



Accents & Issues

God's Call to Holy Living

The word *holy* means *separate* or *pure*. God is holy, and we become holy through association with God (1 Pet. 1:16). God's people are expected to exhibit attitudes and behaviors that reflect God's nature and bring glory to God's name. The God who has saved us has also called us to holy living (2 Tim. 1:9).

Holiness as Following Jesus

Holiness is living as Jesus lived and taught, based on Kingdom values. Holy living is a loving, trusting relationship with God expressed in obedience to God's rule and an unreserved commitment to God's will — a set of values that are radically different from those of this world.

The apostle Paul calls us to renounce unholy living: "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature" (Col. 3:5); "put off your old self, which is being corrupted by your deceitful desires ... and ... put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph. 4:22-24). Paul adds: "You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness" (Rom. 6:18).

In short, we are urged to seek holiness (Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:15) and live worthy of our calling (Eph. 4:1). The holy life is characterized by a strong aversion to sin, and an equally strong desire to portray the "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control" that evidence the Spirit's presence (Gal. 5:22). The holy life is committed to truth and truthfulness, to righteousness, and a high moral standard. God's holiness shines through our lives when we love as God loves, without reservation, and offer forgiveness and grace to those who treat us badly. We witness God's holiness when we seek justice for the oppressed and show compassion for the suffering.

God's Provision

God's grace promises a dynamic new life through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. We receive the Holy Spirit as new believers (2 Cor. 5:17). As we follow Jesus, we are strengthened with power through the Spirit (Eph. 3:16). The Holy Spirit within us gives freedom from sin's control and strength to resist temptation.

Holiness is a provision of God's grace. When we respond in faith to Jesus Christ, we are made holy or righteous by his atoning death. The provision of Christ's death on the cross includes both pardon and power — pardon for sins committed and power to overcome the effects of sin's deadly grip. Indeed, we are granted a change of heart from sinner to saint, given a new nature, and made a new creation as a gracious gift of God.

God's gift of holiness leads us into holy living. Holiness becomes a reality as we surrender the self, which is naturally bent toward evil, to the authority of God, submit to the holy will of God, and receive the cleansing, empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. A lifestyle of holiness is sustained by obedience to God's will through the consistent practice of spiritual disciplines (e.g., Bible study, prayer, serving others) and by open responsiveness to the Holy Spirit. In the fullness of the Spirit we commit to a holy life and realize a liberating release from sin's control. Yet a relapse into sinful behavior remains possible. Thus, confession of sin opens the way to God's forgiveness and restoration of holy living (1 John 1:9).

Good News

The good news is that the forgiveness of sins frees us from guilt and condemnation and deals with addictive behaviors, ingrained habits, and emotional wounds, which threaten a fulfilling and effective Christian life. The answer lies in the deliverance available through Jesus and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

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The invitation to holy living is good news to a world that has lost its way morally and ethically and to a Christianity that professes faith in Jesus without a transformed life. When the values and lifestyles of “born again” Christians are indistinguishable from their unbelieving neighbors, something is seriously wrong. A casual attitude toward the call to obedience and holy living undermines the spiritual vitality of the Church and seriously compromises its witness.

Holy living is a clear and compelling provision of the cross through the power of the Spirit — a way of life that is freeing, fruitful, and fulfilling. It is a convincing witness to a skeptical world. May we then as God’s holy people embrace the call to a holy life.

