

Gamma 13

Study 4

1 Peter 1:13-21

- 1. We are called “to be holy because God is holy” The popular definition of holy is being morally pure is this definition adequate? Look at Lev 11: 44-45 which is the reference Peter is taking from and look at Isaiah 6:3. Does being holy only means being moral? What then is “ holy” and why must we be holy just because He is holy**

The popular definition is not totally accurate. Being holy is more than just moral purity. Lets look at Isaiah 6:3 (ESV) And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!”

Imagine if the angels had sung “Moral , moral , moral is the Lord of hosts;..this surely detracts of the glory of God

Then in Leviticus 11:44-45 (ESV) For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. 45 For I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.”

The Israelites were asked to be holy and the way they were going to achieve this in part was not eating any creatures that crawled on the ground which is nothing to do with moral purity. After all God created all creatures and none are intrinsically sinful.

The holiness of God is one of the most difficult attributes of God to describe. The Hebrew word for holy is *Qadowsh* which literally means “to cut “. Hence to be holy means to be cut off, or separate, from everything else. It means to be in a class of your own.

- Exodus 15:11 asks, "Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?" (ESV)
- 1 Samuel 2:2 declares, "There is none holy like the Lord: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God." (ESV)

Everything God thinks, desires, speaks and does is utterly holy in every way.

He is holy in justice. He is holy in love. He is holy in mercy. He is holy in power. He is holy in sovereignty. He is holy in wisdom. He is holy in patience. He is holy in anger. He is holy in grace. He is holy in faithfulness. He is holy in compassion. In every category He is in a class of his own.'

In fact His holiness is the essence of who He is

Now let's get back to the command in 1 Peter. We are to be holy because He is holy and Peter took this reference from Lev 11:44-45 which indicated that because God had saved them from slavery in Egypt therefore they were then to be dedicated to Him to be cut out of all the peoples of the world to uniquely belong to Him in the way they lived, their behaviour and right down into what they are to eat. They were uniquely belonging to God. The character we will share with God will necessarily be limited to include only his communicable attributes like love, integrity, mercy, good, patient and just as we cannot share his incommunicable attributes like omniscience or omnipresence.

- 2. The older brother in the parable of the prodigal son was portrayed as being moral as well as the rich young ruler who came to Jesus to enquire about eternal life. Both professed to be moral but where they holy? What about Buddhist monks who live an ascetic life isolated from the common world dedicated to keeping their minds pure are they holy too?**

Being holy is no less than being moral but more than mere morality. The elder brother and the rich young man were being moral for a particular purpose. That purpose for the elder brother was to inherit the fathers lands and resources. Morality was a means to an end. The rich young man used morality as the way in which he could earn his way into heaven. Both of them were never holy. Being holy means to be set apart, dedicated to the glory of the person to whom you are set apart for which is ultimately God. A holy person is one who keeps himself morally pure because he loves God and seeks only the glory of God. The Buddhist monks live ascetic lives, cut off from the rest of the world in their monasteries in an effort to follow the 8 fold path which is right view, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right samadhi ('meditative absorption or union'). Their goal is to be one with the universe in Nirvana that is an escape from this world. They are definitely moral but cannot be holy as they are not set apart for the glory and love of God. They are following a set of rules to reach Nirvana

- 3. Why does living holy lives start in the way we think? In verse 13 .. "Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" Isn't holiness simply following the 10 commandments?**

The imagery Peter bring here is like a soldier who girds up his loins which means he ties up the flowing part of his gown to facilitate the free movement of combat. It is an active deliberate action on the part of the believer. Holiness is related to thinking through what it means to be holy in our community in a serious and sober manner not led by emotionalism or anger or fear. The person who desires to be holy needs to sift through what was his former life described as *1 Peter 1:14 (ESV) As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance*

He needs to look and see how his behaviour in the past life was based upon his desire to be independent of God. Then he needs to take the same behaviour in scrutinize under the light

of the Word of God because as a believer who loves God he has to decide is that is the kind of behaviour that would uniquely portray the character of God.

The Christian would then have to look at his current values, priorities, his goals and the standards to which he holds himself to in life do they reflect the main hope of his life? Peter writes that our thinking has to be the result of our hope and our hope must be set on our ultimate salvation in Christ. He writes to “ set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ”. Which means the way he lives has to be consistent with this hope he bears in his heart.

It will include a whole set of moral behaviour but will also include good works and many acts of service using our gifts for example to further the kingdom of God. We recognise that we are holy when our lives and gifts are dedicated to living in a manner utilizing our time and His gifts to give Him glory. Hence holiness is not just morality it is the way we live.

4. What are the other motivations for us to be holy?

The other motivations are firstly

a. Accountability

1 Peter 1:17 (ESV) And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile,

Our actions have consequences not only in this life but the next as well .He will judge our works, in fact they are the only things we take across to eternal life. Hence the motivation to be holy is because He will judge us as to how we have utilised our time and resources to honor God.

b. The enormity of the ransom for our salvation

1 Peter 1:18-19 (ESV) knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot

The most perfect person in the world underwent the hell of crucifixion so that we could live. The most awesome sacrifice underscores his love for us and hence such a price paid must oblige us to reciprocate in kind. He gave His perfect life for us, we now reciprocate by offering our paltry lives to seek His honor not ours.

c. The sole purpose of Jesus incarnation, death and resurrection was to save us hence it is only natural that we dedicate our lives to honor Him

1 Peter 1:20-21 (ESV) He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the **sake of you** 21 who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, **so that your faith and hope are in God.**

Jesus coming was no idle mistake but a movement planned before the foundation of the world. His coming into the world clothed to be in human flesh subject to all the humiliation and pain with death on the cross, then to be raised in glory was for the sole purpose of restoring us back to fellowship and peace with God. He dedicated his life for us even before the foundation of the world hence it is only right for us to dedicate ourselves to Him.

Jesus himself expressed these sentiments in his high priestly prayer to the Father

- John 17:16-19 (ESV) They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

Implications : Just as He set himself apart to give up His life for us we reciprocate with our whole lives

5. **Mary worked in the factory and many there knew her to be a Christian some were surprised and others were not. The common expression was how can that Mary be a Christian ? She is not holy, she lied to the superintendant last year when he caught her sleeping on the job. She looses her temper on occasion. Others praised Mary for her kind heart and help to many in the factory. How does the Non Christian concept of holiness differ from ours? How does this taint their perceptions of Christians and how does this tempt us to be hypocrites? How are we to be holy in the work place.**

The fact is that Non Christians basic concept of holiness is moral perfection and they are going to be looking for a semblance of that in the lives of Christians like it or not. We have to be careful in what we do because holiness is not less than moral perfection. We live out moral lives in response to his sacrifice for us. We dedicate our lives to using our gifts to honor His name which will mean serving others in the factory, being kind and forgiving. Reflecting the character of Christ. We are not going to be perfect but we have to be transparent with our shortcomings learn to say sorry and repent time and time again so that in the end their perception will change and they will begin to see believers are still sinner but who have received undeserved grace and mercy through Christ and are changing day by day to reflect the holiness of God.