

Being And Doing

1 Peter 1:15-16

15 . . . as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

(1 Peter 1:15-16 (NKJV))

Last week, we began the message by saying that these words, "Be Ye Holy" might possibly be some of the most important words in all of scripture. They are words that are filled with all manner of seemingly impossible demands, especially to our souls that sometimes seem to us to be barely saved. And so, as we read these words, we immediately want to say, "But how could this be even remotely possible for such a wretch as me?"

And folks, I can't count the number of times that I have heard well-meaning friends, even preachers, say such things as, "Well, we'll never be really perfect or really holy in this life. That only takes place when we get to heaven".

And I know what those people are trying to say, but we really should be careful in saying such things, because here, God is actually giving a command to all who call upon His Name to "Be Holy". And to add to those words, over in Matthew 5:48, Jesus Himself commanded us to "Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect".

Folks, holiness is ever so important to God. And because we hesitate to believe that our wretched souls could ever really be holy, we live much of our lives stuck within a dilemma of belief and unbelief.

As I observe the way my own soul wrestles with this dilemma, I see that I continually attempt to rationalize these matters using my own personal abilities of wisdom and knowledge. And that is never enough to discern the mind of God.

Thankfully, God offers me relief by turning my eyes to such truths as those in 1 Corinthians 2, truths that speak about a special "secret wisdom" that will come to me from God, secret wisdom that is able to explain the unknowable things of God to my wavering soul. Listen! Verse 6 of 1 Corinthians 2 . . .

6 We . . . speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. (1 Corinthians 2:6-7 (NIV))

I confess that I don't know all of the possible implications involved within this special "secret wisdom" from God, but I do believe that it includes such "wisdom" as would be needed for us to know how to become "Holy" in His sight.

His "secret wisdom" begins by revealing to us that our holiness must have as its beginning, the "salvation" of our souls, an absolutely essential first step. And there can be no other way.

And also, as part of the salvation that we receive from Christ we receive the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit.

His "secret wisdom" reveals to us that those two essential beginnings are all part of God's special divine plan, a plan and a narrow pathway that while difficult, is filled with every provision that we will need along our way towards the "holiness" spoken about here.

Listen to the words of 1 Corinthians 1:30 that speak about His abundant provision to us. Listen!

"It is of God that Christ Jesus has become in you (in me), wisdom, holiness, righteousness and redemption". (1 Corinthians 1:30)

Consider these precious words folks! It is within these few words that many of our questions and concerns about how we can "be holy" are answered for us. Within those words is more of the "secret" wisdom that we read about a moment ago. Within those words, we are told that it is the very Person of Christ who comes into our "being" and brings with Him all the blessed provision for holiness our souls could ever need.

As I prepared this message, my thoughts went to the struggles of a 16th century Roman Catholic priest, Martin Luther. Deep within his heart, Martin Luther could sense that there was something glaringly amiss in the relationship that He knew He was supposed to have with God. And as he searched the scriptures to find what he was missing, his focus became set on the words of Romans 1, especially the words of verses 16 and 17. Listen!

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it (in the gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:16-17 (NKJV))

From these words, Martin Luther realized that the salvation of his soul, and then everything else that would follow on in his relationship with God must come through

faith in Christ alone, from “first to last”, that it was not of works that he would do, but through faith in the Person of Christ.

From that one understanding of God’s plan, Martin Luther became a prominent force in the beginning of our protestant reformation. And may I say, Martin Luther had this doctrine exactly right. Everything, from first to last, is Christ.

“It is of God that Christ Jesus has become in you (in me), wisdom, holiness, righteousness and redemption”. (1 Corinthians 1:30)

Christ is the “secret wisdom” from God, that first causes our souls to hunger for salvation and then to find our salvation in Him. It is through His indwelling presence that souls desire to be and to do righteous things and to have holy behaviors. It is through the shed blood of Christ that we are washed clean from all our sins and are redeemed from a lifetime of bondage. And it is the indwelling presence of the Spirit of Christ that causes us to be holy and to have the holy behavior that we are being admonished here in our text to have. Those words again . . .

15 . . . as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:15-16 (NKJV))

Also again, those words in 1 Corinthians 1,

“It is of God that Christ Jesus has become in you (in me), wisdom, holiness, righteousness and redemption”. (1 Corinthians 1:30)

As we receive Christ as our Savior and Lord, this actually takes place within us. The very person of the Spirit of Christ comes to dwell within us bringing with Him wisdom, holiness, righteousness and redemption. And yes, I know that we have heard such words as these so many, many times. But how much do we really believe them. And how much do we really believe such words as 2 Corinthians 5:17?

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV))

Folks, these words in Corinthians are just as true as John 3:16. And we believe and rely on John 3:16, so why not these?

Here in these words is the essence of the command that we are studying about today, “Be holy, for I am holy”.

Recall that as we closed the message last week, we said, that we must first “be holy”, before we can ever hope to “do holy” things. That is absolute! The “being” must come before the “doing”!

And that is what God is doing within each of us as we receive Christ as Savior and Lord. He is actually changing our very “being” within us.

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV))

This is the point in which the words of 1 Corinthians 1 take place. The old creature is done away with and God makes “the being” within us into an entirely new creature, one that can receive the Person of Christ and His

“. . . wisdom, holiness, righteousness and redemption”. (1 Corinthians 1:30)

May I say that again! The Spirit of Christ comes into our spirit and changes our very “being”. From the very first moment that He begins to abide within us our old nature is washed away and He puts a new nature within us.

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV))

Our nature, our very being changes. And may I say that these words clearly imply that the change is immediate. The word here “behold all things have become new” give the clear understanding that the change is immediate.

But our minds quickly protest and say, “Oh but I don’t “feel” like such profound changes have taken place in me. I am still being tempted and drawn to some of my old ways”. And that is true. And those temptations are real and difficult.

So then, what is it that actually takes place in those first moments of our re-birth in Christ. It is exactly as these words tell us. Our “nature” is changed. The foundational core of our being is made new.

By putting a “new nature” within us, God has prepared our souls to be able to make all those changes in our behavior that “wisdom” and “righteousness” and “holiness” will bring about. If our old sin nature had not been done away with within us, then we would not have been able to join with the Spirit of Christ to begin to resist and to turn away from our old ways of sin.

Folks, think about this! Before the change, while we were still consumed with our old nature, as temptation to sin presented itself to us, our nature had no real desire to resist sin. If it felt good, we would do it. Our old nature simply used its own logic and then did what it thought was most pleasing to it. If, on occasion, our old nature sensed danger in a temptation, it might for its own safety have turned away from that particular temptation

to sin. But the decision to resist the temptation had nothing to do with holiness or righteousness. It was simply another self-centered, self-preserving decision.

But once the Spirit of Christ moves in and begins to abide within our spirit, a whole other manner of thinking begins to take place. We are actually convicted of “sin and righteousness and judgement”, something that had never taken place before. Those words in John 16,

8 And when He (the Holy Spirit) has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. (John 16:8 (NKJV))

This is how this impossible command from God becomes possible for our once weak and wicked souls. It is as Martin Luther concluded. It is all of Christ, from first to last. When we receive Christ as our Savior and Lord, everything changes. His Spirit comes to live within us and we become “new creatures”, the old nature is gone. We have a completely new nature. And as the Spirit of Christ abides within us, He becomes our wisdom, our holiness, our righteousness and our redemption. And we begin to behave with new and different responses, holy and righteous ones.

Now yes, lest we give the impression that God gives us an completely “free ride” into holiness, may we always remember and realize the realities of the world, our flesh and the devil, and their wretched effects on our behavior.

Yes, we do have a whole new nature within us, a nature that no longer wants and desires to sin. But with only a “nudge” from either of those ungodly three, the world, the flesh or the devil, our old nature that has actually been killed out within us seemingly tries to rear its dead self. And memories of the enjoyment we experienced when we use to participate in that behavior rises up within us. We wish it would not happen, but it does. And that is when we, you and I, must do our part. Listen to the way that the Apostle James puts it!

7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. (James 4:7-10 (NKJV))

These words seem to picture someone who has let themselves go too many steps down the wrong pathway. And that can happen even after we have the new nature living within us. Old habits and behaviors just seem to come on us without much warning, and suddenly we realize that we are in deep trouble.

But the answer is always the same, whether we are just at the edge of sin or if we find that we are knee-deep in it. We must

7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. . . . 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. (James 4:7,10 (NKJV))

Before we close, may we resay some of the basic truths that God intends by this command to “Be Holy, for He is holy”. First, God is here telling us that it is His nature to be Holy and that from the first moment that we are saved we become a part of who He is. We are in Him and He is in us, and because He is holy and can be no other way, then so also you and I must be Holy, otherwise we can have no part in Him.

And that is an ever-so unyielding demand. God can have it no other way. He is truly holy and He cannot violate His own holiness by allowing you and me who are in Him to be unholy.

And there is a simple truth that prevails within the behavior of all men. Out of our “being” comes all the “behaviors” of daily life. If our “being” is corrupt, then so also will our behavior be corrupt. It can happen no other way. Simply put, a corrupt being is incapable of doing “holy” things.

If we ever hope to “be holy”, then we must allow Christ to be our way, our truth, our life. We must receive Him as Savior and Lord and allow Him to come in and change our “being” into a “new creature”, a new spirit that can then receive His wisdom, His holiness, his righteousness and His redemption. This is how you and I can “be holy, as He is holy”!

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV))

“It is of God that Christ Jesus has become in you (in me), wisdom, holiness, righteousness and redemption”. (1 Corinthians 1:30)

Praise be to God!