer one day. I had been preaching on praise, and he told me this version in the

Swedish translation which is: 'Thou who art enthroned upon the praises of Israel.' And it was a real revelation to me and he said this to me. He said, 'A king is a king whether he has a throne or not. The Lord is a king whether he has a throne or not. But when we praise him, we offer Him His throne to sit upon. And then in His kingly presence He is amongst us.' So God sits enthroned upon the praises of His people. But you'll know that praise is the outcome of the recognition of His holiness. Thou art holy, who art enthroned upon the praises of Israel.

> "And then we come to a beautiful verse, Isaiah 57:15:
> For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. (KJV)"

I've put a little outline up here, trying to pick out the salient features of that verse. I was so gripped by the beauty of it. 'The high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; . . . in the high and holy place . . . dwells with the humble.' And my little comment is that God's holiness provokes man's humility. When we really see the holiness of God there is only one condition that will result in us, that is our humility. You'll notice actually that there are three words that run like a theme through that verse. If you have the complete verse in front of you, each of these words occurs twice. And each begins with an H. The **high** lofty one whose name is **Holy**, dwells in the holy place with the **humble**. So the theme is high, holy and humble. If you want God to dwell with you, you offer Him a humble heart. And the one who inhabits eternity and whose throne is above the heavens will dwell with the one who is of a humble and of a contrite spirit. I don't believe that anybody can be proud who is living in the revelation of the holiness of God. Pride is really a denial of God's holiness.

Now the next theme that we want to develop is not only is God holy, but He demands holiness in His people. We're following this in the outline and there are a number of Scriptures in your outline from the book of Leviticus that we'll turn to now. Actually, the theme of Leviticus is really the theme of holiness. The word *holy* occurs in this book more than sixty times. We look in Leviticus 11:44–45:

> "For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, [What does to sanctify mean? To make holy.] and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy. (KJV)"

God is holy and He demands holiness in His people. And in the 19th chapter of Leviticus, we have again the second verse:

> "I the LORD your God am holy. (KJV) And in Leviticus 20:7:
> Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God. (KJV) And the same chapter and 26th verse:"

By clear implication, the condition of being God's people is that we be holy as He is holy. This is what severs us, this is what distinguishes us, separates us out from all other people. Turn back in Leviticus 10:10 for a moment.

This is really the theme of Leviticus: how to learn to distinguish between that which is holy and that which is unholy. That which is clean and that which is unclean. And one of the main responsibilities of the priesthood under the Law of Moses was to teach God's people the difference between holy and unholy. And the failure of the priesthood to do this was one of the main causes of spiritual and national disaster in Israel.

Now the same applies to the Christian ministry. One of the great responsibilities of the ministers of God's people is to teach God's people the true nature of holiness and how to distinguish between that which is holy and that which is unholy. And where this teaching is not given and is not received, spiritual disaster will always follow.

Let's look outside the book of Leviticus at a few other Scriptures for a moment. And I have these, I think, some of them up here on the chart. I want you to notice how they correspond. As we go down here, you'll see some are given in the Old Testament and are quoted directly in the New. Let's look for a moment in Exodus 19:6. We'll read verse 5 as well. God is speaking to His people and says this:

> "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. (KJV)"

To be God's people, you have to be different. Different in holiness, separated out from all other peoples. Distinct. The word *peculiar* today has rather changed its meaning, but in the days of the *King James Version* it meant 'distinct, unlike anything else, separate.' And then in Deuteronomy 14 we find again the same statements. Deuteronomy 14:2. The book of Deuteronomy is essentially an analysis of the conditions for entering into your inheritance and staying in it. And like Leviticus, Deuteronomy lays great emphasis on holiness. Deuteronomy 14:2:

> "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth. (KJV)"

You see, the distinctive feature of God's people is their holiness. It's this that separates them from all other peoples. And it's this that lifts them up. We cannot live on the plane that God desires us to live in unless we live and walk in holiness. This is stated very clearly in Deuteronomy 26:18-19.

The word *avouched* means 'publicly acknowledged.' God publicly acknowledges His people as being distinct from all other people.

> ". . . as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments; and to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honor; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the LORD thy God, as he hath spoken. (KJV)"

If you want to be high, you have to be holy. These two things cannot be separated. God wants His people to live on a high plane, not to be under the dominion of situations and circumstances and the attacks of the enemy. To be a victorious, reigning people. But the condition is holiness.

Now let's notice how these requirements of the Old Testament are carried over verbatim into the New. The same words are used. Turn to 1 Peter for a moment and you'll see Peter actually quotes quite a number of these passages that we have looked at already in the Old Testament. First Peter 1:15-16. These words are written, of course, to Christians.

> "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. (KJV)"

He quotes from Leviticus. He says, remember, the same truth applies to you as Christians that applied to Israel under the Law. And in 1 Peter 2:9:

See, all these phrases are taken from the various passages of the Old Testament that we've looked at. They're just piled together in this verse to describe the Christian believers in this generation.

> "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: . . . (KJV)"

The revelation of God's holiness will always cause us to show forth His praises. A person who doesn't praise God has very little conception of God's holiness. Where His holiness is revealed, it stirs us up to praise. And then we show forth His praises, we demonstrate Him to those who are round about us.

Let us also look in the book of Revelation. The Scriptures are not in your printed outline, you may want to jot them down. Revelation 1:5-6, and we take the latter part of verse 5 and the first part of verse 6:

> "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; . . . (KJV)"

You'll notice the Old Testament says 'a kingdom of priests,' and that's really actually what the New Testament says more literally, a kingdom of priests. And Revelation 5:10, we'll read verse 9:

> "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. (KJV)"

Every believer in God's provision is a king and a priest. What is the function of a king? It's to rule. What's the function of a priest? Twofold. To offer sacrifice and to intercede. And as believers in Christ we are already made kings and priests to rule, to offer sacrifice and to intercede. This is not future. This is already taken place as we take our place, in Christ, and in His holiness. Notice how these correspond. Be ye holy, for I am holy. Leviticus 11:45 quoted in 1 Peter 1:16. A kingdom of priests and an holy nation. Stated by Moses in Exodus 19:6, carried over into Revelation 1:6, 5:10. The same language. And then Deuterononmy 28:18-19, 1 Peter 2:9 contain these phrases: A chosen generation, an holy nation, a peculiar people. The distinction of God's people is their holiness. That's the indication, above all others, that we belong to God.

Now let's turn for a little while to some of the other writings of the New Testament which lay the emphasis on holiness. Let's turn to the writing of the apostle Paul for a few moments. In 2 Corinthians 7:1:

> "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (KJV)"

This is the challenge to the believer in Christ. And notice in this verse the responsibility is put clearly upon us, it is what we have to do. We have to cleanse ourselves, we have to perfect or complete holiness in the fear of God. You'll notice that it speaks there of cleansing ourselves from two different kinds of filthiness. The filthiness of the flesh and the filthiness of the spirit. The filthiness of the flesh—that is, of course, the obvious carnal sins like fornication, drunkenness, blasphemy and so on. But the filthiness of the spirit is that forbidden intercourse with Satan's kingdom; the seeking after the occult, supernatural satanic power, fortune-telling, divination, witchcraft, sorcery, idolatry. This is the spiritual adultery. And in God's sight it is far more serious than even the physical adultery. The Scripture says that in view of God's promises, we are under an obligation to cleanse ourselves in both areas, in the area of the flesh and in the area of the spirit. And so cleansing ourselves to perfect holiness in the fear of God.

Now the first part of that first verse contains that word *therefore*. 'Having therefore these promises.' And probably there are those of you who have heard me say this before. In the Bible when you find a *therefore*, you want to find out what it's there for. And the *therefore* at the beginning of chapter 7 refers back to the promises of God from the Old Testament quoted at the end of chapter 6. That is, the last two verses of chapter 6 read as follows:

> "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, . . . (KJV)"

Notice the condition of God receiving us is that we come out and be separate and do not touch the unclean thing.

> ". . . and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (KJV)
> Then Paul goes on:
> Having therefore these promises [on the basis of God's promises and requirements], let us cleanse ourselves . . . perfecting holiness in the fear of [the Lord]."

Then we turn to 1 Thessalonians and notice three passages in this epistle. The Thessalonians had been in many ways model converts, they'd come to the Lord with great joy and excitement. They'd been transformed in their way of living, they were living witnesses. The Word of God sounded out from them to the regions round about. But we have to remember that they lived in paganism and heathenism and

there were many things that they still did not know. If you don't realize this, you might be surprised at some of the things that Paul has to tell them. And one of the things that Paul has to emphasize is the truth of holiness or sanctification. They had not yet come to understand much of this. And you'll see that the theme of sanctification runs through this first epistle to the Thessalonians. We'll look at three successive passages: 1 Thessalonians 3:13, we'll read verse 12 to get the context. This is Paul's desire and prayer for these believers.

> "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints. (KJV)"

Notice that Paul is here looking forward to one tremendous event which is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I believe that if you read the New Testament with an open mind, you will discover one thing: That the teaching of holiness is always linked up with the imminent expectation of Christ's return. The New Testament Christians lived in the hourly expectation that Jesus would be coming back. And this was the greatest motivation to holiness in their lives. And do you know what I believe? I believe we cannot live as they lived unless we have the same expectation that they had. I believe that this is the hope as it is written in 1 John 3 that causes a man to purify himself: 'Every man that hath this hope in him purifies himself, even as he [Jesus] is pure.'

I was talking to a very sweet lady the other day, the wife of a pastor. I have to be a little careful how I designate her. Baptized in the Holy Spirit from an old-line denomination, and we were talking about this theme and I began to speak about the fact that the coming of the Lord is so close at hand. And in a very nice way she began to kind of cool me off and tell me that I was not to get too excited and people had believed this in the year 1000 and they believed it in the days of Wesley and there were many people throughout church history who believed it, and still the Lord hadn't come. And I said, 'Nevertheless, I believe He's coming and coming soon.' And I really believe I pleased the Lord by saying that. We didn't have an argument, but I went to bed that night and I got a little extra reward. I woke up in the morning with something inside me that said, 'Jesus is coming soon.' And I'll tell you that I've never been quite so excited about the coming of the Lord as I was at that point. And I'm praying to God that from now on I'll never lose that inner conviction that Jesus is coming soon. Believe me, it is the real motivation to holy living. That's the way Paul expresses it here. He says, 'Remember, you're going to meet Jesus.' And he says, 'Just fancy how you're going to have to be at that great hour.' Let's read that 13th verse again:

> "To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints. (KJV)"

It's the coming of Christ that's the great motivation to personal holiness. And notice where it begins, it begins in the heart. Everything that God does that is of any value begins in the heart. But in the next chapter Paul moves on to the body, the 4th chapter, verses 3–4, and he says this:

> "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication . . . (KJV)"

See, it's a little surprising to us that Paul would have to tell Christians they're not free to commit fornication any longer, but these people came from a pagan background without any Ten Commandments, without any accepted standards of morality. Paul had to tell them fornication is not permitted for a Christian. Sometimes people give it a little fancier name today and call it 'premarital sex,' but the same truth still applies. Verse 4:

> ". . . that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour . . . (KJV)"

What is meant by 'his vessel'? The body, that's right. The physical body. So we move from the heart to the body. And Paul says, 'As a Christian, you have to know how to keep the vessel of your physical body in holiness and honor.' Your body is honorable, it's a wonderful creation of God. It was designed to be a temple of the Holy Spirit and it's your personal responsibility to keep that temple in the best possible condition from every point of view. I don't believe that any sincere believer can neglect the health of his own body. The body is so closely tied in with God's purposes of holiness. Paul says, 'You've got to learn how to keep that body of yours pure, clean, healthy, available to the Spirit of God.' He says elsewhere in Romans, 'Your members are the members of Christ. Yield your members unto God.' I don't agree with anybody that deliberately in any way breaks down the condition of the physical body. I don't believe that holiness is a list of *do not*'s as I shall indicate, but anything that actually causes the condition of the physical body to deteriorate is unholy. No matter what it may be.

Let's read on to the 5th chapter where Paul returns to this theme and sums it up in one of the most glorious phrases

of all Scripture. First Thessalonians 5:23:

W–H–O–L–L–Y, or entirely, or completely. This is doubtless the verse from which the phrase 'entire sanctification' is taken. Rightly understood, entire sanctification is a scriptural doctrine. But it is not to be confused with the extreme teaching of 'sinless perfection,' which is not what the Bible teaches. But Paul does pray that these people shall be sanctified wholly, entirely, completely. And then he's very specific as to what this means:

> ". . . I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (KJV)"

Notice again the motivation: The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says keep yourself spirit, soul and body clean, pure and ready. Sanctification includes every area of the life; the spirit, the soul and the body. When Jesus comes, He's coming for a complete personality, and that personality needs to be sanctified, set apart to God, holy.

Let's read on in the epistle to the Hebrews, just two Scriptures there. Hebrews 12:10, Paul is speaking about disciplines, God's discipline and the discipline of human parents. And he says:

That doesn't mean that they took pleasure in punishing their children, but it means that they did it with the best understanding that they had. But we all probably would acknowledge that sometimes human parents are not altogether wise or correct in their discipline. Nevertheless, they're doing the best they can. Then Paul goes on to say:

The ultimate purpose of divine discipline is to make you and me partakers of God's holiness. That's the end to which He shapes and directs all His interventions and all His controls in our lives. The ultimate purpose is partaking of His holiness. And then again in the same chapter, Hebrews 12:14:

See, holiness is not optional, it's a part of total salvation. We have given people a very wrong impression at times that well, you get saved and that's it. Then if you want to go on and get the baptism in the Spirit and get sanctified, that's a kind of optional postgraduate course. That's a complete misrepresentation of Scripture. The Scripture says, 'Without holiness no man can see the Lord.' We've also given people a wrong impression that salvation is a kind of static condition that you get into, that when you're saved, you're there. And the best thing that you can do to keep saved is to sit in a church seat and be safe. Salvation is not a static condition and anybody that hopes to be safe by sitting in a church seat is very unsafe. Salvation is a way of life, it's progressive, it's unfolding, it's continuing. I've been a Pentecostal preacher for years, so I can say this. But the Pentecostals and the Baptists have misled God's people as to what salvation is—completely. Many good Fundamentalists and Pentecostals who call themselves saved are far from God's salvation as of this time. Saved in l953. God bless you, brother, but we're living 18 years later, what's happened in the meanwhile? If you haven't grown, you're a monstrosity. If you've made no progress, the word *saved* no longer fits you, believe me. It's the ultimate end to which we are moving, day by day, is partaking of God's holiness.

> "If you want another Scripture, Proverbs 4:18:
> The path of the just [righteous] is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. (KJV)"

If you're walking in the way of righteousness, the light is getting brighter on your path every day. If you're still walking in yesterday's light, you're a backslider today. There is no stopping place in God until you reach the terminus, the goal, and that's 'partakers of His holiness.'

Closing this study, let's just look for a moment at one further important fact. That in the spiritual, holiness corresponds to beauty in the natural. What we acknowledge in the physical, in the body, as beauty, the thing that corresponds to that in the spiritual is holiness. Holiness is spiritual beauty. Anybody that cares about beauty cares about holiness. Let's just look at a few statements of Scripture on this. Psalm 93:5:

Now remember, the house of the Lord is not a church building, it's the people of God. And holiness in all generations is the thing that becomes God's people, that suits them, that makes them look their best, that God requires in His house. Psalm 96:9: The worship that's acceptable to God is worship that is beautified by holiness in the worshipper. And then in Psalm 110 we have a very, very tremendous picture of God's people, as I believe, at the close of this age. The church as it emerges after centuries of darkness, human tradition and error. The church that God is bringing forth that will be a bride fit to meet the bridegroom. We'll read just a few verses, the first three verses of Psalm 110:

> "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. [We know that this is Jesus, it's interpreted by Jesus Himself. Verse 2:] The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion [Zion is the gathered company of God's people]: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. (KJV)"

This is what Jesus is doing now, His enemies are still around, they still oppose, but He is ruling in the midst of His enemies out of the gathering of His people. And the rod of His strength, His authority, is going forth out of Zion. And then there's a description of God's people at the close of this age. The *King James Version* reads like this:

> "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power [but the real meaning is *willing offerings*, totally dedicated offerings, laid on the altar of God's holiness], in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. (KJV)"

If there's anything that appeals to me in beauty it's to see the sun rise on the fresh green foliage and grass. And every little drop of dew begins to shine and sparkle in the sunlight. And that's what holiness is like in the spiritual. And God's people are coming out of the womb of the morning in the beauties of holiness for this last great manifestation of His glory and His power in His people.

Finally, we have one moment or two left to turn to 1 Peter, to the New Testament, to a very beautiful passage there. First Peter 3, which is speaking specifically to Christian women. Now I think some preachers tend to overdo what the Bible teaches to women without dwelling on what the Bible teaches to men. So if you ladies are prepared to get a negative reaction, hold it, I'm not going to do that. All right. It speaks about the adorning of true saintly women. Verse 3:

That isn't what matters, though I believe that every Christian has an obligation to be neat and clean and acceptable in his appearance. But, verse 4:

> ". . . let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price [extremely precious. Verse 5:] For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, . . . (KJV)"

There is an adornment of holiness which is in the hidden man, in the heart. It's a meek and a quiet spirit. Man may not always appreciate it, but in the sight of God it is extremely precious. Shall we bow in prayer? Father, we thank Thee for this word of Thine. We thank Thee for its message so clear and so penetrating, so unambiguous. Lord, we pray that each one of us shall be open to the truth, that we shall not turn away, that we shall not resist the Spirit of grace, that when the Spirit speaks to us of holiness we shall be willing to listen, that we shall be willing to humble ourselves. We know, Lord, that You are pleased to dwell with the humble and the contrite. And we pray for Your people, Lord, each one of us, for ourselves and for one another, that as You look upon us from this day forward You may see us in the beauty of holiness. And we'll be careful, Lord, to give Thee the praise and the glory. In the name of Jesus. And all God's people said - Amen.

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Sermon

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