

Disciples With Distinction – Holiness For Today

- Today we begin a three-part series called “**Disciples With Distinction**,” dealing with three important topics:
 1. **Holiness for Today**
 2. **Holiness for Women**
 3. **Holiness for Men**
- Our study will deal with a foundational issue of the Apostolic faith; that is, **DOES THE HOLY GHOST AFFECT THE OUTWARD ACTIONS AND APPEARANCE OF THE VESSEL HE CHOOSES TO DWELL IN, OR NOT?** Do the standards of conduct and appearance given in Scripture apply to us today, or should they be discarded in favor of a lifestyle that is less conspicuous and less offensive to modern society?
- **But is outward holiness really a foundational issue of the Apostolic faith?** Consider the statement, “History repeats itself,” and then consider this:

Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch, was one of the first seven church deacons chosen to look after the business matters of the early church (Acts 6:3-5). However, his dedication to the Apostolic message was short-lived. According to early writings on heresy, Nicolas eventually backslid and introduced the **Doctrine of the Nicolaitanes** to the church. His doctrine came about as a “knee-jerk” reaction to the legalism of the Judaizers; it abused Paul’s doctrine of the grace of God and introduced a false freedom into the church. **Nicolas and his followers erred in combating one extreme teaching with another extreme teaching!**

In the book of Revelation, John compared the Nicolaitanes to Balaam in the Old Testament who “cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel” (Revelation 2:14-15). Balaam was unsuccessful in cursing Israel from without, but he taught them to mix godliness and worldliness (Numbers 22-25) and they cursed themselves from within! This same spirit was behind Nicolas’ doctrine, which was based on Greek dualism. **He declared that Christians - since they were sinners saved by grace - could live like the world on the outside and still remain saved on the inside.** His teaching would later be the basis of the doctrine of eternal security (once saved, always saved) and even the practice of the confessional (confessing to a priest while living in sin!).

Since his teaching required no outward (or inward!) change to be saved, he and his followers attracted large numbers of converts - both from the pagan religions and from a lukewarm church. Nicolas taught that the “externals” of holiness were not important. God, however, had a different opinion. **Twice in Revelation (2:6 and 2:15), God said that He “hated” the teaching of the Nicolaitanes. And He still hates it!**

In his brilliant work, “Against Heresies,” the Greek theologian Irenaeus (AD 125 – AD 202) lets us know how far this worldliness eventually reached: “The Nicolaitanes are the followers of that Nicolas who was one of the seven first ordained [as deacons] by the apostles. They lead lives of unrestrained indulgence.” (Book 1, Chapter 26, Section 3)

An outward “standard of holiness” was the first thing to go in the Great Falling Away of the latter first century, but the tide of change did not stop there. Holiness was soon followed by real repentance, water baptism by immersion in Jesus’ name, speaking in tongues and the gifts of the Spirit, and the doctrine of the Oneness of God. As the elder Apostles died one by one, leaders with smaller vision and weaker conviction stepped in and subtly altered their message. **Only much later, as gross doctrinal errors took root in the church and propelled her into the Dark Ages, did it become apparent just how much was lost when the holiness lifestyle was abandoned.**

- **The Nicolaitanes are once again rising among the Apostolics!** They are compromising the non-negotiable principles of Scripture for personal convenience and societal acceptance. They are surrendering holiness because it is too burdensome and laying truth to rest in the cold grave of tolerance because it is too exclusive and inflammatory. They have massacred the Scripture, maligned the Apostles and mortified their Creator with their shoddy scholarship and their loose living. But the modern Nicolaitanes do not deceive me; I know the damage they did the last time around. **Their new freedom is nothing less than the old bondage in another cloak.** Observe them long enough and you will see that holiness is only the first item on their agenda of change, for the slope to ecumenicalism is steep and slippery. **History repeats itself!**
- **WHAT IS HOLINESS?**
 - The Bible teaches us that holiness is one of the attributes of God, necessitating His condemnation of sin, and setting before men their highest possible aspiration – to be holy as God is holy!
 - **1 Peter 1:15-16** *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.*
 - The Hebrew word “qodesh” and the Greek word “hagiosune” mean “withdrawal.” Therefore, scholars define holiness to mean “separate” or “apart.” **Being holy does not only mean withdrawing FROM something, it means withdrawing UNTO something.** We do not live holy merely to make others look unholy! Our original state of holiness was lost in the Fall of Man, and we live holy lives so that we can “withdraw” into man’s original state of communion with God.
 - **Hebrews 12:14** *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:*

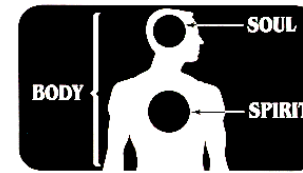
- The Bible teaches us that HOLINESS IS ESSENTIAL for Christians, and it also teaches us that our personal holiness develops through a process known as SANCTIFICATION (a synonym for “holiness” or “separation”).
- 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24** ²³And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.
- Paul is teaching us three important concepts here:
 - That sanctification is a process of maturing that takes place over time (“sanctify you WHOLLY”).
 - That we are sanctified through God’s power, not our own (“faithful is he that calleth you, WHO ALSO WILL DO IT”).
 - That sanctification involves all three parts of man’s being (“SPIRIT and SOUL and BODY”).

"SALVATION IS THE MOST ELASTIC WORD IN THE BIBLE"

Time	Past	Present	Future
Experience	"I was saved"	"I am being saved"	"I will be saved"
Theological Term	Justified	Sanctified	Glorified
I am saved from sin's	Penalty	Power	Presence
My holiness before God is	Positional	Experiential	Eternal
My personal righteousness is	Imputed	Imparted	Implanted
Sanctification occurs in my	Spirit	Soul (Mind)	Body

- POSITIONAL sanctification** is as complete for the youngest believer as it is for the oldest. It depends only upon **one's position in Christ**. A new Christian is as saved as any saint the moment they are born again, but they are only beginning to walk with God; they are immature.
- EXPERIENTIAL sanctification** is one's actual holiness of lifestyle, or **what one is through Christ**. It is imperative that believers allow God to lead them in sanctification, for it is possible to eventually forfeit salvation altogether if they do not mature in holiness.
- ETERNAL sanctification** will occur in believers at the rapture, when they are instantly and eternally transformed into a state of **complete conformity to Christ**.

- THUS, MOST ISSUES OF HOLINESS ARE NOT SALVATION ISSUES; THEY ARE MATURITY ISSUES.** ONLY AS WE DO NOT OBEY GOD IN THESE AREAS DOES OUR WILLFUL DISOBEDIENCE BECOME A SALVATION ISSUE.
- The battle for holiness (sanctification) is won or lost IN THE MIND,** because it is our mind (soul) that must be transformed on a daily basis! On one side in this battle is our redeemed SPIRIT directing us to do good; on the other side is our unredeemed BODY tempting us to do evil.



In a **SPIRITUALLY DEAD** person, the SPIRIT is alienated from God because of sin. Unless he makes a choice to change it, this is an eternal condition! Since the spirit is dead, the SOUL is now in charge. Led by his intellect, emotions and will, this person cannot understand spiritual concepts, for they are foreign to him. His BODY becomes merely a tool for acting out his lusts and passions. This man is “mortal,” which means “death-doomed” or “Satan-ruled.”



In a **SPIRITUALLY ALIVE** person, the SPIRIT is back in fellowship with God because of salvation. And unless he makes a choice to change it, this also is an eternal condition! Since the spirit is alive, the SOUL is not allowed to be in charge. Thus, there is an ongoing war to subjugate the natural mind and body to God's Spirit now dwelling in the redeemed human spirit. (Romans 6:11-13, 7:22-23, 8:13-14) His BODY is now offered as a “living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1) to do the will of God, and not allowed to fulfill fleshly lusts. It is now subject to direction from his reborn spirit – through the “MIDDLE MAN” of the soul. Thus, it is the MIND that determines the quality of his service to God. That is why **CHRISTIAN MATURITY** is so important, and **WHY IT IS A CONSTANT STRUGGLE TO LIVE HOLY!** By the way, this man is “im-mortal,” which means “NOT death-doomed”!

- Here are some Scriptures that illustrate this constant struggle:**
Romans 7:18-23 ¹⁸For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh.) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. ¹⁹For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. ²⁰Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. ²¹I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. ²²For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: ²³But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Romans 8:5-9 ⁵For they that are after the **flesh** do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the **Spirit** the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to be **carnally minded** is death; but to be **spiritually minded** is life and peace. ⁷Because the **carnal mind** is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. ⁸So then they that are in the **flesh** cannot please God. ⁹But ye are not in the **flesh**, but in the **Spirit**, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

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

SEVEN HOLINESS PRINCIPLES:

1. Holiness involves both the “negative” concept of SEPARATION and the “positive” concept of DEDICATION.

2 Corinthians 6:17-7:1 ¹⁷Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, ¹⁸And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. ^{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.

2. We are not saved BY works, but we are saved UNTO works.

Ephesians 2:8-10 ⁸For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

James 2:17-18 ¹⁷Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. ¹⁸Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

3. Holiness is not a MEANS of earning salvation, but a RESULT of experiencing it.

Titus 3:5, 8 ⁵Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost ... ⁸This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

4. God demands an EXTERNAL witness of our INTERNAL holiness.

Matthew 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT EXTERNAL COMPLIANCE IS WORTHLESS BEFORE GOD UNLESS THERE IS ALSO AN INTERNAL REALITY OF HOLINESS!

5. God gives us three HOLINESS TEACHERS to show us how to live a life that pleases Him.

- The supreme source of holiness teaching is **the Bible** itself. Therefore, a holiness standard must either be a specific Biblical statement or a valid application of a Biblical principle.
- God has also given us **spiritual leadership** in the church to help us apply Biblical principles to the situations we encounter in contemporary life. (Ephesians 4:11-16)
- Finally, **the Holy Spirit** teaches us directly through internal promptings and convictions - if we will listen! (John 14:26, 16:13, Jeremiah 31:33, 1 John 2:27)
- **NOTE:** Our “three holiness teachers” work together and complement one another, but the Bible is our final authority. God does not give human beings the right to change His message, nor will the indwelling Spirit of God speak contrary to the written Word He Himself inspired.

6. The Bible teaches us three kinds of HOLINESS STANDARDS that God expects every mature Christian to adhere to.

- **Bible Standards** – these are explicitly commanded in Scripture and demand immediate obedience.
- **Church Standards** - these are established by spiritual leadership to deal with the practical application of Scriptural principles in modern situations, and are usually understood and implemented gradually as a believer matures.
- **Personal Standards** - these are prompted by the Holy Spirit in individual lives due to the unique background of each believer, and may have no relevance to any other believer.
- **NOTE:** Holiness standards are NOT the central part of holiness - that is an internal work of God’s Spirit. However, they ARE an external sign that an authentic work of salvation and subsequent Christian maturity have taken place.

7. **Because holiness principles deal more with our CREATION than with our CULTURE, God's Word emphasizes them differently for WOMEN and for MEN.**

- The reason there seem to be more "external standards" for women is that God created men and women differently (even if that is not a "politically correct" thing to say!).
- For example, men are stimulated by sight. This is why Jesus said, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." (Matthew 5:28) A man is always attracted to a woman physically before he is connected to her emotionally. That is why pornography is sold almost exclusively to men. Statistics tell us that even the majority of pornographic magazines published for women are actually purchased by homosexual men.
- Women on the other hand are stimulated by touch, either a physical touch or an emotional touch. That is why Paul gives a different command concerning women: "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." (1 Corinthians 7:1)
- So, while a woman is commanded to APPEAR a certain way so that the man is not affected, the man is commanded to ACT a certain way so that the woman is not affected.

HOLINESS FOR WOMEN AND MEN:

- **1 Timothy 2:8-10** ⁸*I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.* ⁹*In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; ¹⁰*But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.**

In our next two lessons, we will discuss the implications of this passage of Scripture, namely ...

- The WOMAN'S primary problem areas with holiness are:
 1. Adornment
 2. Apparel
 3. Attitude
- The MAN'S primary problem areas with holiness are:
 1. Appetite
 2. Anger
 3. Apathy

- This is not to say that women never have problems with inner holiness, or that men never have problems with outer holiness.
- These are **TENDENCIES ONLY**, because of the distinct natures the sexes were created with.
- **FOR BOTH WOMEN AND MEN, HOLINESS BEGINS ON THE INSIDE AND MUST BE DEMONSTRATED ON THE OUTSIDE.**

QUESTION: "I KNOW ABOUT OUTWARD HOLINESS STANDARDS, BUT HOW CAN I DEVELOP REAL INTERNAL HOLINESS?"

- The good news is that if you are a Spirit-filled child of God, you already have internal holiness, for God's Spirit is holy! However, you must let Him reign in your life - both inside and outside.
- Since holiness is God's very nature, when we receive the Holy Spirit we receive a holy nature. Through the Spirit's power, we can overcome sin and live righteously (Romans 8:2-4, Galatians 5:16, 1 Thess. 4:7-8).
- We have freedom from sin's dominion, the power to choose not to sin (John 8:34-36, Romans 6:11-25). We will not continue to live in sin, and in fact our new nature cannot sin (1 John 3:9).
- However, our old nature is not eradicated but merely subdued within us, so our flesh still has the ability to commit sinful acts (1 John 1:8, 2:1, Galatians 5:6-17).
- But the born again nature within us restrains us from habitually committing sin. As long as we let the Spirit lead us, we will not sin!
- **THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT DOES NOT DESTROY THE LAW OF SIN BUT OVERCOMES IT.**
- As long as a bird flaps its wings, the law of aerodynamics enables it to overcome the law of gravity. However, gravity has not been destroyed. If the bird folds its wings, gravity reasserts itself and the bird plunges to the ground.
- **CHRISTIANS CAN LIVE ABOVE SIN – BUT ONLY IF THEY CONTINUALLY "FLAP THEIR SPIRITUAL WINGS!"**
- **NEXT TWO LESSONS:**
 - Holiness For Women
 - Holiness For Men