

FOUNDATION STONES, PART 4 - HOLINESS

Because the Arctic region of North America between Alaska and Greenland is dominated by vast, level plains of tundra there are few natural landmarks. For this reason, over many years the native peoples in these areas have used stone landmarks for navigation, as a point of reference, or as a marker for food caches. They are called Inukshuk, and many are built in the shape of a man to indicate that "someone has passed this way before."

In the book of Joshua, a similar monument was erected when the children of Israel crossed over the Jordan River into their Promised Land, because God wanted them to remember the heritage their forefathers had given them, and know that "someone has passed this way before."

Joshua 4:21-22 When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these **stones**? Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.

In the New Testament Church, we also have been given a great heritage, passed on to us by faithful men and women who left us a firm foundation. We can never forget where we have come from, or we will never be able to get where God wants us to go! Twenty-first century Christians need to know without doubt that the things we believe are not just man's idea, but are absolute foundational TRUTH from God's Word.

Ephesians 2:20 And are built upon the **foundation** of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.

TONIGHT, WE WILL LOOK AT OUR FOURTH FOUNDATION STONE – HOLINESS.

Hebrews 12:14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

This verse teaches us that holiness is absolutely ESSENTIAL for Christians. You can't go to God's holy Heaven unless you live a holy life. Notice the next verse, Hebrews 12:15 – "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God ..." In other words, when you make no attempt to follow a holy lifestyle, you lose the grace of God in your life!

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.

These verses teach us that holiness is absolutely EXPECTED by God. We are commanded to live holy in a way that affects every part ("all manner") of our lifestyle ("conversation") – this is nonnegotiable to God!

But couldn't this idea of holiness just be an "inward" work of God? Is outward holiness really a foundation stone of the Apostolic faith? Does the Holy Ghost really affect the outward actions and appearance of the vessel He chooses to dwell in? Do the standards of conduct and appearance given in Scripture apply to us today? Couldn't they be discarded in favour of a lifestyle that is less conspicuous and offensive in modern society? **Does God really want us to be that different?**

Titus 2:14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

1 Peter 2:9 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:

How foundational is holiness? Remember this: "History repeats itself" ...

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 6:5). 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, the Apostle John compared the Nicolaitanes to Balaam in the Old Testament who "cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel" (Revelation 2:14). Balaam was unsuccessful in cursing Israel from without, but he taught them to mix godliness and worldliness (Numbers 31:16) 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. The loss of holiness was soon followed by the loss of 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! The only thing we learn from history is that we never learn anything from history! **A LIFESTYLE OF HOLINESS IS A FOUNDATION STONE OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH.**

Jesus wants to be more than the Saviour who forgives your sins, He wants to be the Lord who affects your everyday character and conduct! **BUT THE APOSTATE SPIRIT OF THE LAST DAYS WILL REJECT HOLINESS TEACHING! THEY WANT A SAVIOUR, NOT A LORD.**

Isaiah 4:1 And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.

The last days church is represented by seven candlesticks in Revelation chapters 1-3. The seven would-be brides of Isaiah 4:1 are a prophetic picture of the church in the last days. All seven women seek to take hold of one man (i.e. seven churches seek the Lord).

Many Christians today want to eat their own bread, their own interpretation of God's Word. But this bread is polluted and unacceptable to God!

2 Timothy 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

Malachi 1:7 Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible.

Many Christians today want to wear their own apparel, rejecting separation from the world, holiness preaching, spiritual authority, and anything they think is "negative."

These "women" want to be the Bride of Christ, but only on their own terms! They have no desire to submit to the authority of a husband; they are not interested in his needs or his concerns. They want an arrangement that benefits them without intimacy, love or devotion.

These "Christians" want nothing more than forgiveness, to have the reproach of sin removed. This is the apostate spirit of the last days – BUT IT IS NOT OUR SPIRIT!

The attitude of many is "how much do I have to do to be saved?" but our attitude is "how much can I do to please Jesus?"

Romans 12:1 I 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.

Paul says, "I BEG you brethren to present your BODIES (not just your "inner man") to God in sacrificial, holy living – and this is not anything extraordinary, it is just your reasonable service to Him as a Christian!"

Luke 17:10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

AMPLIFIED BIBLE: "we have not gone beyond our obligation"

Living a holy lifestyle is the "new normal" when you become a child of God. You should think differently, talk differently, act differently, and dress differently. The POINT of the Apostolic lifestyle is to STAND OUT. This is not just for a few "deep" Christians – this is for ALL Christians! You don't get "extra points" if you do this – HOLINESS IS THE POINT!

The Hebrew word “qodesh” and the Greek word “hagiosune” which are translated “holy” in the Bible literally mean “withdrawal,” “separation” 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.

We have no problem teaching baptism by immersion in water because the very word “baptism” means “to immerse.” In the same way, we have no problem teaching biblical standards of holiness because the very word “holy” means “to be withdrawn, to stand apart, to be separate.”

We do NOT teach that our lifestyle convictions save us, because the Bible teaches that “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). But we DO teach that our lifestyle convictions are a RESULT of us being saved – not just because we are THANKFUL, but because we are TRANSFORMED. We now have a desire to please the Lord!

Paul tells us that our salvation is “not of works” ...

Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

But then immediately tells us that our salvation is “unto good works” ...

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

In other words, GOOD WORKS don’t have anything to do with GETTING saved, but they have everything to do with BEING saved and STAYING saved! Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord!

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.

Because God has done so much for me, I WANT to live a life that is separated from the world and separated unto Him in body AND spirit. **Immature Christians think in terms of “I HAVE TO, maturing Christians think in terms of “I WANT TO,” and mature Christians think in terms of “I GET TO”** (i.e. it’s a privilege to live holy!).

People argue over the DETAILS of holiness because they have never received the SPIRIT of holiness.

Jude was preparing to write an epistle about “the common salvation” (i.e. the new birth experience that all Christians receive) when he was prompted by the Holy Ghost to tell us to “contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” He goes on to warn us that some ungodly people will creep in to the church and turn God’s grace into “lasciviousness” (“loose living”) – in other words, they will live any way they want and just presume that God will forgive them and overlook it. And then Jude warns us that God destroyed some of the people He once delivered (!), because they did not obey His commandments! (i.e. Israel) **HOLINESS IS PART OF OUR FAITH – IT IS A FOUNDATION STONE!**

Jude 1:3-5 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.

Paul gives us the major passage in the NT where the word “YIELD” is used multiple times. The Greek word means “to exhibit, to substantiate, to prove, or to show.” **If you’re YIELDED to God, IT WILL SHOW!**

Romans 6:12-19 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

Paul says it very plainly – you once were a SERVANT to SIN, and now you are a SERVANT to RIGHTEOUSNESS. And it is “righteousness unto holiness” – if the JUSTIFICATION you’ve experienced on the INSIDE is real, it will show up in SANCTIFICATION on the OUTSIDE!

God is not the least bit interested in being made over in YOUR image. He refuses to conform to your culture or comfort zone. He is totally convinced that since He alone redeemed (“purchased”) you out of sin, He OWNS you. And with God that is non-negotiable. God wants to make you over into HIS image – so if you have a Biblical salvation experience, it will CHANGE you in ways that you could not have previously imagined. Your DESIRES will change. Your PRIORITIES will change. Your THINKING will change. Your ACTIVITIES will change. Your DRESS CODE will change. In fact, your ENTIRE LIFESTYLE will change.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

If you have true righteousness in your SPIRIT, you will have true holiness in your BODY – because BOTH of them belong to God!

I understand that many times, the generations before us did a good job of telling us WHAT to do, but sometimes not a very good job teaching us WHY we do it. We're working diligently to correct that in this generation. But hear me well ... just because they may have overlooked the WHY doesn't mean that they were wrong on the WHAT! Culture and churches may have become more liberal, but God has never changed His mind on what an Apostolic believer should act like, talk like, or dress like.

We are now “servants of righteousness” – and servants don't ARGUE, they YIELD.

Because we are a church where EVERYONE is welcome to “belong before they believe,” and because we are a church that is patient with young believers while they GROW, we always run the risk of being misinterpreted. Jesus and Paul were misinterpreted, and we will be also!

That means people will come here from time to time with an AGENDA ... to enjoy fellowship but not discipleship, to get all the benefits without any of the responsibility, to experience salvation but reject sanctification. AND WE WILL LET THEM COME, AND WE WILL LOVE THEM.

But the reason every one of us is here instead of somewhere else is the power of God that is in our midst – and a holy God only manifests Himself only among a holy people who are YIELDED to Him. We will NEVER change our stand on HOLINESS, because it is BIBLICAL.

We will continue to YIELD ourselves and SEPARATE ourselves, because that is a foundation stone that brings God's power!