

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord” I Cor. 7:1

HOLINESS - GOD'S PLAN

by Craig Marlatt

Recently I had an opportunity to meet with a minister friend of mine who was passing through town on his way to some meetings where he would be speaking. He had recently gone through some changes in his ministry and I was very interested in his perspective on things in light of what God was doing in his own life. Because the meeting time was short I asked him briefly what he thought was the greatest need in the Church today. Without hesitation he replied, “Holiness and evangelism!”

Although I was somewhat startled by his quick response I knew in my spirit that he was speaking from God’s heart directly to me. “Holiness and evangelism!” We are desperate for a God sent refreshing from the Holy Spirit today. A refreshing that not only brings the activity of the Spirit into our churches, but also the character of the Lord Jesus into our lives. No programs or gifted men can substitute the genuine outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church. Nothing we do without can take the place of what only He can do within us.

Why Is Holiness So Important?

Nothing can replace personal holiness for the genuine witness of the Church to the world. I believe that people in the world are looking for something that is real, true, and worth believing. Today young people are desperate for role models that have something worth following and few Christians are willing to put forth the dedication and the effort to be the salt of the earth in someone else's life. Because of this we are losing the popular vote and taking on the appearance of people who are doing their own thing. Christianity is not a religious issue, it is God’s answer for the human situation. It is God’s way of bringing the world into the order in which He created it to be: under the Lordship of Jesus Christ!

In order to accomplish this He has called out a people to himself and redeemed them unto a life of obedience through love. It is this love and obedience to God that separates true Christians from the world and brings them under the dominion of Jesus Christ. It is the love of God that is shed abroad in our hearts through the giving of the Holy Spirit to those who believe. Romans 5:1,2 says *“Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”*

Holiness is not primarily an external thing, but in the human life it finds itself totally expressed in one word: Obedience! It is not something that we can obtain by the way we dress or the group we associate with. It is not what we do or do not eat or drink, (although true holiness affects all of these areas in our lives). Holiness is the re-created heart expressing its’ love for God through every area of the Christian life. It is the way we work, and the way we play; the way that we raise our children and the way we treat our spouse (or even ourselves). It affects the way we appear to, and interact with those

around us, and commands the right to alter and change our personalities if they are found unsuitable to God. It is the Holy Spirit working in and through a human life which is consecrated unto God. It is God's rightful due from the human race! "*Without holiness no man can see the Lord.*"

Whenever we as Christians lower our standards of righteousness in accordance with the world's morality (comparing ourselves to the world) we hinder the purposes of God in our lives and indeed yield to the very enemy of God (and of our own souls) Satan. God has high plans for us and to accomplish them He has given his best: Jesus Christ.

Holy Spirit Has Been Given to Us.

Before He died Jesus spoke to his disciples about the next step in God's plan, which would take place after Jesus' work was completed. He said to them, "*Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you*" (John 16:7). Having accomplished our salvation by his own death on the Cross, and resurrection from the dead, Jesus left the earth and sent the Holy Spirit to the Church to complete the work of God's plan for man. Not just to walk with us (as Jesus did with his disciples), but to be in us, working through our lives and conforming us into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ (John 14:17).

When Jesus was on the earth He limited himself to the physical body of a man and hence could only be in one place at one time. But now we have the Holy Spirit who is not a flesh and blood man as Jesus was, but rather Spirit, by which means He is able to be in all of us who believe, everywhere, wherever we may be. If we yield to the leading of the Holy Spirit He will teach us how to walk in the right way, and He will confirm the words that Jesus spoke (John 14:26).

Before leaving the earth Jesus told his disciples, "*I go to prepare a place for you*" (John 14:2). He might also have said of the Holy Spirit, 'He comes to prepare you for that place'. If the Holy Spirit is in us He is active, working to make us holy. He is busy leading us in the way so that the holiness that is given to us by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ can indeed be worked out in our lives to render us a holy people fit for the One who calls us by his own name.