

Holy
God
Holy
People

NEVILLE BARTLE



Holy God Holy People

God is holy, and we are his children. God wants us to demonstrate the same loving, righteous nature that he has. God wants us to be his special people, and live holy lives.

Many people ask, "Can we be holy in a sinful world? Can we have victory over sin and temptation?"

We can never be holy in our own strength. But Jesus came to cleanse us from all sin and make us holy.

This book will help you learn more about the holiness of God. It will also help you learn how you can overcome sin and temptation, and live a holy life through the power of the Holy Spirit.

God is holy, and he desires to cleanse your heart and empower you through the Holy Spirit so that you can be holy too.

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*Holy God—
Holy People*

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Chapter One

God is Holy

“Who will sit on the throne?” thought Isaiah as he walked up the hill towards the Temple. Isaiah was one of the outstanding prophets of the Old Testament. He was a well- educated young man who lived in Jerusalem near the palace of the king and near to the Temple. He was probably related to the royal family of Judah and was well known in the city of Jerusalem. He was a preacher, and he spoke about God to the leaders of the government and to the other people of Jerusalem.

“Who will sit on the throne?” The question came back again. Isaiah was thinking much about the country and the conditions of the country. King Uzziah had been king for fifty two years. During this time the country had become richer. The walls of the city and the watch towers on the corners of the city wall had been built up and strengthened. The army was strong and had defeated its enemies (2 Chronicles 26). In many ways the country was strong, but Isaiah knew that many of the people were not sincere in their worship. They carefully followed the Temple rituals, but they were selfish and greedy, and their hearts were far from God. Now the king had died, and this meant change. What would happen to the country? Would the new king be a good king or would he lead the country in the wrong direction? There were many questions going through Isaiah’s mind as he went to the Temple.

Isaiah was not a priest and so he could not go into the Temple itself. He could go only as far as the door and gaze through the doorway. Perhaps he thought of the words of David, “One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his Temple” (Psalm 27:4 NIV). As he

stood there near the door of the Temple, God showed him a vision. It was as if he could see right through the holy curtain and into the Most Holy Place. God gave him a vision and he could see into heaven itself. He saw the Lord seated on a throne which was high and majestic. The clothes of the one seated on the glorious throne were long and filled the whole house. There were special angels surrounding the throne and singing praises to God.

These angels, called seraphim, had six wings. They were bright and shining as if they were on fire. With two wings they covered their faces, with two wings they covered their bodies and they used the other two wings for flying. These angels belonged to a heavenly choir that was divided into two parts. One group would sing, "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord Almighty is holy. His glory fills the world." The other group would respond by singing the same words back to them. These fiery angels were singing these songs with all their strength, and the sound of their voices made the foundations of the Temple shake and the Temple was filled with smoke.

As the angels were singing and shouting the praises of God, the Temple began to shake as if it were in an earthquake. Isaiah felt the Temple rocking and he was frightened. The power, majesty and glory of God were too much for him. Isaiah was terrified and he cried out, "There is no hope for me! I am doomed because every word that passes my lips is sinful, and I live among a people whose every word is sinful. And yet, with my own eyes I have seen the King, the Lord Almighty" (Isaiah 6:5).

Perhaps Isaiah was frightened because God had said to Moses many years before, "I will not let you see my face, because no one can see me and stay alive" (Exodus 33:20). The glory of God's holiness was so powerful that the angels covered their faces. They lived near to the throne of God and they knew that God was absolutely holy with no darkness or evil of any sort to be found in him. God was higher than any other person or creature, and he alone has all power and strength. The angels experienced the

powerful beauty and majesty of God's holiness and so they hid their faces.

As Isaiah saw the angels covering their faces, he felt the holiness, majesty and glory of God. He began to think about his own life and he realized that he was far from being holy. He was not the person that he should be. He was ashamed and frightened.

Isaiah was not an evil criminal. He was a prophet, he believed in God, and was a preacher of God's word. Many people in Jerusalem thought he was a wonderful man of God. But when Isaiah saw the holiness of God and he thought of his own life, he realized that he was a sinner. He saw that his life was not righteous before God. He cried out, "There is no hope for me. I am doomed because every word that passes my lips is sinful, and I live among a people whose every word is sinful." Like many people today, Isaiah was not always careful about the things he said. The Bible says, "If you do not control your tongue, your religion is worthless" (James 1:26). It also says, "With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be" (James 3:9-10 NIV). One of the most difficult things to control is our own tongue.

Isaiah was a good person and his conduct was much better than most people of his town. Probably he had looked at the lives of other people around him and said, "I'm much better than them." But now he had seen the holiness of God. He realized how far short he was of God's holiness and he cried out confessing his sinfulness.

As Isaiah confessed his own sin and his own need, something wonderful happened. One of these angels flew to the altar, and using some tongs, took a burning coal from the altar. He flew to where Isaiah was and touched his lips with the burning coal. The angel said, "This has touched your lips, and now your guilt is gone, and your sins are forgiven" (Isaiah 6:7).

I John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins to God... he will forgive us our sins and purify us from all wrongdoing." This describes what happened to Isaiah. Isaiah humbled himself, confessed his sins, and God did not reject him. Instead, God in his mercy sent an angel to him and brought forgiveness and cleansing to his life.

After this cleansing experience Isaiah heard God speaking, "Who shall I send? Who will be our messenger?" (Isaiah 6:8). None of the angels answered, because God doesn't use angels to be his preachers. Angels do not witness about the saving power of Jesus. They have a different work to do. But God uses human beings—men and women like you and me—to be his witnesses, and to do the preaching that needs to be done. First Isaiah was cleansed, and then he heard the voice of God calling him. God wants to cleanse us through and through so that he can use us effectively in his service.

God cleansed Isaiah's life and Isaiah became a strong prophet for the Lord. For many years he was a prophet and teacher to the kings of Judah and to the leaders of the government. He had a tremendous influence on the city of Jerusalem and to the people of Judah for many years. God has work that he wants you and me to do. If we allow God to cleanse our hearts and to make us holy, he will use us to do the work that he is calling us to do.

In the story of Isaiah there are five important points that we need to notice.

- ✓ God is totally and completely holy.
- ✓ Like Isaiah, our lives are not holy.
- ✓ God wants to cleanse us and make us holy.
- ✓ We must humble ourselves, confess our sins and let God cleanse our lives.
- ✓ God wants to use us in doing his work.

Holy, Holy, Holy

Isaiah had a vision of God seated on the throne and the angels singing and praising the holiness of God. In the book of Revelation, chapter four, John tells about his vision of the throne of God. He saw the Lord seated on a throne with glory and light shining around the throne. There was a rainbow around the throne and in a circle around the throne were twenty-four elders dressed in white and wearing crowns of gold. From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Surrounding the throne on each of its sides were four living creatures. These living creatures were covered with eyes in front and behind. Each one of the living creatures had six wings. And day and night they never stopped singing, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come" (Revelation 4:8).

The four living creatures sang songs of glory and honour and thanks to the one who sits on the throne who lives forever and ever. As they sang, the twenty-four elders fell down before the one who sits on the throne. They threw their crowns down in front of the throne and said, "Our Lord and God, you are worthy to receive glory and honour and power. For you created all things and by your will they were given existence and life" (Revelation 4:11).

Many think that the twenty-four elders represent the twelve tribes of Israel of the Old Testament and the twelve apostles of the New Testament. They symbolize all of God's people, both past and present, worshipping God.

The vision that John saw and the vision that Isaiah saw are very similar. Everything in heaven is worshipping God, praising him, and declaring his holiness. In both Isaiah 6:3 and Revelation 4:8 there are the same words: "Holy, holy, holy." Why do the angels and the living creatures keep repeating this word three times?

We know that God is three in one. We can say that God the Father is holy, Jesus is holy, the Holy Spirit is holy. God is

completely holy, and the character of God the Father, the character of Jesus, the character of the Holy Spirit are all the same. There is only one God, and he is holy in all that he is and in all that he does.

The angels sang “holy, holy, holy,” to emphasize how holy God is. Some people may say “Yes, yes, yes,” to emphasize their total agreement. In the same way the angels are saying God is very, very, very holy. In Revelation 4:8 it says, “Day and night they never stopped singing, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty.” God’s holiness is greater and more wonderful than anything we could ever imagine. God’s holiness has no beginning and no end.

God Demonstrates his Holiness to the People of Israel

In the book of Exodus we have another picture of the holiness of God. The children of Israel had left Egypt. Moses had brought them into the desert of Sinai and they had made their camp near Mount Sinai. While they had been in Egypt they had seen the idols and the gods that the Egyptians had made. But now God was wanting to teach them how to worship him. God was about to give them Ten Commandments of how they should live and how they should worship. God wanted to show the Israelites that he was different to the gods they had seen in Egypt. He was invisible, living, powerful and holy. God put on a big demonstration on Mount Sinai to show his power and strength to the Israelites.

God is holy and everything that belongs to God is holy. He declared that Mount Sinai was holy and that the people were not to go there. A boundary line was set around the base of the mountain and people were not allowed to cross that line.

God said to Moses, “I will come to you in a thick cloud, so the people will hear me speaking with you and will believe you from now on” (Exodus 19:9). The Lord gave very clear directions, “Go to the people and tell them to spend today and tomorrow purifying themselves for worship. They must wash their clothes and be ready

the day after tomorrow. On that day I will come down on Mount Sinai, where all the people can see me. Mark a boundary around the mountain that the people must not cross, and tell them not to go up the mountain or even get near it. If any of you set foot on it, you are to be put to death” (Exodus 19:10-12).

On that special day God came to the mountain and displayed his majesty and strength. “There was thunder and lightening, a thick cloud appeared on the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast was heard. All the people in the camp trembled with fear. . . . The whole of Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord had come down on it in fire. The smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace, and all the people trembled violently. The sound of the trumpet became louder and louder. Moses spoke, and God answered him with thunder” (Exodus 19:16,18-19).

God’s holiness was so powerful that the people trembled with fear. God told Moses, “Go down and warn the people not to cross the boundary to come and look at me; if they do many of them will die. Even the priests who come near me must purify themselves or I will punish them” (Exodus 19:21-22). When Moses went up to the top of Mt Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, the dazzling light of the Lord’s presence came down on the mountain, and it looked like the top of the mountain was covered with a raging powerful fire (Exodus 24:15-17).

Holiness is the heart of God and all that God does is holy. All of God’s power, love, righteousness, and justice are found in the holiness of God. God told the people of Israel and the priests to change their minds and their ways, and purify themselves so that they would not be punished.

Today many people think that God is only a God of love and mercy, and often they do not think about his holiness. They think they can do whatever they like and that sin is not a big problem. They believe that because God is a loving God who forgives sin, it is okay to sin. But they have forgotten that God is also a holy God

who hates sin. We cannot play tricks on God and we cannot deceive him. Hebrews 12:28, 29 says, "Let us be grateful and worship God in a way that will please him, with reverence and awe; because our God is indeed a destroying fire."

When the Israelites saw the lightning, heard the thunder, and felt the mountain shaking, they were impressed with the power, majesty and holiness of God.

God's Temple is Holy

Many years after Moses, King Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem as a place to worship God. He used only the best and finest of materials to build this Temple. 150,000 people worked for many years to build the Temple. King David and the people of Israel had donated 250 tons of gold and over 500 tons of silver to be used in constructing the Temple. At today's prices it would have cost well over a thousand million dollars to build. The Israelites gave generously of the very best they had to the worship of God. The most sacred room in the Temple was completely lined with pure gold. The pure gold was a symbol of God's holiness.

The day came to dedicate the Temple and set it apart to be used for the worship of God and him alone. This Temple was the most beautiful building in the world. The people offered 22,000 cows and 120,000 sheep as fellowship offerings for the dedication of the Temple. Solomon made a wonderful prayer of dedication. He asked God to accept the Temple and come and live in the Holy Place. As he prayed the dazzling light of God's presence came and filled the Temple. Fire came down from heaven and burned up the sacrifices on the altar. 2 Chronicles 7:2-3 says, "Because the Temple was full of the dazzling light, the priests could not enter it. When the people of Israel saw the fire fall from heaven, and the light fill the Temple, they fell face downward on the pavement, worshipping God and praising him for his goodness and his eternal

love.”

This story shows us another picture of the dazzling purity of the holiness of God. The people could not stand in the presence of Almighty God. All they could do was to fall face down in worship. Their strength was gone as they felt God’s mighty power. When the light and fire filled the Temple, the priests were so frightened they did not dare go inside to offer sacrifices. The people of Israel rejoiced that God had entered the Temple. They felt so strongly that he was their God, and they were his people. They felt Jerusalem was God’s holy city; the Temple was his holy place of worship. They believed that God lived in the most sacred room of the Temple—the room they called the Most Holy Place or the Holy of Holies. For the Jews the Temple in Jerusalem was the holiest place in the whole world.

In the New Testament there is a big change that occurred in the way of worshipping God. Worship is no longer restricted to a certain building or Temple even if it is the most beautiful building on earth and covered with pure gold. God has chosen people to become his special temple. 1 Corinthians 3:16 says, “You know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you.” And 1 Corinthians 6:19 says, “Don’t you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you, and was given to you by God?”

In the Old Testament, the Temple or house of God was extremely important, and nothing considered to be dirty or filthy was to enter into the Temple. Now men and women who have come to believe in Jesus have become God’s temple. Just as God’s temple was holy, we also are to be holy. When Christians meet together to worship God, whether in a church or under a tree, Jesus is present with them, for they are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Individually we can think of ourselves or our bodies as being the temple of the Holy Spirit. Nothing that is dirty or evil should be a part of our lives. Since we are the temple of God, then it is also

important that we must be holy in the eyes of God and become the place where the Holy Spirit lives.

We have seen these important points.

- ✓ God is holy in every part of his being.
- ✓ God demonstrated his awesome holiness to the people of Israel and they were afraid of God's mighty power.
- ✓ The Temple and everything belonging to God is holy.
- ✓ Holy is a powerful word and it means something that is dedicated to God and is set apart for God's special use.
- ✓ We are now God's temple and we must be totally dedicated to God and live holy lives for the Holy Spirit lives within us.

Chapter Two

The Meaning of Holiness

*Be holy in all that you do, just as God who called you is holy.
The scripture says, "Be holy because I am holy."
(1 Peter 1:15-16)*

The words "holy" and "holiness" appear more than 550 times in the Bible. The Bible itself is often called the Holy Bible. This shows that it is a very important word, but how is this word "holy" used and what does it mean?

Holy Means Set Apart for God's Special Use

Holy often has the meaning of "sacred" or "belonging to God alone." God is holy and everything that belongs to him is holy. The Hebrew word (*godesh*) means that something is set apart for special or sacred use such as the worship of God. Because it is holy and is set apart for God's special use, it must not to be used for ordinary purposes.

- ☞ The seventh day of the week is holy because it belongs to God.
Genesis 2:3, Exodus 20:8
- ☞ The tithe is holy for that belongs to God.
Leviticus 27:30,32 (NIV)
- ☞ God's name is holy and must be treated with special respect.
Exodus 20:7, Psalm 30:4
- ☞ The Temple belongs to the Lord so it is holy. Because the Temple is dedicated to the Lord, the sacrifices that are made in the Temple are holy. "The Lord is in his holy Temple, he has his throne in heaven."
Psalm 11:4

☞ All the dishes and instruments in the Temple are holy because they are dedicated to God and used in his service.

Numbers 4:15 (NIV)

☞ The Temple was built on a hill and so the hill was referred to as the holy mountain. “Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his holy mountain, for the LORD our God is holy.”

Psalms 99:9 (NIV)

☞ When Moses was looking after the sheep in the desert, he saw a burning bush but the fire did not burn the bush. He went closer to see this bush and God called him and said, “Do not come any closer ... you are standing on holy ground” (Exodus 3:5). The earth did not look any different, but because it was chosen by God it became sacred or holy.

God gave Moses instructions to build a tabernacle or a special tent for the worship of God. Everything in the Tent of worship was holy. No ordinary person was to touch it or use it. Everything was sacred and only the priests were to touch them and use them. In the sacred Tent there were only two rooms. The first was the Holy Place and only the priests were allowed to go into this room. Other people were not allowed to enter or else they would die. The second room was called the Most Holy Place. Only the high priest was to go in once a year on a very special day called the day of atonement. It was forbidden for any other person or priest to go inside or else they would die. This word “holy” shows that these things belong to God alone and no other people are to touch them or use them.

In Leviticus chapter 10, we can read the story of the two sons of Aaron who were priests. One of their jobs was to burn incense in the sacred Tent. The nice smelling smoke was a symbol of the people’s prayers that were going up to heaven. God had told them to use only special holy fire in the sacrifices. But these two priests did not follow God’s instructions. They took their own pan, put live

coal in it from their house, added incense and presented it to the Lord. But this fire was not holy because it was ordinary fire from their homes. Suddenly the Lord sent fire, and it burnt them to death in the presence of the Lord. Then the Lord said to Aaron, "All who serve me must respect my holiness" (Leviticus 10:3). This was a powerful lesson to the priests and to all the people of Israel. God is holy and he wants those who worship him to respect his holiness.

Because God had chosen Israel as his special people, they were to be holy. "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession" (Deuteronomy 7:6 NIV). Christians are God's special people and we too must be holy. We must live differently from those who do not obey God. Because we are God's special people and are dedicated completely to him, we must not play around with sin. We must be holy in all that we do and we must not allow any impurity, evil words, lies, gossip, or other evil habits or practices to be a part of our lives. "You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own" (Leviticus 20:26 NIV).

Holy Means Separated From Sin

Everything that belongs to God is holy. Everything that belongs to God must also be separated from sin. Sin is disobeying God and God does not like sin. When Adam and Eve sinned they hid from God because they were ashamed and afraid of him. Later they had to leave the beautiful garden where God had put them. Sin causes separation from God. Holiness brings us close to God and causes us to turn away from sin. "Let us purify ourselves from everything that makes body or soul unclean, and let us be completely holy by living in awe of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1). We cannot be God's holy people and hold on to sin.

Do not try to work together as equals with unbelievers, for it cannot be done. How can right and wrong be partners? How can light and darkness dwell together? How can Christ and the devil agree? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? How can God's temple come to terms with pagan idols? For we are the temple of the living God.... And so the Lord says, "You must leave them and separate yourselves from them. Have nothing to do with what is unclean, and I will accept you. I will be your father and you will be my sons and daughters.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

Light - Darkness

The Bible often uses the difference between light and darkness as a picture to help us see the difference between sin and holiness. The Bible tells us that God is light, and that sin is darkness. We are to come out of darkness and live in the light. Jesus is the light of the world, but he also tells us to be lights shining in a dark and sinful world.

God is Light.

God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 1 John 1:5 (NIV)

Jesus is the light of the world.

Jesus...said, "I am the *light of the world*. Whoever follows me will never walk in *darkness*, but will have the light of life."

John 8:12 (NIV)

Jesus has come to rescue us from the darkness of sin.

I have come into the world as *light*, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the *darkness*. John 12:46

We are to reflect the light of Jesus to a sin darkened world.

You are like *light for the whole world.... your light must shine* before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:14-16

Light and darkness are opposites. We are to walk in the light.

How can right and wrong be partners? *How can light and darkness live together?* How can Christ and the Devil agree?... 'You must leave them and separate yourselves from them. Have nothing to do with what is unclean and I will accept you' ... says the Lord Almighty. 2 Corinthians 6:14-15,17-18

You yourselves used to be in the *darkness*, but since you have become the Lord's people, you are in the light.... You must *live like people who belong to the light*, for it is the light that brings a rich harvest of goodness, righteousness and truth. Have nothing to do with the worthless things... that belong to the *darkness*. Ephesians 5:8-11

God is light, and there is no *darkness* at all in him. If, then, we say that we have fellowship with him, yet at the same time live in the *darkness*, we are lying both in our words and in our actions. But if we *live in the light—just as he is in the light*—then we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin. 1 John 1:5-7

These verses are very clear, God wants us to be clean and pure in a world of sin. He wants us to shine as lights in a world that is full of darkness.

Holy Means Morally Pure

God is holy. This means that God is perfectly good, clean, pure, free from sin, free from evil, righteous, just, and fair.

☞ Everyone will praise his great and majestic name.

Holy is he!

Mighty king, you love *what is right*;

You have established *justice* in Israel

You have brought *righteousness and fairness*.

Praise the Lord our God;

Worship before his throne!

Holy is he.

Psalm 99:3-5

In these verses the phrase “holy is he” is repeated and in between are the words of justice, righteousness, and fairness. God is holy means that God is good, upright, and fair in all that he does. God does not trick or deceive us. We are to think about God’s holiness as we come to worship him.

Psalm 111 is a song of praise to God. The person who wrote this song was praising God for his goodness. Look at all the wonderful things it says about God’s character. All of these are summed up in the word holy.

☞ All he does is full of *honour and majesty*;

His righteousness is eternal...

He is kind and merciful. . .

He never forgets his covenant. . .

In all he does he is faithful and just;

All his commands are dependable.

They last for all time they were given in truth and righteousness. . .

Holy and mighty is he!

Psalms 111:3-5,7-9

Because God is our heavenly Father and we are his children,

God wants us to be like him. We are to show the same qualities that we see in God. God wants us to be righteous, kind, merciful, faithful, just and dependable. God's children should show the same moral qualities as their heavenly Father.

Purity

The Bible also uses the words "pure" and "purity" to show us that God wants us to be holy. Just as pure water is free from dirt and germs, a holy person keeps his or her life free from sin.

Obeying God's commands helps to keep our lives pure

How can young people keep their lives *pure*? By *obeying your commands*. Psalm 119:9

There is no purity without confession of sin

But if we confess our sins to God... he will forgive us our sins and purify us from all our wrongdoing. 1 John 1:9

Jesus died to purify our hearts

He gave himself for us, to rescue us from all wickedness and to make us a pure people who belong to him alone and are eager to do good. Titus 2:14

Young people are to keep their lives pure and free from sin

Avoid the passions of youth, and strive for righteousness, faith, love, and peace, together with those who with a pure heart call out to the Lord for help. 2 Timothy 2:22

Do not let anyone look down on you because you are young, but be an example for the believers in your speech, your conduct, your love, faith, and purity. 1 Timothy 4:12

We are to live pure lives even in an evil world

Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may be innocent and *pure* as *God's perfect children*, who live in a world of corrupt and sinful people. You must shine among them like stars lighting up the sky, as you offer them the message of life.

Philippians 2:14-16

Let us *purify* ourselves from everything that makes body or soul unclean, and let us be completely holy by living in awe of God.

2 Corinthians 7:1

We are to love God with pure hearts

Come near to God, and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners! *Purify your hearts*, you hypocrites!

James 4:8

The purpose of this order is to arouse the love that comes from a *pure heart*, a clear conscience, and a genuine faith.

1 Timothy 1:5

We are to be pure as we wait for Jesus to return

Happy are the *pure in heart*; they will see God! Matthew 5:8

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be *pure* and blameless until the day of Christ....

Philippians 1:9-10 NIV

The message of all of these verses is very clear. God wants to purify our hearts, so they will be full of a pure love for God. A pure heart is not polluted or made dirty by sin and selfishness. If our hearts are pure, we will no longer be double minded, sometimes serving God and sometimes living for our own selfish interests.

God told the Israelites to be holy

God gave these instructions for the Israelites to be holy.

- ☞ I am the Lord your God, and you must keep yourselves *holy*, because I am *holy*. I am the Lord who brought you up out of Egypt so that I could be your God. You must be *holy*, because I am *holy*.”
Leviticus 11:44-45
- ☞ Be *holy*, because I, the Lord your God, am *holy*.”
Leviticus 19:2
- ☞ Keep yourselves *holy*, because I am the Lord your God. Obey my laws, because I am the Lord and I make you *holy*.”
Leviticus 20:7-8
- ☞ You shall be *holy* and belong only to me, because I am the Lord and I am *holy*. I have set you apart from the other nations so that you would belong to me alone.
Leviticus 20:26

Sadly, the people of Israel often did not obey God. They turned their backs on God and they followed after the idols and immorality of the people who lived near by. Because they refused to repent and turn back to God, God allowed other nations to attack them and destroy their cities. Sometimes the people repented and turned back to God. However, the Bible says that some people were righteous and lived lives that were pleasing to God.

- ☞ Noah was a *righteous man, blameless* among the people in his time, and walked with God.
Genesis 6:9 NIV
- ☞ Enoch *walked with God*.
Genesis 5:22-24
- ☞ God told Abraham “I am God Almighty, walk before me and be *blameless*.”
Genesis 17:1 NIV
- ☞ Moses was one of the mighty men of God, he walked closely with God and talked with him. And so the Bible says, “Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the *Lord knew face to face*.”
Deuteronomy 34:10 NIV

- ☞ Asa's heart was *fully committed to the Lord* all his life.
1 Kings 15:14 NIV
- ☞ Job was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.
Job 1:1 NIV
- ☞ David had been a man of obedience and totally devoted to God. But later he committed adultery with a woman and he felt very guilty of his sin. David was deeply repentant. He wanted very much to be clean in God's eyes. He cried to God, "*Cleanse me of my sin* and I'll be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.... *Create in me a pure heart*, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit with me."
Psalms 51:7, 10 NIV

The New Testament Tells Us To Become Holy

In the New Testament this message that God wants us to live a holy life becomes even stronger and more emphatic.

- ☞ God wants you to be *holy*.
1 Thessalonians 4:3
- ☞ Just as he who called you is *holy*, so be *holy* in all you do; for it is written, '*Be holy because I am holy.*' 1 Peter 1:15-16 NIV
- ☞ You ought to live *holy and godly lives*.
2 Peter 3:11 NIV
- ☞ Try to be at peace with everyone, and try to *live a holy life*, because no one will see the Lord without it. Hebrews 12:14
- ☞ Let us *purify ourselves* from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.
2 Corinthians 7:1 NIV
- ☞ For God did not call us to be impure, but to *live a holy life*.
1 Thessalonians 4:7 NIV

Jesus Died to Make Us Holy

Some people wonder, "How can we humans, who live in a sinful world, ever become holy?" In a world full of evil and temptations how can we ever keep our minds pure and free from

sin? Some feel that the life of holiness is too hard for us to follow. It is true that we cannot walk the path of holiness in our own strength, but God has made a way to help us. Jesus came and died to make us holy.

☞ He has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you *holy in his sight*, without blemish and free from accusation. Colossians 1:22 NIV

☞ Christ Jesus, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to *purify* for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is right. Titus 2:14 NIV

☞ May God himself, the God of peace *sanctify* you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept *blameless* at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 NIV

☞ Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her *holy...* and to make her radiant, without stain or wrinkle, or any other blemish, but *holy* and blameless. Ephesians 5:25-27 NIV

Some people believe that Jesus died to forgive their sins, and bring them into heaven, and save them from going to hell. This is true, but it's only part of the truth. The gospel of Jesus is much more than this. God desires to make us holy so that we can walk in friendship and harmony with himself and with others. He wants us to consecrate our whole life to him and become holy in all that we think and do. He wants our hearts to be clean and pure. He wants us to keep away from the darkness and to walk in the light. Our hearts are to be free from sin and filled with love for God and love for others.

Chapter Three

We Must Be Holy and Worship God Alone

Worship no god but me. Exodus 20:3

God is holy and wants all people to be holy. Holiness and worship belong together. We must worship the one true God and have no other gods before Him. God gave the Ten Commandments to the people of Israel. The first two commandments speak about worshipping God.

☞ I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven or on earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God. Exodus 20:1-5 NIV

God wants us to be his holy people. This means that we must have nothing to do with the worship of other gods and belong only to the one true God.

The Israelites Did Not Get Rid of All the Enemies

God brought the people of Israel out of Egypt and led them into the Promised Land. But this land wasn't empty, for there were already people occupying this country. The Canaanites worshipped idols, and immorality and prostitution were part of their worship practices. Some of them took little children and babies and burned them alive in the fire to their evil gods. Their ways were so evil that God told the Israelites to destroy these people completely. God

strongly warned Moses and the people of Israel:

- ☞ You must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them and show them no mercy. Do not intermarry with them... Break down their altars...burn their idols in the fire. For you are a people holy to the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 7:2-3,5-6 (NIV)

Joshua led the people of Israel into the land of Canaan. God did many miracles, and they conquered many nations and killed their enemies. But they did not completely destroy their enemies. They did not follow God's instructions completely and allowed the enemies to live among them. They even began to intermarry with the people that God had sent them to destroy. God wasn't pleased with this, "I said, you shall not make a covenant with the people of this land, but you shall break down their altars. Yet, you have disobeyed me" (Judges 2:2 NIV). The Israelites started worshipping the idols of the people they were sent to destroy. They began to follow the same evil practices and soon they became involved in prostitution and even burned their children as sacrifices to these evil false gods.

We Must Abandon False Gods

God had chosen Israel to be his special people, just like a man chooses a woman to be his wife. A husband gets very angry and jealous if he finds out that his wife is not being faithful to him and is spending time with some other man. A wife also feels very angry and jealous if her husband is unfaithful to her. In the same way, God is angry when people reject him and worship other gods. It is spiritual adultery.

God told the Israelites:

- ☞ *Do not worship any other god*, because I, the Lord, tolerate no rivals. Exodus 34:14
- ☞ *Do not follow other gods*, the gods of the peoples around you; for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a *jealous God* and his anger will burn against you.
Deuteronomy 6:14-15 (NIV)
- ☞ Worship no god but me. Do not make for yourselves images of anything in heaven or on earth or in the water under the earth. Do not bow down to any idol or worship it, for I am the LORD your God and I tolerate no rivals. Deuteronomy 5:8-9
- ☞ Burn their idols. Do not desire the silver or gold that is on them, and do not take it for yourselves. If you do that will be fatal, because *the Lord hates idolatry*. Do not bring any of these idols into your homes, or the same curse will be on you that is on them. Deuteronomy 7:25-26

During the time of Joshua most of the people continued to follow the worship of God, but some of the Israelites had begun to worship idols. Therefore Joshua commanded them to get rid of their foreign gods.

- ☞ *He is a holy God...* He will tolerate no rivals, and if you leave him to serve foreign gods, he will turn against you and punish you. He will destroy you, even though he was good to you before.... *Get rid of these foreign gods* that you have... and pledge your loyalty to the Lord, the God of Israel. The people then said to Joshua, “We will serve the Lord our God. We will obey his commands.” Joshua 24:19-20, 23-24

Remove Idols and See the Blessings of God

When Samuel was the leader of Israel, many of the Israelites had slipped back into idol worship. God allowed the Philistines to

oppress the Israelites badly and make life miserable for them. Many time the Philistines fought against Israel and defeated them. The Israelites cried to Samuel, asking him to beg God to help them to defeat their enemies. Samuel told them: "If you are going to return to the Lord with all your hearts, you must get rid of all the foreign gods and the images of the goddess Astarte. *Dedicate yourselves completely to the Lord and worship only him*, and he will rescue you from the power of the Philistines" (I Samuel 7:3-4).

The Israelites listened to Samuel; they confessed their sins, and destroyed all their idols. They fasted and made sacrifices to God. But then, five Philistine kings came with their armies to fight against the Israelites. The Israelites were afraid of the Philistines and called out to God for help.

While Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines moved forward to attack Israel. It seemed like the Israelites would be destroyed. But then, the Lord sent thunder crashing over the heads of the Philistines. The Philistines were terrified. They panicked and fled from the Israelites. The Israelites rushed out and chased the Philistines, slaughtering them along the way. The Philistines were defeated and did not invade Israelite territory again for many years (1 Samuel 7:10-11,13). The Israelites learned that when they got rid of the false gods and worshipped God with a pure heart, then God displayed his mighty power.

We Must Worship God Alone

God commanded the people to worship him alone. They were not to make any idol or image and worship it. What about us today? Many people would never dream of bowing before an image of wood or stone. Our towns and cities have many churches, and often government leaders say, "We are a Christian country." But are we a holy people? To be holy means to belong totally to God and to him alone.

Many people think that worshipping God in church on Sunday is all that we need to do. Once they leave the church and go home, they often ignore God unless they have a real big problem. They act as if God was left back in the church. When they are sick they do not pray to God for help, but instead, they ask a magician, a spirit medium or even a witch doctor (witchcraft) to help them.

Many people hold onto two very different beliefs at the same time. They pray to God, but also pray to their ancestors or some tribal god. They think, "When I was a child, my father used to take care of me. Now he is dead, but he hasn't left us. He is still here and will take care of us." And so they continue to consult the dead and ask their ancestors to help them. These people do not have proper trust and faith in God and God isn't pleased with them. God wants us to be his holy people and worship him alone. "When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?" (Isaiah 8:19 NIV).

In some countries people make carvings out of wood to look like their ancestors or the head spirit of their village or tribe. Some people trust in a tribal god that has belonged to their village for generations to help them and protect them. Some people spend lots of money to buy an image of some god or goddess; they take it home and put it in a special place and each day place flowers or burn incense before the image. They believe that these offerings will make their ancestors or the tribal gods happy and so protect them. But the Bible says:

- ☞ All these gods are useless; they can do nothing at all—these idols are weak and powerless. Isaiah 41:29
- ☞ All who trust in idols, who call images their gods, will be humiliated and disgraced. Isaiah 42:17
- ☞ All those who make idols are worthless, and the gods they prize so highly are useless. Those who worship these gods are blind and ignorant—and they will be disgraced. Isaiah 44:9

Many Christians are fearful of witchcraft, the ghost of a dead person, or some spirit that lives in a lake, a river, a mountain or the forest. These Christians are not totally committed to Jesus Christ, and when they find themselves with sickness and problems they get frightened. Instead of calling on God to help them, they give in to their fears and seek help from sorcery, magic charms, or the spirits of the dead. Some people hold onto magic charms, special leaves, or other objects for protection from evil powers. They are like the people of Israel. They are double-minded people. They believe in God but yet they hold on to other forms of beliefs and rituals, too. When the Israelites truly repented of their wickedness and removed all idols that they had, then God showed them his power by helping them.

Some people, even some church leaders, say we must respect our customs and traditions. Some say, "The Jews had their customs and we too have our customs. The ancestors are our way to God. We pray to the ancestors or tribal gods, and they in turn pass on our request to Almighty God who answers us through the tribal gods or through the ancestors. These are our customs and traditions that have existed for generations. Why should we reject our customs and traditions?" God's word says that these other gods are really demons and they are not the way to God at all. When we give food to them we are really giving the food to demons (1 Corinthians 9:20).

☛ He abandoned the God who made him and rejected the Rock his Saviour. They made him jealous with their foreign gods and angered him with their detestable idols. They sacrificed to demons, which are not God—gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your fathers did not fear. You deserted the Rock, who fathered you; you forgot the God who gave you birth. Deuteronomy 32:15-18 (NIV)

If we cleanse our homes from all idols, images, lucky charms, and supernatural objects, and put our faith totally in God, we will experience God's blessing and protection on our lives and on our families.

Ephesus was a city where many people worshipped false gods and believed in magical charms. There was also a big temple of the goddess, Artemis, in the city. Paul preached the gospel in Ephesus and many people turned away from their sins. These people had been practising magic, and witchcraft, but they accepted the message of the Gospel, and were baptized. It seems however that some of the new Christians had not completely destroyed all the magic charms from the past. The Bible says, "Many of the believers came, publicly revealing and admitting what they had done. Many of those who had practised magic brought their books (magical scrolls) together and burned them in public ... In this powerful way the word of the Lord kept spreading and growing stronger" (Acts 19:18-19). When people got rid of the items belonging to the false religion and depended totally upon God, they experienced God's blessing.

God is holy. He wants every one of us to be his holy people and worship him alone. In the New Testament we are told to keep ourselves separate from all that is evil.

☞ Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what does righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols...Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God. 2 Corinthians 6:14-16, 7:1

Therefore we must separate ourselves from the worship of other gods, spirits or ancestors. We do not need charms or lucky stones

to give us protection or prosperity. God is greater than all other spirits and supernatural powers, and he will guard and protect his children. If we purify our lives from all that is not pleasing to God, then God's blessing will be poured out on our lives, our church and our families, too.

If you have something in your house that you are relying on to protect you or give you success, then you need to get rid of it. If you wear a magical charm, or have a lucky stone, or something else that is supposed to have power to keep you safe or to give you good luck, then you need to confess it and bring it out into the open. Meet together with your family members and other Christians to pray and destroy it. You can pray this prayer:

Lord God, you are Almighty and Powerful. There are no other gods like you, for you alone are most high, pure and holy and deserve all praise and glory.

I have kept this magical charm or item of my ancestors. I thought this would give me protection and power, but now I believe in Jesus Christ. I know Jesus died to forgive my sins. You have cleansed my heart and mind with the blood of Jesus and now I want to worship you alone.

I want to get rid of all these things. I turn away from every work of the devil, his ways and his tricks. Lord Jesus Christ I give myself to you. Jesus, I want you to be my protector. I rely on no other power but the power of Jesus Jesus.

I want you to be the ruler of my life and my family. I reject all other powers, charms or magic things in the mighty name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

When you finish praying, throw this thing into the fire, or get rid

of it in some place where you will not go back to it. Once these things are destroyed, then sing songs and praise Jesus our mighty Saviour and protector.

Other Forms of False Worship

Some people are not attracted by images and idols and they say, "I have no idols or images in my house. I know better than that." Yet many people today fill their minds with movie stars, pop singers, or sports heroes. Many spend lots of money going to movies, watching videos, or listening to records of their favourite singers or actors. They buy magazines and read their stories and almost worship these people. They would never dream of kneeling down in front of them or praying to them, yet these movie stars or singers have become more important than God. Some Christians spend hours watching videos or listening to CD's, but have no time to read their Bibles or pray. Many of these pop singers and movie stars live immoral and ungodly lives. Yet people, who call themselves Christians, have allowed these people to become first in their lives and God is pushed to the side. They give God a little time on Sunday and then God is often forgotten for the rest of the week. This is not pleasing to God.

Love of Material Possessions

In many Western countries people are proud of their knowledge, their education and their material possessions. They have nice houses, cars, boats and all sorts of things to make themselves happy and comfortable. These are nice things and good things, but for many people these have become more important than God. Some people are so busy working to earn money to buy more things or better things, that they have no time to worship God. Bible reading and prayer are neglected, and on Sundays they are

often too busy to go to church. Some go to church on Sunday, but then God is forgotten for the rest of the week, as people concentrate on making money. They need to be reminded of these words.

☞ Do not love the world or anything that belongs to the world. If you love the world you do not love the Father. Everything that belongs to the world—what the sinful self desires, what people see and want, and everything in this world that people are proud of—none of this comes from the Father; it all comes from the world. The world and everything in it that people desire is passing away; but those who do the will of God live forever.

1 John 2:15-17

Summary

In this chapter we have seen that holiness and worship belong together.

- God wants us to be his own special people and worship him and only him.
- We must not act like the Israelites did. They gave into temptation and again and again they slipped back into worshipping idols. We must make a clean break with all that is not pleasing to God and then we will see his power and blessing poured into our lives.
- We must not allow worldly pleasures, or money and material things to become first in our lives. God must be first in every part of our lives.
- If we put God first and serve him only then he will bless us. We are his special people and he wants to bless us.

Look at the beautiful blessing from Deuteronomy. This is God's special promise to those who reject all idols, serve him, and put him first in their lives.

God's Promise of Blessing

Obey the Lord your God and all these blessings will be yours:

The Lord will bless your towns and your farmlands.

*The Lord will bless you with many children,
with abundant crops, and with many cattle and sheep.*

*The Lord will bless your grain crops
and the food you prepare from them.*

The Lord will bless everything you do.

The Lord will defeat your enemies when they attack you.

*The Lord your God will bless your work
and fill your barns with grain.. (Deuteronomy 28:1-8)*

Chapter Four

The Beauty of Holiness

Worship the LORD in the splendour of his holiness.

Psalms 96:9 (NIV)

God is holy and God loves beauty. He is perfectly righteous and good in every way. There is nothing evil or deceitful in God. Everything he does is true, right, just, and completely good. God is holy and holiness is beautiful. Unfortunately many people think holiness is dull and unexciting. They think holiness means following many rules and regulations, and not being able to have any fun.

Satan is a liar and he has convinced many people that to be holy is boring and that sin is exciting. They do not understand that living a holy life means living in partnership with the amazing God who created the universe. God is the one who created love, laughter and happiness. When we live in harmony with God we experience his love, joy and peace. Walking in harmony with the creator of the universe is not dull and boring.

God loves beauty. Look at nature and the beauty of mountains, rivers, and forests. Think of the beautiful colours of birds, butterflies, flowers and little insects. Think of the beautiful colours of tropical fish and all the different types of animals in the world. God created all of these.

People all over the world will stop and gaze at a beautiful sunrise or sunset and look at the beautiful colours that are constantly changing. It is not surprising that David wrote, "How clearly the sky reveals God's glory" (Psalm 19:1). The sunrise and the sunset both fade and disappear but God's glory does not fade and disappear.

☞ Sing to the Lord, praise his name...

Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.

For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise...

Splendor and majesty are before him;

strength and glory are in his sanctuary...

Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness.

Psalm 96:2-4,6-9 (NIV)

Look at the words in this psalm that describe God: glory, marvelous deeds, great, worthy of praise, splendour, majesty, strength, holiness. We worship God because he is so wonderful. God is awesome. Our words cannot describe the goodness and beauty of God. We should not come casually into the presence of such a high and holy God.

☞ Who has the right to go up the Lord's hill?

Who may enter his holy Temple?

Those who are pure in act and in thought.

Psalm 24:3-4

Jesus said, "Happy are the pure in heart; they will see God" (Matthew 5:8). This verse does not just refer to seeing God in heaven at the end of our lives. It also means that here and now only those whose hearts are pure will be able to see God and know him in his beauty and glory. In this chapter we will look at a number of word pictures that help us to understand the beauty of holiness. Harmony is one of the things that makes music so beautiful. Holiness brings harmony into our lives.

Holiness is Harmony

God is the creator of music and we worship God with songs and music. The words "sing" and "praise" are found over 400 times in the Bible. Singers and musicians know that harmony is very

important. A choir or a singing group will practise their songs again and again so as to get the right harmony. All their voices must blend together in perfect harmony or else the song is spoilt. It takes time and discipline and hard work, but the result is beautiful music that brings joy and happiness to others. If the singers are not united and do not follow the leader, then the result is a terrible noise that people do not like. Holiness is like harmony, and sin is like disharmony.

In the beginning, the world was a place of perfect beauty and everything lived in harmony. "God looked at everything he had made, and he was very pleased" (Genesis 1:31). Everything was in a state of harmony. No one was jealous, angry, or greedy. There was no fear. God walked and talked with Adam and Eve. The animals were not afraid of each other and they were not afraid of the humans. Relationships were in harmony. We call it paradise for it was a perfect environment, and all of creation lived in harmony.

God gave Adam and Eve the power of choice. Humans are not like the plants that just grow where they are planted. Nor are we like the animals who really do not have much power of choice. God has made us completely different. We can think for ourselves and to a large extent we can plan our own lives. We can obey God or reject God, we can make war or we can make peace. We can love people, ignore people and even hate people. We can do good to others, or we can destroy others. We can do all these things and many other things because God has given us the power of choice.

Unfortunately Adam and Eve made the wrong choice. Sin entered the world, and the harmony was destroyed. Adam and Eve were frightened and hid from God. When God asked Adam what had happened, Adam blamed Eve. Eve blamed the snake. The result was separation from God and from the beautiful garden. Sin brought a curse upon the earth and human life has been one of never ending struggle and hard work ever since.

The remainder of the Bible is the story of how God wants to

destroy sin and bring men and women back into harmony with each other and in harmony with God. One day God will restore creation to the beauty and splendour it had in the very beginning. This is why God wants us to be holy. He wants to take out the rebellion and selfishness that each person is born with and restore us until we become a picture of the goodness and kindness of God.

In a band there may be three different guitars or even more. Each guitar must be tuned so that it is in tune with all the others and also in tune with the keyboard. If they are in tune, there will be harmony. But if one person does not want to tune his guitar to the others there will be disharmony, and the music will not sound good.

In the same way, as Christians, we need to be in tune with God. If we do not listen to God and choose to go our own way, then there will be no harmony but only discord. We must surrender our desires and submit to God's desires. We can do this, for we know that God plans good things for his children, and his ways and plans are always better than ours.

A guitar has six strings that are all different but when each string is tuned properly then they blend together to make beautiful music. This is a beautiful picture of living in right relationships with other people. We are all different and God does not make us the same as others. Instead he wants to help us to live in harmony with others.

“Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14 NIV). We cannot be self-centered and holy at the same time. Right relationships with other people are very important. Jesus said that it was not enough to be kind and good to our friends. Instead he said, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44).

Jesus said that if a person came to the temple to give a gift to God, and there remembered that a brother was upset with him, then he should leave his gift and go and straighten things with his

brother. Once he is reconciled with his brother then he should come back and give his gift to God. Some people find it easier to confess their sins to God but find it hard to apologize to a brother or to a wife or husband. This is not right. We need to straighten relationships with other people first and then it is easy to get right with God. "If we say that we love God, but hate others we are liars. For we cannot love God whom we have not seen, if we do not love others whom we have seen... Whoever loves God must first love others also" (1 John 4:20-21). Living in harmony means living in a right relationship with God and with other people.

Holiness is Fruitfulness

Jesus portrays the Christian life as being like big sweet juicy clusters of grapes growing on a grape vine. Jesus is the vine, we are the branches, and God is the gardener who looks after the vineyard. God wants us to bear fruit—lots of fruit. Some trees need very little care, but grape vines need lots of care if they are to bear good fruit. Every year the gardener comes with his cutters and trims the vine. The gardener checks the grape vine and cuts off any branches that have no fruit growing on them. He looks at the branches that have fruit, and he cuts off excess leaves so that the branch will have bigger and better fruit.

If a branch is cut off from the vine, it quickly shrivels and dies and is thrown out to be burnt. A branch can only bear fruit if it is securely attached to the vine, and the life-giving sap of the vine flows into the branch. The branch has no life of its own. It is the sap flowing from the vine into the branch that gives it life and causes it to bear fruit. The life-giving sap of the vine is a picture of the Holy Spirit. He wants to fill us and flow through our lives. When we listen to Jesus and are obedient to him, then the Holy Spirit fills our lives just as the sap fills the branch.

Jesus said, "I chose you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will

last" (John 15:16 NIV). But what sort of fruit is Jesus looking for in our lives? The Bible tells us, "The Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). These beautiful fruits grow in our lives as we allow God to cut away from our life everything that is not pleasing to him. We must also be closely attached to Jesus and allow the Holy Spirit to flow into every part of our life. The closer we are to Jesus the more fruit we will bear. Bible reading, prayer, worship, being kind and compassionate to others are all things that keep us close to Jesus.

God wants our lives to be full of fruit. Jesus said, "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples" (John 15:8 NIV). When people see God's love, joy, peace and patience demonstrated in our lives they see the presence of God, and they give glory to God.

Holiness is fruitfulness. Let us allow God to use his pruning cutters on our lives so that we may produce nice delicious fruit of love, joy, and peace for the glory of God.

Beautiful Garments of Righteousness

Jesus told a beautiful story of a man who had two sons. The youngest one asked his father for his share of money and went off to a big city in a far country. He wasted the money on parties, drinking, gambling, and on girlfriends. After some time he ran out of money. There was a famine in the country and there was little food and not many jobs. Eventually he got a job feeding pigs. He was a Jewish boy and Jews hated pigs. The most revolting job for a Jewish boy was to feed pigs. Yet this boy was so hungry and so poor he wanted to eat the pig's food. He began to think of the good time he used to have at home and how his father's employees had better food than he had. He decided to go back home and confess his sin to his father. He decided to ask his father to allow

him to work as a servant.

His father was watching and saw him coming. He ran out to meet him, wrapped his arms around him and cried for joy. The son said, "I have sinned against God and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son" (Luke 15:21). The father called to his servants, "Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet"(Luke 15:22). The boy's clothes were worn out, dirty and smelled like they had come from the pig pen. The father takes off the dirty filthy clothes and puts nice new clean clothes on his son. This is a picture of what God wants to do with us. "I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10 NIV).

The Bible uses the picture of putting off dirty clothes and putting on clean clothes when it talks about the sinful nature. The Bible uses a variety of terms to describe the sinful nature, sometimes it is called "*the old self*" in contrast to the "*new self*." We are to get rid of it as if it were old dirty clothes and we must put on the "new self" and live a life of righteousness and holiness. The Bible does not tell us to discipline the sinful nature or to educate it or even to suppress it. Instead the Bible says to get rid of it.

✞ You must get rid of all these things: anger, passion, and hateful feelings. No insults or obscene talk must ever come from your lips. Do not lie to one another, for you have *taken off the old self* with its habits and have *put on the new self*.

Colossians 3:8-10

✞ *Get rid of your old self*, which made you live as you used to—the old self which was being destroyed by its deceitful desires. Your hearts and minds must be made completely new. You must *put on the new self*, which is created in God's likeness, in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4:22-24

- ☞ Therefore *rid yourselves* of malice, and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind....Abstain from sinful desires which war against your soul. 1 Peter 2:1, 11

The Bible speaks out very clearly that we must get rid of all these evil things from our lives. An athlete will strip off his heavy clothing before he runs a race. In the same way we are to “rid ourselves of everything that gets in the way, and of the sin that holds on to us so tightly and let us run with determination the race that lies before us” (Hebrews 12:1). If we don’t get rid of sin from our hearts, then our Christian lives will be weak and we will often be defeated.

A Beautiful Work of Art

God is the great creator and designer, he is also an artist who loves beauty. He has created the world and all the beautiful creatures in it. God is still at work making beautiful things. He wants to take our lives and make something beautiful and useful out of them.

God told Jeremiah to go to the house where a person was making pots and vases out of clay (Jeremiah 18:1-6). Jeremiah watched as the man took a lump of soft clay and put it on his potters wheel. As the wheel began to spin the man began to mould and shape the clay with his fingers. He wanted to make a very beautiful vase but the clay was too stiff. The potter tried but the clay would not respond to his hands for it was not flexible enough. The potter changed his mind and started again and made something else out of the clay. God said to Jeremiah, “You are in my hands just like clay in the potter’s hands” (Jeremiah 18:6).

God is wanting to make something beautiful out of our lives. But we need to be flexible and allow God to mould us and shape our lives as he sees best. If we are stubborn and resist God’s plans,

then God is not able to do in our lives the wonderful things he wants to do.

We must surrender ourselves into the hands of God and allow him to do what he would like with our lives. He is our heavenly Father and he plans good things for his children, never bad things. "You are our Father, Lord. We are like clay and you are like the potter" (Isaiah 64:8). We must have willing hearts that are eager to do God's will and to obey him. "How I love to do your will, my God! I keep your teaching in my heart" (Psalm 40:8). David prayed, "You are my God; teach me to do your will" (Psalm 143:10).

In the Garden of Gethsemene Jesus prayed to his Father, "If it is possible take this cup of suffering from me! Yet not what I want but what you want" (Matthew 26:39). If we have this attitude of being totally submissive to the will of God, then we will find that God will purify our hearts and make something beautiful out of our lives.

*Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!
Thou art the potter I am the clay
Mold me and make me after thy will
While I am waiting yielded and still*

*Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way
Hold o'er my being absolute sway!
Fill with thy Spirit till all shall see
Christ only, always living in me.*

(Adelaide Pollard)

In this chapter we have been thinking about the beauty of a holy life. Holiness is not dull and boring, but it is the exciting adventure of walking and working in partnership with a wonderful heavenly Father. We have looked at four pictures of a holy life.

- Holiness is harmony. We must be in tune with God and in tune with others.
- Holiness is fruitfulness. As the life of Jesus flows into our lives we will bear fruit so that God is glorified.
- Our sinful life is like dirty rags that we are wearing. God wants to remove these and clothe us in robes of righteousness.
- God is an artist and he will make something beautiful out of our lives as we are yielded to him.

*Something beautiful,
Something good;
All my confusion he understood.
All I had to offer him
was brokenness and strife.
But he made something beautiful of my life
(Gloria Gaither 1971)*

Chapter Five

Three Enemies Of Holiness

God is holy and he wants us to be holy people, but why does it seem to be so hard to live a holy life? The angels sing, "Holy, holy holy is the Lord God Almighty," as they proclaim his praises. But when we look around in the world we see so much sin. Even within the church, people are not living lives that are pleasing to God. Some people come to church, sing songs and praise God, but their hearts are far from God. They do not live godly lives for they are jealous of others, dishonest, gossiping and critical of others.

What is the basic cause of these problems?

Why is it so hard to live a holy life?

Many people say, "We are just humans like everyone else and it is too hard to live a holy life here in this sinful world. We will continue to sin until we die, but once we get to heaven we will be holy."

God wants us to live a holy life here and now in this sinful world. Jesus said, "You are like a light for the whole world...Your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things that you do and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14,16).

We have three enemies who are always seeking to pull us away from living a holy life. The three enemies are: Satan, love of worldly pleasures, and the sinful nature. Look at these three scripture verses.

☞ *Your enemy the devil* prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him and stand firm in your faith.

1 Peter 5:8,9

☞ Anyone who chooses to be a *friend of the world* becomes an *enemy of God*.

James 4:4

☞ For the *sinful nature* desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other. Galatians 5:17

These three enemies-- Satan, love of worldly pleasures, and the sinful nature try to defeat us and destroy our Christian life. Some call this an "evil trio"— the world, the flesh and the devil. We must be very careful and guard ourselves against these three enemies and find ways to overcome and destroy them. If we do not overcome them, then they will overcome us and we will not be able to live a life that is pleasing to God.

Satan

Satan was a very important angel who was not content to be God's servant. He became proud and wanted the highest place for himself. He rebelled against God and became God's enemy. He could not fight against God, because God is far too powerful. Instead, he attacks the good and beautiful things that God has created, including people like you and me.

God created man and woman and placed both of them in that beautiful Garden of Eden. Everything was beautiful. They had plenty of food, water, friendship, and companionship with God. They had all they wanted and there was no sorrow, anger, jealousy or heartache. God talked with them and they lived in harmony with God and with each other, but Satan came in and deceived them. He placed doubts in the mind of the woman and deceived her. He told Eve that if she ate the fruit from the forbidden tree, she would receive the knowledge of knowing good and evil, and would be like God. The woman listened to the deceitful words of Satan. The fruit looked so beautiful, and she thought how wonderful it would be to be wise. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Instead of listening to God and refusing Satan, she listened to Satan and

ignored God. She obeyed Satan's words, ate the fruit and gave some to her husband. He could have refused to eat it, but he followed his wife rather than following God. This is how sin came into the world, and with sin came shame, guilt, fear, distrust, anger, resentment, bitterness, selfishness, and all sorts of evil .

Satan's ways have not changed. He is still deceiving and persuading mankind to disobey God's instructions and laws. Paul wrote to the people of Corinth and told them, "I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3). This Bible verse shows us that Satan's ways have not changed. Therefore we too must be alert at all times. Otherwise, he will deceive us and we, too, will fall into the trap of sin.

We must not feel depressed and defeated. The good news is that Jesus has defeated Satan. "The Son of God appeared for this very reason, to destroy what the devil had done"(1 John 3:8). We must rejoice. In the power of Jesus we can resist and defeat Satan. James 4:7 says, "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Satan is our enemy and he is always going around finding ways to tempt us, but through the power of Christ, we can overcome him.

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground" (Ephesians 6:10, 11, 13).

Worldly Pleasures

Satan is our enemy and he is very cunning. He does not come to us dressed in black with horns and a long tail and smelling of smoke and sulphur. If he did, people would run from him. He is much too clever. Instead he comes disguised in a multitude of

different ways in order to tempt us. When he tempted Eve, he came in the form of a snake and deceived her about the fruit. The woman saw the fruit was delightful and thought it would give her wisdom, and so she took it. So Satan uses the good things of the world to tempt us.

Satan showed Jesus all the powerful kingdoms of this world with all their riches and greatness. He said to Jesus, ‘If you bow down and worship me, then I will give to you all of these’ (Matthew 4:9). Satan will try to use our desires for the good things of this world to distract us and turn us away from God. Demas was one of Paul’s co-workers. He was Paul’s disciple and worked with Luke. He listened to Paul preach, he saw his strong faith, and was with Paul while he was in prison. But later Paul wrote these sad words, “Demas fell in love with this present world and has deserted me” (2 Timothy 4:10).

Demas started well in his Christian life, but then difficult times came and his faith was not strong. All the glitter and glamour of this world deceived Demas and he turned his back on following Jesus. It’s terrible if we lose our faith as Demas did. Jesus said, “Will you gain anything if you win the whole world but are yourself lost or defeated? Of course not” (Luke 9:25).

We must obey these words of the Bible.

☞ Do not love the world or anything that belongs to the world. If you love the world you do not love the Father. Everything that belongs to the world—what the sinful self desires, what people see and want, and everything in this world that people are proud of—none of this comes from the Father; it all comes from the world. The world and everything in it that people desire is passing away; but those who do the will of God live forever.

1 John 2:15-17

Victory over the World

Moses is an excellent example for us. He was adopted as the son of the king of Egypt. He was treated royally and had the best education that was available. He was rich with horses, chariots, palaces, fancy clothes, good food, girlfriends and everything that money could buy. Moses had all of these things but he gave all these things up and decided that to suffer disgrace for the Messiah was worth far more than all the treasures of Egypt (Hebrews 11:24-26 NIV).

The pleasures of the world had tempted Moses but he overcame these temptations. Every day the pleasures and treasures of the world will tempt us also. But we must put Jesus first in our lives and make Christ the king of our lives. If we do this, then we will overcome the worldly desires.

Some people tried to escape from the temptations of the world by living in caves up in the mountains or out in the deserts. But God did not call us to run away from the world, Instead he wants us to be light in a dark and sinful world. Jesus knew about the problems the disciples would face and so he prayed especially for them.

☞ I have given them your word and the *world has hated them*, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. *My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.* They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. *Sanctify them* by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, *I have sent them into the world.*

John 17:14-18 (NIV)

Jesus tells us some very important things in this prayer . The people who love worldly pleasure and power do not like the believers of Jesus Christ. But we are not to stay away from worldly

people, for Jesus has sent us into the world, so that we can be salt and light and make the world a better place. Jesus wants us to be free from sin, but he does not take us out of the world, instead he prays that God will protect us and keep us holy even in a world that is full of sin. Jesus' prayer is that we would be sanctified or made holy through his word.

We are to live godly lives in a sinful world. This is not easy for sometimes people are hostile. There are many things in the world to tempt us. Friends and relatives put pressure on us to live the same way they do, but we are to live differently to the people of the world. Paul says we are to live as if we were dead, "I will boast only about the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; for by means of his cross the *world is dead* to me, and I am dead to the world" (Galatians 6:14). The worldly life is trying to get us to give in to it, but in Jesus' name and power we can win the victory over the world. I John 5:4 says, "Every child of God is able to defeat the world. And we win the victory over the world by means of our faith."

Have you ever seen the letters WWJD? They stand for "What Would Jesus Do?" People use these letters to remind themselves that they are not to live by the standards and desires of the world but to keep their eyes on Jesus. When they face decisions they ask themselves, "What would Jesus do?" This helps them to use their faith in Jesus to overcome the pressures and temptations of the world.

The Sinful Nature

The third enemy is the sinful nature. What is it, and where did it come from?

When God created Adam and Eve, they were holy and pure, but when they sinned, their lives were ruined. Sin did not just affect them, for it affected everyone who came after them. Sin spread

from one to another like an infectious disease. It spread from father to son and from mother to daughter. "Sin came into the world through one man, and his sin brought death with it. As a result death has spread to the whole human race because everyone has sinned" (Romans 5:12). Sometimes the sinful nature is called "original sin" because it has come into our lives as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve.

Adam and Eve were created pure and holy. Because they sinned everyone who came after them has been born with a desire for sin and self-centeredness. David said, "Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5 NIV).

Little babies are cute and cuddly when they are born, but it is not very long until we find the cute little baby also has a temper and will scream when it is not happy. Think about little children. Who taught them to steal, fight and argue? We did not teach them these things. We teach our children, "Don't steal, don't fight, don't lie, don't disobey." These evil desires are already in their hearts and it is not long before children demonstrate stubbornness and disobedience and a very strong self will.

Jesus said, "It is what comes out of a person that makes him unclean. For from the inside, from a person's heart, come the evil ideas which lead him to do immoral things, to rob, kill, commit adultery, be greedy, and do all sorts of evil things; deceit, indecency, jealousy, slander, pride, and folly- all these evil things come from inside a person and make him unclean." (Mark 7:20-23). All of these evil things come out of our hearts because there is a sinful nature in our hearts that we inherited from Adam.

Sinful Nature or Human Nature

It is very important that we do not confuse human nature with the sinful nature. Adam and Eve were created with a human nature

but not with a sinful nature. They were created holy with no desire for sin in their hearts. Because they were humans they had desires for food, for sleep, for friendship and a desire for knowledge. These desires are good and are normal and were given to us by God. The sexual desire is another desire that was given to us by God. It is a very strong desire and like our other desires it must be controlled. Some people do not control their sexual desires, and they get involved in immorality and adultery.

Jesus had a human nature but not a sinful nature for he was without sin. We will always have a human nature for that is an essential part of who we are. We need to discipline and control our human nature. It is natural to get hungry, and when we see food we want to eat some. It is normal and natural to have sexual desires. But, as Christians, we do not steal to satisfy our hunger. Neither do we get involved in adultery or immorality. Instead we control our desires and do not let our human desires control us.

The Good News Bible is a very good translation but in some places they have used the phrase "human nature" instead of the phrase "sinful nature" (e.g. Romans 8:5-6, Galatians 5:17). This is an inaccurate translation. The sinful nature is that desire in our hearts that chooses to do the wrong rather than the right. It is more interested in pleasing itself than in pleasing God. When the sinful nature is in control of our lives, we are proud but not humble; we prefer pleasure to self sacrifice; we prefer our way to God's way; we want to take revenge rather than forgive. We love those who are kind to us and we hate those who hurt us or displease us.

We can see that the sinful nature is really a twisted self-centred human nature. It is normal to want to feel good about oneself, but if we are not careful this can easily turn into pride. It is normal to feel hunger but if we do not control our appetite we become greedy.

| Human Nature | Sinful Nature |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| self worth | pride, arrogant |
| food | greed |
| sleep - rest | lazy |
| sexual desires | lust - immoral thoughts |
| care for our bodies | love of ourselves |
| ambition | selfish ambition |
| love and friendship | jealous, covetous, envious |
| shelter and security | self centered |

Some Bible translations use the word “flesh” instead of the term “sinful nature.” Flesh does not mean the soft part of our bodies, but rather selfish bodily desires. We must control our bodily desires. If we let our bodily desires control us they will lead us into sin.

The sinful nature is self-centred, and causes a lot of problems in our Christian lives because it always wants to be in control. It wants to be the king of its own castle, and captain of its own ship. Many people want God to be their helper but they still want to be in control of their own life.

The Holy Spirit wants us to obey God and follow his instructions. The sinful nature opposes the Holy Spirit. “For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want” (Galatians 5:17 NIV).

One person described the sinful nature as being like a supermarket trolley with a wheel that keeps jamming so that even

though you push the trolley in a straight line it keeps wanting to go crooked. Romans 7:19-20 says, "I don't do the good that I want to do; instead I do the evil that I do not want to do. If I do what I don't want to do, this means that I am no longer the one who does it; instead, it is the sin that lives in me."

Arrow missing the target

One day a father saw his son playing around with a bow and arrows. The boy had made the bow out of some bamboo and he had made the arrows out of some reeds that grew in the bush. He had enjoyed making it and now he was trying it out. He tried and tried to hit the target but no matter how much he tried, he always kept missing the target. He became very frustrated and he asked his father, "Dad, what is wrong? Why do I always miss the target? Something must be wrong. Is it me or the bow?"

The father came near to his son and looked at the homemade arrows. He held one up close to his eye and looked along it from one end to the other. He smiled and said, "The arrows you made are not straight. They are a bit crooked, and that is why they fly crooked. But let me show you how to straighten them." They went home and the father started the fire and heated the arrows over the fire. As the reed heated up it became flexible and the father was able to gently bend the reed and straighten it out. Now he told his son, "Go and try it out. Now your bow and arrows will work well."

Our thoughts are like the reeds this boy used for his arrows. The sinful nature has warped our hearts and minds and we have become twisted in our thinking. Instead of wanting to do the right thing and following the right way, we allow the sinful nature to twist our thinking and it pulls us in the wrong direction. We desire to please God but then temptation comes, we give in and go the wrong way. The sinful nature continually wants to pull us back into

sin.

There is a solution. Just as this boy asked his father for help, we can go to our Heavenly Father for help. Just as this boy gave his bow and arrows to his father, so we can give our hearts and lives to our Heavenly Father so that he can straighten them out. In the story the father used a fire to soften the reed so that he could make it straight. In the same way the fire of the Holy Spirit will work in our hearts and take out the crookedness. He will change us until we will shoot straight and not keep on missing the mark.

Actions and Attitudes

When we talk about sin, it is helpful to think about the difference between actions and attitudes.

1. Sinful actions are the sins that we commit like stealing, lying, fighting, and adultery/sexual immorality.

2. Sinful attitudes come from the sinful nature that lives within our hearts and pulls us to commit sin.

Sinful attitudes are like the branches of a plant and sinful actions are like the fruit of a plant. Attitudes come first and then the actions.

What is this sinful nature? Some call this "original sin" for it goes all the way back to Adam. Some call it the root of sin, for as long as the sinful nature stays in our hearts it will keep on trying to grow and produce sinful actions. Sin is like a bamboo that grows from the ground. We can cut it down but it will grow up again. No matter how many times we cut it down to get rid of it, it will still grow because the roots are still in the ground.

We can think of the sinful nature as being like a disease within our body. If the doctor does not discover the cause of this sickness and find a complete cure for it, then this sickness will keep coming back. In the same way, if the sinful nature/original sin still remains in our hearts, then this will always keep pulling us back towards a

life of sin. We will find that we do not have the joy, peace or victory that we would like to have.

There is a problem with these word pictures, for the sinful nature is not something physical that we can see or touch. Doctors can see it with an x-ray, and it cannot be removed by surgery. The sinful nature is the evil desire of our hearts. These crooked thoughts and wrong desires that hide within our hearts, stir us up and drag us into sin. James talks about these evil desires that live in the human heart. "But we are tempted when we are drawn away and trapped by our own evil desires. Then our evil desires conceive and give birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (James 1:14-15).

The main desire of the sinful nature is this, "I want to be my own boss. I want to look after myself and run my own life." This idea comes straight from Satan himself. Isaiah 14:13-14 speaks out clearly about Satan's thoughts in the beginning. He was a mighty angel of God. He saw he was more handsome and had greater honour than the other angels, but he became rebellious and disobedient. Satan thought:

☞ *I will ascend to heaven;*

I will raise my throne above the stars of God;

*I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly,
on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain.*

I will ascend above the tops of the clouds;

I will make myself like the Most High. Isaiah 14:14 (NIV)

These words "I, myself, and my" are found many times in these boasting words of Satan. The sinful nature has just the same kind of thoughts. One Bible college teacher wrote the word "sin" on the blackboard, but he wrote it like this, with a big "I" in the middle.



The real root of sin is a big “I” that wants to have its own way, and is not willing to submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The sinful nature wants to be in control and rule over everything. Therefore it fights against the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit always wants to glorify Jesus and make him to be King and Lord of our lives. So they are enemies and fight against each other. If you allow the sinful nature to remain in your life, then this war will never end. We will find little peace for there will be an ongoing battle between the two opposing forces.

Many Christians have two opposing forces fighting against each other within them. Each one wants to win over the other. They fight against each other in order to rule over us. The Holy Spirit of God comes into our hearts when we repent of our sins and believe in Jesus Christ. But there is another powerful desire that is also inside us. This is the sinful nature. The sinful nature agrees with what Satan wants, so it pulls us toward sin and its activities. The Holy Spirit wants us to obey the Lord Jesus. These two struggle within us in order to control our lives.

The double minded person is the one who is undecided about who should be in control of his life. Sometimes he listens to God, and other times he follows the desire of the self centred sinful nature. These two strong desires are competing against each other and this gives the Christian a lot of problems.

Sinful Nature Causes Problems

The sinful nature came as a result of the sin of Adam and it has affected the lives of every person. When a baby is born, it is born with a sinful nature. The sinful nature is self centered and is concerned with “me first.” Many of the fights and quarrels between children take place because neither child wants to give in to the other child. For this very reason, parents have a great responsibility

to teach their children to do what is right and good. Many marriage problems happen for the same reason. Neither person wants to give in or say sorry to the other person. Each one of them wants to be in charge, no one wants to give in to the other person. Many wars have been fought between countries for the same reason. Each country wants to be the biggest and no one wants to submit to someone else.

Each person is born with a sinful nature and this is the cause of many Christians being weak in their spiritual lives. Paul wrote to the Corinthians and told them that they were still living according to their sinful nature. "I could not talk to you as I talk to men who have the Spirit; I had to talk to you as men of this world...because you still live as men of this world. When there is *jealousy among you, and you quarrel with one another*, doesn't this prove that you are men of this world, living by this world's standard?" (I Corinthians 3:1-3).

The Corinthian Christians were "men of this world" and "living by the world's standards," because they were not listening to the Holy Spirit. Their thinking and actions were controlled by love for the things of this world.

Today many Christians are living the same kind of life as the Corinthian Christians. They have turned away from the sins they used to do. They believe in Jesus Christ and wait for the Lord's return but they still have this spiritual conflict in their hearts. The sinful nature continues to battle against the Holy Spirit and so they are double minded.

The Holy Spirit wants us to humble ourselves and let Jesus be Lord of our lives. "Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you doubleminded. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up" James 4:8, 10 (NIV). This verse refers to two types of people. "Wash your hands you sinners" refers to sinful actions that we have committed. We need to repent, confess and ask the blood of Jesus to cleanse us.

“Purify your hearts, you double minded” does not speak about actions done with our hands, but attitudes that hide within our hearts. We need a deeper work of God to purify our hearts. This verse refers to those believers who are double minded, for the sinful nature is competing against the Holy Spirit. They need to purify their hearts and get rid of the sinful nature and be totally surrendered to Jesus Christ.

Crucify the Sinful Nature

The Bible uses very powerful language when it talks about sin, for it tells us to crucify the sinful nature. Jesus died on the cross to forgive the sins that we have committed. He also died to destroy this sinful nature that is within us, so that we can be free from sin and live righteous lives. The Bible does not tell us to fight against this sinful nature until we die. Instead it tells us to crucify the sinful nature and get rid of it. Look at these Bible verses:

- ☞ We know that our *old being* has been *put to death* with Christ on his cross, in order that the power of *sinful self* might be destroyed, so that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”
Romans 6:6
- ☞ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have *crucified* the *sinful nature* with its passions and desires. Galatians 5:24 (NIV)
- ☞ For if you live according to the *sinful nature* you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to *death* the misdeeds of the body, you will live. Romans 8:13
- ☞ I have been *put to death* with Christ on his cross, so that it is no longer *I* who live, but *Christ* who lives in me.
Galatians 2:19, 20
- ☞ In the same way, count yourselves *dead to sin* but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Romans 6:11

All of these Bible verses talk about death. But it does not talk about physical death. It says that we must die to sin so that we shall no longer follow the desires of the sinful nature. A dead person does not feel hungry, does not envy, and does not hear. We too must become like a dead person that has no desire for sin. Then we will not envy someone's property and we will not listen to the flattering words of those who want to lead us away from faith in God.

Crucifixion is not pleasant and it is a slow painful death. To crucify the sinful nature is not easy, for the sinful nature does not want to die. It fights to remain in control. But we need to do what Galatians 5:24 says. We need to take the passions and evil desires of the sinful nature and nail them to the cross. We must totally reject and renounce jealousy, greed, hatred, lustful thoughts, selfish ambition, pride, resentment and bitterness. We must get rid of these things out of our life until we can say like Paul did, "I have been *put to death* with Christ on his cross, so that it is no longer *I* who live, but *Christ* who lives in me (Galatians 2:19, 20).

We must be dead to sin, but we must be alive with Christ. Just as Jesus rose from the dead, he also gives us a new life that hungers and thirsts after righteousness. The Holy Spirit must fill us so that our ears will be open to hear him and obey him. If we do this then, the sinful nature will no longer lead us astray. The Holy Spirit will give us a dynamic spiritual life, and God's power, joy, and peace will fill our hearts and lives to overflowing.

Surrender is the Way to Victory

The Biblical message is clear: we must get rid of our sinful nature. Paul said, "Do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness, but rather...offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be

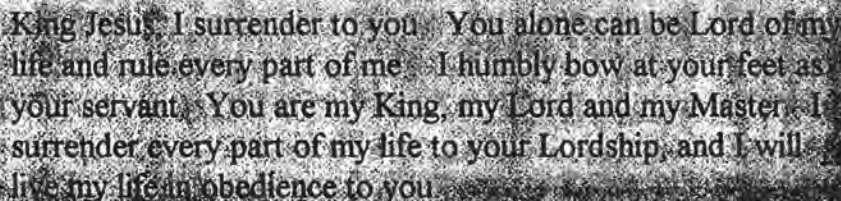
your master... (Rom 6:12-14 NIV).

Who is master of your life? Is your life controlled by the Holy Spirit? Or is there an ongoing struggle in your life with two forces struggling for control? Is your life controlled by the Holy Spirit, or does the sinful nature sometimes control your life?

Often we think that the person who surrenders is the loser and not the victor. But in our Christian life the only way that we can gain spiritual victory is if we surrender our will to the Holy Spirit.

We must end this internal struggle. You must say, "I am tired of this sinful nature in my life. Jesus loved me so much that he gave up his life to redeem me from sin. Therefore, I now want to completely surrender my life to the Lord Jesus. I will not struggle against the Holy Spirit. My sinful nature and my selfish desires must go. Jesus alone must be king of my life. He must rule and be lord over everything in me, and I'll be under his authority and him alone."

How about you? Is the Holy Spirit and the sinful nature still fighting against each other in your heart or not? It is good if you can pray a prayer like this:



King Jesus, I surrender to you. You alone can be Lord of my life and rule every part of me. I humbly bow at your feet as your servant. You are my King, my Lord and my Master. I surrender every part of my life to your Lordship, and I will live my life in obedience to you.

There is a wonderful Christian song that has been a blessing to many people. It is a prayer song of surrender to Jesus. Read these words and make them your prayer.

*All to Jesus I surrender; Humbly at his feet I bow,
Worldly pleasures all forsaken. Take me Jesus take me now.*

*I surrender all. I surrender all.
All to Thee, my blessed Saviour,
I surrender all.*

*All to Jesus I surrender; Make me Saviour wholly thine
Let me feel the Holy Spirit; Truly know that thou art mine*

*All to Jesus I surrender; Lord I give myself to thee.
Fill me with thy love and power; Let thy blessing fall on me.*

*I surrender all. I surrender all.
All to Thee, my blessed Saviour,
I surrender all.*

Judson Van De Venter

Chapter Six

We Can Overcome The Sinful Nature Through The Power Of The Holy Spirit

For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live... (Romans 8:13 NIV)

Many Christians live with a constant tug-of-war going on inside their lives. They want to do the right but often do they wrong. They want to avoid the wrong but often end up doing the things they know to be wrong. They feel shame and discouragement. The Christian life seems to be one long struggle. They wonder if there is any help for them.

We have good news. The salvation that Jesus gives us is full and complete. God does not leave us with an impossible struggle. God does not command us to live holy lives and then not give us the power or the ability to live a holy life. God always gives us the ability to do what he asks us to do. Jesus forgives us for the sins of the past, and he wants to give us victory over the sinful nature. Through the power of the Holy Spirit he enables us to live victorious Christian lives.

- ☞ For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. Romans 8:13 (NIV)

- ☞ The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Galatians 6:8 (NIV)

The Holy Spirit and The Sinful Nature

In Galatians 5:19-23 Paul has two lists: one lists the evil results of the sinful nature and the other one lists the fruit of the Holy Spirit. If we allow the sinful nature to control us, it will pull us toward these evil actions. But if the Holy Spirit fills us, then these good attitudes will be produced in our lives.

Sinful Nature

Immoral

Filthy and indecent actions

Worship of idols

Witchcraft

Becoming enemies, fighting

Jealousy

Angry

Ambition

Separating into parties and groups

Envy

Drunken orgies

Holy Spirit

Love

Joy

Peace

Patience

Kindness

Goodness

Faithfulness

Humility

Self-Control

These two lists are totally different. The sinful nature pulls us towards evil. The Holy Spirit pulls us towards God, and produces good positive qualities that everyone likes.

These two opposing forces are fighting within the hearts of many Christians. The sinful nature leads us to sin and eventual destruction. The Holy Spirit produces, goodness, righteousness, holiness, and eternal life. In the Old Testament, God promised that he will remove the evil desires of the sinful nature from our hearts and give us the Holy Spirit.

The Prophecy of Ezekiel

During the time of Ezekiel a big disaster came to the people of Judah. They had disobeyed God and worshipped idols. God allowed their enemies to come and destroy them and their homes. Many Israelites were captured and taken hundreds of miles away to Babylon. After many years, God told Ezekiel to give the Israelite captives a wonderful message of hope.

☞ I will take you from every nation and country and bring you back to your own land.

I will sprinkle clean water on you and make you clean from all your idols and everything else that has defiled you.

I will give you a new heart and a new mind.

I will take away your stubborn heart of stone and give you an obedient heart.

I will put my spirit in you and I will see to it that you follow my laws and keep all the commands I have given you.

Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors. You will be my people, and I will be your God.

I will save you from everything that defiles you.

(Ezekiel 36:24-29)

This prophecy of Ezekiel was fulfilled in the lives of the people of Judah. They left the foreign nations where they had been and came back to their own land. They abandoned their idols and they never went back to worshipping them again. Many of them became very strict in obeying the law of Moses.

But this prophecy of Ezekiel is also a picture of what God does for us. We have sinned and gone far away from God, but Jesus has brought us back to God. Ezekiel spoke of people having their hearts sprinkled with clean water which is a picture of baptism. God cleanses our hearts from all impurities and our lives have been

changed.

A stony heart is a good picture of the sinful nature. The sinful nature is hard like stone because:

- It wants to follow its own desires and does not want to obey God.
- It does not have compassion on others but thinks only about itself.
- It does not forgive easily but holds onto anger and bitterness.
- It is proud, self-centered and jealous of others

God promised to remove this hard stone-like heart that is proud, self-centred and often full of anger, jealousy and bitterness, and give us a new heart of flesh. This means a heart that is soft, tender, compassionate, full of love for God and for others. God promises to put his Spirit into our hearts. The Holy Spirit will live within us and help us to follow God's commands and plans for our lives. In this way we become God's very own people and he becomes our God who provides, protects, saves us, and keeps us.

Think about your own life. How is the condition of your own life? Is your heart hard, stubborn and stone like? Or, have you surrendered your will to the Holy Spirit and allowed God to transform your mind and give you a heart that gladly obeys God's laws?

The Holy Spirit Comes like Fire

John the Baptist said this about Jesus, "The one who will come after me will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3:11). On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came like fire and entered the heart of each person in the room. The Holy Spirit brought about a great change in the lives of the disciples and the believers.

The picture of the Holy Spirit being like a fire is very important

and helps us understand the work of the Holy Spirit. When Solomon had built the Temple in Jerusalem, he prayed and dedicated the Temple to God, and the fire from heaven came and burnt the animal sacrifice that was on the altar (2 Chronicles 7:1). Later during the time of Elijah (1 Kings 18), God sent fire from heaven down on the burnt offering. When God sent down the fire to the altar, he showed that he was pleased with the sacrifice they had made, and that he had forgiven their sins.

The fire that came down on the day of Pentecost did not come to the altar in the Temple in Jerusalem, but the fire came on ordinary men and women who were committed to Jesus Christ. This shows that God was pleased with them. It shows also that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit and the fire of the Holy Spirit must burn within our hearts. When the fire came down on the day of Pentecost, God showed that he was very pleased with the disciples. He purified their hearts and made them his very special people.

| Old Testament | New Testament |
|----------------------|---|
| Temple | Our Bodies (1 Cor 6:19) |
| Altar | Our hearts |
| Offering | Our lives |
| Fire | Holy Spirit |
| Fire must not go out | Holy Spirit must keep burning (2 Tim 1:6, Gal 5:25) |

Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. This means that our hearts are like the altar. The sacrifice that we offer is our own lives as a living sacrifice that is set apart for God's work and

service. The Holy Spirit is the fire upon the altar. In the Old Testament the fire on the altar of the temple was not allowed to go out, but had to be kept burning day and night. In the same way we have to keep the fire of the Holy Spirit burning in our hearts. We do this by prayer, Bible reading, worship and living in obedience to God.

Refining Fire

The fire on the day of Pentecost has another meaning, too. Malachi says that the Lord will come down like a fire. "He will come to judge like one who refines and purifies silver. As a metalworker refines silver and gold, so the LORD's messenger will purify the priests" (Malachi 3:2-3).

Gold is the most valuable and precious metal in the world. It is used as a form of money in banks and is also used to make very valuable jewellery, but people want only pure gold that has no impurities in it. It is impossible to get pure gold by washing it with water. For water washes only the outside, but the impurities are hidden inside. In order to get rid of the impurities, the gold is put into a very hot fire called a refining fire. This fire makes the gold so hot that it is no longer solid but melts until it becomes a burning hot golden liquid. When this happens any hidden impurity floats on the top and becomes visible. The refiner can then skim off the impurities and pure gold is left behind. The pure gold is very valuable.

The purifying work of the Holy Spirit is very important. He melts our hearts, and cleanses us from all the impurities that are hidden deep inside our lives. At the beginning of this book we read about Isaiah's vision of the Lord in the Temple. When he saw the power and the holiness of God, he realized that there was sin in his heart and he felt guilty and ashamed before God. He confessed his sin, and soon an angel came to him with a fire from the altar and

touched Isaiah's lips. The angel said, "Now your guilt is gone and your sins are forgiven." This shows us the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is holy, and he is like a refining fire that comes into our lives to purify our hearts and makes us holy in God's sight.

Fire is often used to clear land for gardens. In some parts of the world, village farmers cut down the trees and bushes, leave them to dry, and then they burn them. After the fire has burnt up all the leaves and branches, they plant the seeds for their gardens. The fire has destroyed all the weeds and so a healthy garden grows. The Holy Spirit can be thought of as a fire which burns up all impurities that exist in our hearts and minds. When this is all burnt up, the wonderful fruit of the Holy Spirit can grow and flourish in our lives (Galatians 5:22). The Holy Spirit helps produce in us love, joy, peace, patience, kindness goodness, faithfulness, humility, self-control, and gentleness. All these good qualities are like fruit that grow in our lives.

The following song is a prayer song, that the Holy Spirit would come like a refining fire to purify our hearts and make our hearts holy before God.

*Purify my heart - Let me be as gold, as precious silver
Purify my heart - Let me be as gold - pure gold
Refiner's fire, my heart's one desire is to be holy*

Set apart for you Lord

I choose to be holy

Set apart for you, my master

Ready to do your will

Purify my heart

Cleanse me from within and make me holy

Purify my heart

Cleanse me from my sin - deep within

(Brian Doerkson, Victory Publishing, 1990)

Spiritual Tug-of-War

Many Christians have a tug of war going on in their lives with the sinful nature pulling towards evil and the Holy Spirit pulling towards righteousness and holiness.

This picture illustrates the Christian who is struggling with a sinful nature. The chair in the centre of the heart represents the throne and the centre of the person's will. There is a struggle to see who is in control. The flame represents the Holy Spirit who draws us towards God, righteousness and holiness. On the opposite side is a person pointing to himself. This represents the sinful nature that is self seeking. Both want to control this person's heart. This person is double minded because the sinful nature is competing against the Holy Spirit.



Often this person feels like there is a big tug-of-war going on in his heart, and finds it difficult to live a strong Christian life.

- The sinful nature is pulling away from God, while the Holy Spirit is pulling towards God.
- The sinful nature is like a secret enemy operating on the inside of the heart and working to destroy our spiritual life.
- The sinful nature is self-centred and wants to rule over every part of our lives.
- Self is proud and wants to sit on the throne.
- Self loves words like “I, me, and mine.”
- Self enjoys pleasure, comfort, popularity, fun, and a place of importance.
- The sinful nature wants to please itself and does not want to take directions from others.
- The sinful nature is in sympathy with Satan and worldly pleasures that are on the outside and so encourages us to

give into temptation.

We can have victory over this situation, and we do not need to live with a tug-of-war in our hearts. Jesus came to destroy the devil's work, and through his death on the cross he can give us victory over the sinful nature.

In this picture we see the heart of the person who has surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and allowed the Holy Spirit to take full control of his or her life. You will notice that it is the Holy Spirit who is sitting on the throne. You will notice the person is no longer pointing to himself, but is now kneeling in submission to the Holy Spirit. He is no longer fighting against the Holy Spirit but kneeling like a servant ready



to do whatever God wants him or her to do. This is what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. There is no longer a tug-of-war going on. There is harmony, for now we are in agreement and willing to do whatever God wants him us do. Romans 8:4(NIV) says, "We do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit." The Holy Spirit is in control of our lives. We listen to him as he guides us and teaches us. He encourages us to do the right things. He warns us against doing the wrong things. The Holy Spirit gives us strength to overcome temptation. And as we walk in harmony and unity with the Holy Spirit, the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience and all the other fruit of the Spirit grow bigger and stronger in our lives.

Chapter Eight

Become a Living Sacrifice

I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. (Romans 12:1,2 NIV)

What does it mean to be a living sacrifice? Even the idea of burning a sheep or some other animal in a fire as part of worship seems strange to us. Why did God tell the people to make sacrifices?

The Bible speaks of many different sacrifices but they can be divided into two main groups. Some sacrifices were designed to take away sin and put people into a right relationship with God. Other sacrifices were sacrifices to express gratitude and thanks to God. The New Testament also speaks of two main sacrifices, the first is the sacrifice that Jesus made for us when he died on the cross. The second is the sacrifice of thanksgiving that we make when we give ourselves back to God.

Think back to the story of Noah. He and his family stayed in the ship while it rained for 40 days and 40 nights. The land was covered with water, and all the other people and animals drowned and died. Noah with his family and the animals he took into the ship were the only ones who survived the flood. They stayed in the ship for nearly a year until the water went down, the land dried out, and God allowed them to leave the ship. They were so glad, and they thanked God for his care and protection upon their lives. Noah took one sheep, a goat, and a bull and sacrificed them on the altar. The Bible says, "The odour of the sacrifice pleased the LORD"

(Genesis 8:21). This was a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God for saving them from the terrible flood.

The story of Noah is similar to what Paul said in Romans 12:1. Noah was thankful that God had protected him and his family, and so he offered a sacrifice to God. This sacrifice was not for the purpose of forgiveness of sin. This sacrifice was a thanksgiving and praise offering. Paul reminds us that it is because of God's mercy that we have received salvation. We have salvation because Jesus gave his life as a sacrifice on the cross that we may be forgiven. God has given us new life, and so we too must offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise to God.

However, our offering is different from Noah's. Noah killed animal sacrifices, but we must offer ourselves to God. We are not dead sacrifices on an altar of stone, but we are walking, talking, living sacrifices. If we do this, then we will become "God's own people and we will do what is right and pleasing to him." But how can we give our bodies as a sacrifice to God? Are we going to collect huge stones to build an altar, then put on some firewood, and finally sit on top of it? Obviously that is not what Paul has in mind.

☞ Offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and *offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.* Romans 6:13 (NIV)

☞ Just as you used to *offer the parts of your body* in slavery to impurity and to ever increasing wickedness, so now *offer them* in slavery to *righteousness leading to holiness.*

Romans 6:19 (NIV)

You must offer all parts of your body to God. 1 Corinthians 6:20 says, "God... bought you for a price. So use your bodies for God's glory." Let us look at some parts of our body. What does it mean to give all the parts of our bodies to God as a sacrifice?

Eyes

Jesus said, "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness" (Matthew 6:22 NIV). Our eyes are a very important part of our bodies. Our eyes see something and immediately it attracts our attention. The eyes of King David spotted a woman having a bath. Instead of turning aside he continued to watch and this led him to sin. In Jericho, Achan's eyes were attracted to some gold, silver and a beautiful robe. He coveted them, took them, and hid them in his tent (Joshua 7:21). His sin brought God's judgement on the entire nation.

Job shows us a very different example. He was a righteous man and said, "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl" (Job 31:1 NIV). Psalms 101:3 (NIV) also gives us good advice. It says, "I will set before my eyes no vile thing." Today we have many different kinds of books, video tapes and television programs. Some are good but many are not good. Many are filled with immorality and pornography that is designed to grab our attention and pollute our minds. We must be very careful with what we watch, and what we allow our children to watch. If our eyes concentrate on these types of things, then our minds will be filled with lustful and immoral thoughts, and they will corrupt our lives.

We must dedicate our eyes to God so that he can control our eyes. We can ask ourselves, "Is this what Jesus would watch?" Looking at the wrong things will lead us down the wrong path.

We must use our eyes to read, study and meditate on the word of God. We can use our eyes to look for those who are in need, or are facing problems, and find ways to help them. Hebrews 12:2 says, "Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus." If our eyes and minds are focused on Jesus, this will help us walk upright and live righteous lives even in a sinful world.

Ears

Our ears are doorways that allow things to enter our minds. We must guard the doorway and not let rubbish and filth enter our minds. Gossip spreads rumours about other people. Dirty stories and jokes make our minds dirty.

We need to be careful about the sort of music that we listen to. Some music stirs up wrong emotions and evil desires within our minds. But there is good Christian music that can be a real blessing to us and strengthen us in our Christian lives. If we dedicate our ears to God, then we will be able to say like young Samuel said, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:10).

We also need to listen to others. God has given us two ears and only one mouth, perhaps we need to spend twice as much time listening to others than we do talking. "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry..." (James 1:19). There are many people who are hurting and carrying heavy burdens. They are looking for someone who will take time to listen to them. Unless we take time to listen to their problems and pray with them they will never know how much God cares about them. Listening to others is one of the ways in which we can demonstrate the love of God.

Mouth

"Do not use harmful words, but only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed, so that what you say will do good to those who hear you" (Ephesians 4:29). Christians should talk differently to non-Christians. Jesus must rule our mouths and all that we say. Our words are like matches. Just as one match can start a forest fire and cause a lot of destruction and damage, so careless words can create big problems. "If you do not control your tongue, your religion is worthless and you deceive yourselves" (James 1:26). "Nor is it fitting for you to use language which is obscene, profane, or vulgar" (Ephesians 5:4).

Since we want to be holy and pure in God's sight, then our words too must be clean.

If the Holy Spirit fills our lives, he will control our mouths and our tongues and change our words so that they speak only those things that are good and pleasant. We must be careful with songs we sing and music we listen to. Some songs are not good, but other songs are an encouragement and blessing to ourselves, to others and give praise to God.

"Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Speak to one another with the words of psalms, hymns, and sacred songs; sing psalms and hymns to the Lord with praise in your hearts... Always give thanks to God the Father" (Ephesians 5:18-20).

Hands

Many people have used their hands to steal and fight. But now this must be changed completely. We need to give our hands to God and use our hands to do things that are kind and helpful. Romans 6:19 says, "At one time you surrendered yourselves entirely as slaves to impurity and wickedness for wicked purposes. In the same way you must now surrender yourselves entirely as slaves of righteousness for holy purposes."

"If you used to rob, you must stop robbing and start working, in order to earn an honest living for yourself and to be able to help the poor" (Ephesians 4:28). Becoming a Christian is a major change. The thief who used to steal, must now work to support himself and his family. God will bless his work and he will have food to take care of his family, and he will have extra that he can give to the poor.

The people who have spent their time gambling, need to spend their time working in their garden or farm or some other useful job where they can earn money or grow food for their families.

Legs

Our legs do a lot of walking and take us many places. Some non-Christians spend their time going to disco's and night clubs. Some go around looking for young women and worldly pleasure. Others roam the streets looking for things to steal. They think that crime is exciting. Some use their legs to find places where they could get drinks and drugs. Their legs take them on the wrong road that leads them deeper and deeper into sin. The Bible says, "What you think is the right road may lead to death." (Proverbs 14:12). We need to turn away from the wrong road, "Have nothing to do with the worthless things that the people do, things that belong to darkness" (Ephesians 5:11). Instead we need to be listening to the Lord. For he says, "I will teach you the way you should go" (Psalms 32:8).

Look at these scripture verses:

- ☞ *Walk in all the way* that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess. Deut 5:33 (NIV)
- ☞ He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to *walk humbly* with your God. Micah 6:8 (NIV)
- ☞ He will *guide our steps* into the path of peace. Luke 1:79
- ☞ Avoid evil and *walk straight ahead*. Don't go one step off the right way. Proverbs 4:27

Mind (Thoughts)

The mind is most important for it gives direction to all other parts of our body. Romans 12:2 says, "Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a *complete change of your mind*." We should not allow other people to push us or pull us to their way of thinking and acting. We need to let the Holy Spirit transform our minds until our way of thinking becomes like that of Jesus.

The Word of God is very important, for it gives us God's instructions. God said to Joshua, "Study [God's law] day and night, and make sure you obey everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful" (Joshua 1:8). If we fill our minds with the Word of God, this will give direction to our lives, supply nourishment to our spirits, and will help us grow mature in our Christian lives.

Philippians 4:8 says, "Fill your minds with those things that are good and deserve praise, things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, honourable." If we fill our minds with good thoughts then our actions will be good. But if we fill our minds with evil things then our actions will be evil. If we use our ears to listen to dirty stories and watch dirty movie pictures, this will damage our consciences and paralyze our Christian life and faith.

We must allow God to control our thoughts. We must guard ourselves against pride. Some people are proud of their good looks, some are proud of their wealth or their education. Others are proud of their position in society or even their position in the church. We must keep ourselves free from pride. Instead, we are to be humble and gentle towards others. "Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited" (Romans 12:16 NIV).

"All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand..." (1 Peter 5:5-6 NIV).

We must also be guard against evil thoughts towards other people, for these will grieve the Holy Spirit. Anger, resentment, bitterness, jealousy and any other evil thoughts towards others are not pleasing to God. We must forgive other people just as God has forgiven us. We must ask God to cleanse our hearts and minds and remove any thoughts that are not pleasing to him. We need God to take away anger, bitterness, resentment, and jealousy, and to fill us

with his love and peace.

Give Our Families to God

Abraham believed God and did what he said. God called Abraham to leave his home, his relatives, his country and go to a new place. Abraham obeyed God. He went to a new country which God promised to give to him and his descendants, but Abraham had no children. He was 75 years old when God promised to give him a child. However, many years passed and still Abraham did not have a child. Sometimes it looked like God had forgotten his promise, but God did not forget his promises. When Abraham was 99 years old and his wife, Sarah, was almost 90 years old, God told them again that they would have a child.

When Abraham was 100 years old, and his wife Sarah was 90 years old they had a baby boy of their own. What excitement! Abraham was very happy and he loved Isaac more than anything else in his life. Abraham had lots of cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys and camels, but the most precious part of his life was his son Isaac. One night when Isaac was 12 years old, God spoke very clearly to Abraham in a dream. (You can read the whole story in Genesis 22:1-19.) He told Abraham to take Isaac to a certain mountain, build an altar, then he must kill Isaac and sacrifice him to God as an offering. Abraham had regularly offered sacrifices of sheep and goats but now God's words were very different.

Abraham must have been very surprised, but Abraham was a man of faith and he always obeyed God. Therefore early in the morning he took Isaac, they placed some firewood on a donkey, and they went on their way. When they came to the mountain, they gathered some stones, built an altar, and put the firewood on it. Now Abraham tied up Isaac and laid him on top of the altar. He took his knife and was ready to kill Isaac, but the angel of God called to Abraham. The angel said, "Don't hurt the boy or do

anything to him...Now I know that you honour and obey God, because you have not kept back your only son from him” (Genesis 22:12).

Then Abraham saw a ram caught in a bush by its horns. He took it and offered it as a burnt offering to God. God saw what Abraham did and promised to bless him.

Isaac was so precious in Abraham’s life but he was ready to give the most valuable thing in his life to God. What is most important to you in your life? Are you ready to give everything to God and let him control it?

Are you willing to give your wife or husband, your children, and your whole family to God. If God controls your life, then you will find that God will bless your life in unexpected ways.

Summary

In this chapter we have talked about dedicating ourselves as a living sacrifice to God. God has bought us with his blood, and given us a new life. Let us dedicate ourselves to him in appreciation for all he has done for us. We have talked about giving the parts of our body to God—our eyes, ears, mouth, hands, legs and minds or thoughts. There are other things also that we must also give to God. We must give to God our time, talents, knowledge, ability, strength, our money, our families, houses, lands and everything to God. Jesus said, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30). This is what we mean by living a holy life. It is a life totally dedicated to Jesus Christ and lived in obedience to him.

Chapter Nine

How Can We Become Holy?

How can we, who are mere humans, become holy? We agree that God is holy and the angels are holy, but can we be holy? Many Christians reject this idea. They say, "We are only human beings and we live in a sinful world where we are constantly surrounded by temptation. So how can we live a holy life?" It is true that we will never be free from temptation while we are alive on this earth. Being holy, does not mean that we cannot improve or grow in our Christian lives. People who are totally committed to Jesus Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit will be able to grow stronger and stronger in their Christian lives. Holiness is being spiritually healthy. It means that the disease of sin is removed from our lives, and we are able to grow stronger in our love for God and be more effective in our service for God.

God Commands Us To Be Holy

- ☞ Be holy in all that you do, just as God who called you is holy. The scripture says, "Be holy because I am holy."

1 Peter 1:15, 16

Jesus died in order to make us holy.

- ☞ By means of the physical death of his Son, God has made you his friends in order to bring you *holy, pure, and faultless* into his presence. Colossians 1:22
- ☞ Jesus died...in order to purify the people from sin with his own blood. Hebrews 13:12

God Himself will make us holy.

We do not become holy by keeping the law or by our own efforts or strength, but rather it is a change that God makes in our lives.

- ☞ May the God who gives us peace make you *holy in every way* and keep your whole being—spirit soul and body— free from every fault...He who calls you will do it.

1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24

We must be holy and wait for Jesus' return

- ☞ You ought to *live holy and godly lives* as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. 2 Peter 3:11, 12 (NIV)

Holy Spirit will make us become holy.

- ☞ For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. Romans 8:13 (NIV)

If we allow the sinful nature to control our hearts then it will take us back to our old ways of life, and destroy our Christian life. We need God to cleanse us of our sinful nature and allow the Holy Spirit to fill our lives. Then we will be able to overcome sin and live a life that is holy and totally committed to God.

The message is clear.

- ✓ God is holy and wants us to be holy.
- ✓ Jesus died to redeem us from sin and make us holy.
- ✓ God wants to make us become holy.
- ✓ We must be holy and wait for Jesus' return.

We cannot live a holy life in our own strength. The Holy Spirit must fill our lives. He is holy and will cleanse our lives and strengthen us to live a life of victory over temptation.

What Must We Do to be Filled with the Holy Spirit?

1. We must be sure of our salvation.

All people have sinned and none of us are righteous in God's eyes. But Jesus died to redeem us from the hands of Satan. We must repent. That means, turn away from our sins and confess them to Jesus. He will forgive us from our sins and bring us into the family of God.

2. We must reject and renounce the evil desires of the sinful nature.

Once we repent of our sins and believe in Christ, he forgives our sins and gives the Holy Spirit to us. The Holy Spirit lives within us to lead and guide us. But many people come to discover that there are two very different forces battling against each other within them. The sinful nature opposes the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit wants to defeat the sinful nature.

Therefore we must reject the evil desires of the sinful nature. We must not allow evil desires to pull us away from God. We must confess and reject the evil attitudes that like to hide within our hearts. We need to get rid of envy, lust, anger, bitterness, lying, pride, hatred, gossip, laziness, and selfishness. All of these attitudes and activities are evil in God's eyes.

We should not only pray, "God, I want you to bless me and make me a strong Christian." We need to be very clear and definite. We need to confess our sinful attitudes and actions one by one, and ask God to remove them from our lives. Some people have found it useful to take a pen and some paper and write down all the things in their lives that are not pleasing to God. Consider these matters:

Envy, lust, anger, bitterness, hatred, pride, boasting, lying, gossip, impurity, laziness, selfishness, evil thoughts, rebelling against authority, lack of self-discipline, lack of prayer and Bible

reading, failing to give one tenth of what I earn to God, running after worldly pleasures.

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal all the evil things that are hidden in your heart and mind, and write them down. Then prayerfully go through the list and confess each sinful attitude, habit or practice.

Don't be in a hurry. Examine your heart and mind and ask God to show you whatever is evil in God's sight. Think back to when you were young and ask God to examine your heart. David prayed this prayer, "Examine me, O God, and know my mind; test me, and discover my thoughts. Find out if there is any evil in me and guide me in the everlasting way" (Psalm 139:23-24).

We need to ask God to do the same in our lives. God will show you things from the past that need to be confessed and forsaken. Bring all your sins one by one and lay them at the foot of the cross and ask Jesus to cover these sins with his blood. Ask God to remove every impurity and evil habit or practice, and make you pure and holy.

3. We must desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit

Matthew 5:6 (NIV) "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God himself. There is no other gift greater or better than the Holy Spirit. But God will not fill us with the Holy Spirit if we are double-minded. The Holy Spirit will only fill the lives of those people who have a heart that hungers for righteousness. We must have a deep thirsty desire to be filled with the Spirit.

☞ Jesus said, "Whoever is thirsty should come to me, and whoever believes in me should drink. As the scripture says, 'Streams of life-giving water will pour out from his side.' " Jesus said this about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were going to receive. John 7:37-39

☞ Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. Jeremiah 29:12,13 (NIV)

God's word is clear. We must have a burning deep desire to be all that God wants us to be. We must desire to follow the perfect will of God. As we hunger and thirst after God, he will fill us with the Holy Spirit. But people who live a half-hearted life, and do not hunger and thirst after God, will not receive the wonderful blessings of God.

4. We must dedicate ourselves and all we have to God

Any person or thing that is given totally to God for his service is holy for it belongs to God. The Temple, the altar and the sacrifices, all belonged to God, and so they were holy. Therefore we must give everything we have to God and let him take control of it.

We must give every part of our body, our thoughts, our hearts, our education, our money, our work and our families to God and let him take control of them. We must submit to God and let him be master of everything we own. We must humble ourselves and allow Jesus Christ to be king in our life.

5. Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit

Once we repent of our sins and believe in Christ, God gives us the Holy Spirit. He lives within us and gives us direction. Many Christians are glad that Jesus is their Saviour, but they do not allow the Holy Spirit to fill their lives completely. They do not allow him to control their hearts and minds. If you would like to walk in the path of holiness, then the Holy Spirit must fill you entirely. Ask him to remove all that is impure in God's eyes. Ask him to cleanse your heart so that the Holy Spirit can fill every part of your life.

6. Believe

If we want to be filled with the Holy Spirit, we need to believe the promises of God. Look at these wonderful promises that God has made to you.

☞ For God promised to give the Holy Spirit to you, your children, and all who are far off for all whom the Lord our God will call.

Acts 2:39 (NIV)

☞ The Holy Spirit, who is God's gift to those who obey him.

Acts 5:32

☞ The Father....is glad to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.

Luke 11:13 (NIV)

Do not fear and do not doubt. God has promised to give us the Holy Spirit. He wants the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts, our minds, and our lives. He will give the Holy Spirit to all who obey him and ask for him to fill their lives. We commit ourselves to God as a living sacrifice, and promise to do whatever he asks us to do. In simple faith we ask him to fill us with the Holy Spirit and he will do it. Matthew 21:22 says, "If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

Look again at these six points:

1. Be sure of your salvation.
2. Reject and renounce all the evil desires of the sinful nature.
3. You must desire for the Holy Spirit to cleanse you and fill you.
4. Give yourself and all your possessions to God. Be willing to obey whatever he says.
5. Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit.
6. Believe that God will fill you with the Holy Spirit and make you holy.

Think of these as steps on your spiritual journey. Whereabouts are you on your spiritual journey? Ask God to show you any areas

of weakness and failure in your life. He will guide you and direct you as you are obedient to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit Wants to Fill You

If you want the Holy Spirit to fill you entirely, and make you holy, you must search your heart. David prayed like this:

☞ Examine me, O God, and know my mind;
test me, and discover my thoughts.
Find out if there is any evil in me
and guide me in the everlasting way. Psalm 139:23-24

☞ Remove my sin and I will be clean;
Wash me and I will be whiter than snow....
Create a pure heart in me, O God,
and put a new and loyal spirit in me. Psalm 51:7,10

We can pray like this:

Lord Jesus, I thank you for your death on the cross, I thank you for saving me from a life of sin and bringing me into the family of God. I am ashamed because my Christian life is so weak. The evil desires of the sinful nature are still hiding in my heart. All these evil things weaken my Christian life.

(Now confess each of these evil things in your life to God.)

Lord, I am ashamed of these evil things. I don't want to do them any more. I ask you to take each of these things from my heart and make me holy. Lord Jesus, wash me with your blood and make me pure.

Lord Jesus, I give myself to you. Cleanse my entire heart and mind. I give myself totally to you as a sacrifice. I humble myself and want the Holy Spirit to fill every part of my life, so that he is truly Lord of my life. I want my whole heart and life to be holy, pure and pleasing to you.

I want my body to be the temple of the Holy Spirit and Jesus can sit on the throne of my heart. Lord Jesus, I believe you hear my prayer today. I believe the Holy Spirit is working to fill my life, my heart and thoughts entirely. Now in the power of the Holy Spirit, I can walk in the life of holiness.

I thank you and give you glory in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Filled and Refilled

When we talk of being filled with the Holy Spirit we should not think that God fills us up like a person filling up a bucket from a tap. Instead we should think of such expressions as these, "She was full of love," or "He was full of fear," or "He was full of anger." These expressions tell us what was controlling that person's life and character. In the same way the person who is filled with the Holy Spirit is controlled and directed by the Holy Spirit. We know that people who are full of anger can calm down and lose their anger. Two people may be deeply in love, but if they are not careful, their relationship can go bad, and their love can turn to coldness or even hatred.

Holiness is a love relationship with God that is maintained by us being obedient to God. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is a very close relationship between a human and God's Holy Spirit,

in which the Holy Spirit is allowed to be in full control. This love relationship, which is built on trust and obedience, must be maintained.

Holiness is a love relationship with God that is maintained by continual obedience to God.

Relationships can be spoilt. If we disobey God and do not listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit then we grieve the Holy Spirit and make him sad. If that happens we need to immediately repent, confess our sins, correct the problem, and ask God to restore the relationship. God will restore us to fellowship with himself and will again fill us with his Holy Spirit. We can be filled with the Holy Spirit, but that is not the end, for we need to be continually filled. In Acts chapter 2, we read of the Apostles being filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of the Pentecost. Then in Acts chapter 4 we read of the disciples facing opposition and praying for God's special help and again it says, "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit"(Acts 4:31). Our goal is to walk so close to Jesus that we are continually being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Ten

Holy and Human

Yet we who have this spiritual treasure are like common clay pots, in order to show that the supreme power belongs to God, not to us. (2 Corinthians 4:7)

He knows what we are made of; he remembers that we are dust. (Psalm 103:14)

A Parable: An Ocean and a Bucket

One Sunday Pastor Mark preached that Christians should live holy lives. After the service, Tommy came and asked the pastor, "Pastor, I have a question in relation to what you preached today. You have said that God is righteous and holy. That is good, but then you said, we too must become holy. But we are not like God. He is all powerful and we are just ordinary humans living in a sinful world. How then, can we become holy?"

Pastor Mark replied, "This is a good question because many people have this same question. Do you remember the time we went to the coast and saw the sea?" Tommy had lived all his life in the mountains and remembered very well the first time he saw the sea. He replied, "Oh yes, I remember very well. That was the first time I saw the sea and I will never forget it. Oh, the sea was so big. It went as far as I could see. It seemed to have no end, and the waves crashing on the shore really frightened me."

Pastor Mark said, "You are right the ocean is so huge. Now just imagine if I were to take a bucket and fill it with water from the sea and bring it to the land. Now think about the sea water in the

bucket and the sea water in the ocean. Are they the same or are they different?

Tommy thought for a bit and replied, "If I tasted them they would taste the same for they are both salt water. But the salt water in the bucket is so much smaller than that which is still in the sea."

Pastor Mark told Tommy, "The holiness of God is just like this. It is greater, higher, deeper and wider and has no end to it. We are like the small bucket. We don't become holy in our own strength. Holiness must come from God alone. God wants to fill our little bucket with his holiness. But every day we continue to grow and become more mature in our Christian life. This little bucket of ours must become like a big bucket and the love of Jesus will continue to pour abundantly into our lives."

Common Clay Pots

Tommy's question is not a new question. Many people have asked questions just like his, "How can we be holy in a sinful world?" We feel it would be easy to live a holy life in heaven; but how can we live a holy life here in this sinful world. How can we live a holy life when we are surrounded by so many temptations?

The Bible clearly shows us that God wants us to live holy lives here and now in a sinful world. Jesus did not die on the cross just to take us to heaven when we die, but to set us free from sin now.

The Bible says that we have this "spiritual treasure in common clay pots." In New Testament times people had many types of dishes. Some were made of bronze or silver or even gold, and they were kept for very special occasions. But they had other dishes which were made of clay and baked in the fire. They were for ordinary every day use.

Common clay pots speaks of ordinary people in everyday life. God likes to use ordinary people in very extraordinary ways. The

disciples of Jesus were very ordinary people, but God used them in an extra-ordinary way. After God had used Peter and John to heal a crippled man, they were brought before the Jewish council. The leaders “were amazed to see how bold Peter and John were and to learn that they were *ordinary men of no education*. They realised then that they had been companions of Jesus” (Acts 4:13). It was Jesus living within them in the power of the Holy Spirit that made them so different.

The first Christians were very ordinary people. Paul said, “Few of you were wise or powerful or of high social standing. God purposely chose what the world considers...weak in order to shame the powerful. He chose what the world looks down on and despises and thinks is nothing, in order to destroy what the world thinks is important. This means that no one can boast in God’s presence” (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

God is not looking for some spiritual “Superman” or “Wonder Woman” to change the world. Instead God is looking for ordinary people who are totally committed to Jesus Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit. God wants to take ordinary people and cleanse them from sin and fill them with the Holy Spirit and use them for his glory. This is how he wants to transform the world.

We Cannot Be Holy In Our Own Strength

The secret of the Christian life is allowing Christ to live in us. We do not become holy by our own efforts, or by following long lists of rules. The Pharisees believed very strongly that God wanted them to live holy lives. They wanted to avoid sin, so they made long lists of rules of things people should do, and things people should not do. There were problems with this approach:

1. Some became proud of how holy and righteous they were. Sometimes they made long prayers in the market. When they fasted they went around looking very hungry and sad so people would see

that they were fasting. When they gave their offerings they wanted others to know how much they gave (Matthew 6:1, 5, 16).

2. Some became very critical of others who did not keep all the hundreds of rules.

Jesus told a story of a Pharisee who went to the Temple and prayed, "I thank you God that I am not like that tax collector over there..." (Luke 18:9-14).

*A holy person is not proud—
a proud person is not holy*

Jesus said that the Pharisee received nothing from God.

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees because of their pride and their lack of love. He said, "You are like white-washed tombs, which look fine on the outside but are full of bones and decaying corpses on the inside" (Matthew 23:27). The Pharisees tried to be holy in their own strength and failed. If we try to be holy in our own strength we too will fail. We do not become holy by following dozens of rules but by allowing Christ to live within us and fill us.

We need to confess our sins, and repent of our selfishness, and humble ourselves. We need to allow the Holy Spirit to fill us with his love and power. Paul said, "Yet we who have this spiritual treasure are like common clay pots, in order to show that the supreme power belongs to God, not to us" (2 Corinthians 4:7). The spiritual treasure that Paul is talking about is the transforming power of the Holy Spirit living within us.

Our Bodies Are Like Clay Pots

When God made Adam he made him from the "dust of the earth" just like a clay pot is made from ordinary clay. God made us in his likeness, but sin has spoiled our lives. God's desire is to restore us into his likeness so that the character, goodness and love of God is seen in our lives.

God is holy and he wants us to be holy also. He wants us to be his special people who are dedicated to him and follow him in loving obedience. When God cleanses our hearts from the sinful nature and fills us with the Holy Spirit, he does not turn us into angels who have never sinned.

We do not become as holy as Adam and Eve when they came into this world fresh from God's own hand. They were perfect and without a sinful nature. In this life, we will never be perfectly holy like Adam and Eve were before they sinned. We have all sinned and we live in a sinful world.

We will be tempted

As long as we are alive in this world we will be tempted. No one will ever be free from temptation. Jesus was tempted, but did not sin. We should not be surprised when temptations come. Often temptations will come from members of our own family and even our friends will give us wrong advice. School friends and work mates will try to lead us astray. There will be pressure to give in and do what others do. But we must resist temptation. The Bible gives us this promise that God will help us. "God...will not allow you to be tested beyond your power to stay firm; at the time you are put to the test, he will give you the strength to endure it, and so provide you with a way out" (1 Corinthians 10:13). We will always be tempted, but through the power of the Holy Spirit we can resist the temptation and so live in victory over sin.

We Should Avoid Temptation

Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "Lead us not into temptation" (Matthew 6: 13 NIV). We are to "live as children of light" (Ephesians 5:8 NIV) and we are to "Walk in the light" (1 John 1:7 NIV). This means we need to keep away from the places where sin and temptation are waiting for us. If we hang out at night clubs then it is certain that temptations will come to us. We have to be

careful what we watch, for videos, movies and TV programs can fill our minds with all sorts of thoughts that weaken our Christian lives and can easily lead us into sin.

We Must be Balanced

It is very important that we seek God's guidance so that our lives will be balanced. Jesus prayed for the disciples, "I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but I do ask you to keep them safe from the Evil One" (John 17:15). Some people have gone away from everybody and lived in caves in the desert or up in the mountains. They thought this would help them to be free from temptation. But that was not Jesus idea. Others have gone to live in a monastery and they have nothing to do with the world outside the walls of the monastery, and they spend their time in prayer. But Jesus did not pray that we would leave the world but that we should be like salt and light in a sinful world (Matthew 5:13-16). God wants us to get involved in the problems of the world and to make the world a better place.

Remember darkness can never put out the light of a candle, but even a little a candle helps to remove the darkness. Jesus wants us to be the light of the world.

We Must Use Self-Control

We have human bodies that have emotions, desires and strong feelings, which are given to us by God. When the Holy Spirit fills our lives, these desires and feelings do not disappear. They are a normal part of healthy bodies; however, they must be controlled. It is normal and natural to have desires for food, rest, and security. We like to feel loved and accepted by family and friends. These desires must not control our lives. All people need rest but some people become lazy and waste their time. We all enjoy good food, but some people are greedy and do not control how much they eat.

Sexual desires are given to us by God but they must be controlled. Sexual fulfillment must only be found inside the marriage relationship.

Joseph was a strong healthy young man and he was faced with sexual temptation when his employer's wife tempted him day after day. Joseph rejected these temptations, but the woman continued to plead with Joseph. Eventually Joseph had to run to get away from her. Many would have given into the temptation, but Joseph was self-controlled and overcame the temptation.

“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith...” (1 Peter 5:8-9 NIV).

Self discipline or self control is one of the beautiful gifts of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:23). “His Spirit fills us with power, love and self control” (2 Timothy 1:7). The Holy Spirit does not turn us into a robot. He does not control us like a person controls a machine by pushing buttons and moving levers. The Holy Spirit is like a helper, teacher, or counselor who guides us, directs us, and encourages us to develop our self control. Peter emphasized how important self control is in our Christian lives.

Do your best to add goodness to your faith,
to your goodness add knowledge,
To your knowledge add *self-control*,
To your *self-control* add endurance...

These are the qualities you need... they will make you active and effective in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:5-8

Our Bodies Are Not Perfect

Jesus said the most important commandment was, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second most important

commandment is this: 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself'" (Mark 12 30,31). We may have a pure love for God and for other people but still make mistakes.

We may have pure hearts – but imperfect minds. A husband and wife may love each other deeply, but yet sometimes there are problems in their relationship. Perhaps somebody forgot something. Perhaps they didn't communicate properly and one person misunderstood the other. We are human and we make mistakes. We forget things and so we may hurt people and may even make them angry. We did not mean to hurt them but because we forgot to do something we caused them pain.

Sometimes we misunderstand people, and we make mistakes. Sometimes we do not hear properly and so jump to a wrong conclusion.

Some people have lived in sin for many years and sin has left its scars on their lives. Those scars do not disappear over night. Some people have been hurt deeply as children and this has a big effect on their lives. Some people have been sexually abused as children or as teenagers, and they find it hard to trust other people. It takes time to heal these deep hurts that people have suffered. However, as people bring all these hurts and pains to the Lord Jesus Christ, he is able to bring healing and new life. As they allow God's love and forgiveness to fill their hearts and lives, then they are able to forgive the people who have hurt them. Forgiveness is the key to healing the deep emotional wounds that people have.

Our Emotions

We have emotions that effect the way we feel and act. Some people are quick to act whereas others are very cautious and slow to act. Some people tend to be negative and a little gloomy whereas others are much more positive. This is part of our basic personality and is affected by our childhood and the experiences that we have been through. This will not change overnight. God

cleanses our hearts and sets us free from the sinful nature, but our basic personality remains the same. God keeps working in our lives and changing us so that we show more and more of the character of Jesus in our daily lives.

Imperfect Bodies

Even though we are filled with the Holy Spirit we still live in a body that is weak.

Our body is marvellously made and God has filled it with all sorts of complex chemicals called hormones that helps our body work properly. Sometimes our hormones get out of balance. Some people get very depressed and moody. Other people may get very excitable. This is part of being human. Sometimes doctors can give medicine to help get the hormones back into balance. Our bodies become tired and need sleep and rest. Sometimes we have a headache or have the flu. Our body is sick and it is easy to be impatient. At times like this we may be easily upset.

Our bodies change as we get older, and older people do not have the energy that younger people have. Our physical condition may affect the way we live, and our Christian lives may not always be as good as we would like them to be. Our hearts may be pure but our lives may not be as positive as we wish they were.

God made our bodies, and they are God's good gift to us. The Bible says, "He knows what we are made of; he remembers that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14). This is the meaning of the phrase, "We who have this spiritual treasure are like common clay pots"(2 Corinthians 4:7). These clay pots are our human bodies for Adam was made from the dust of the earth (Genesis 2). God fills these ordinary weak human bodies of clay with his Holy Spirit so that people will see God's power at work and give him glory. The gift of the Holy Spirit is not just for ministers and church leaders. God wants all of his people, young and old, men and women, rich and poor to be filled with his Holy Spirit and living lives that bring glory

to God.

We Must Grow in Grace

As Christians we should always be growing in our Christian lives. We will never reach a point in our lives when we can sit down and say, "I have reached the top. I am now a perfect Christian and can never be any better or stronger." A person who thinks that way has completely misunderstood what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

New Christians are like "new born babies, crave pure spiritual milk so that by it you may grow up in your salvation" (1 Peter 2:2 NIV). But we are not to stay drinking milk for the rest of our lives. We are to "continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

It is important that we give regular time to Bible reading for this gives us spiritual food and helps us to grow. Prayer is also very important to our Christian lives.

It is very important to meet with other Christians to worship and have fellowship together. Jesus promised that when just two or three people get together to worship him, he is right there with them (Matthew 18:20). As we pray together and share the difficulties and the blessings, we strengthen each other and so grow in our knowledge of God.

Chapter Eleven

Holiness Is Christlikeness

Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end. (Hebrews 12:2)

Jesus said, "Remain united to me, and I will remain united to you. A branch cannot bear fruit by itself; it can only do so if it remains in the vine. In the same way you cannot bear fruit unless you remain in me." (John 15:4)

Jesus is God in human flesh. He walked the dusty roads of the earth. He ate and he slept. He became tired and thirsty. He cried and his body felt pain. He was tempted by Satan but never sinned. He was the Son of God and yet he was also the Son of Man. Hebrews 4:15 says, "We have a High Priest who was tempted in every way that we are, but did not sin."

Jesus was a real man just like us walking on this earth. Many temptations came to Jesus. Satan tried very hard to get him to sin, but did not succeed. Jesus was victorious over all those temptations. He lived a sinless life. He calls us to follow his example and live a holy life. Jesus shows us the meaning of holiness.

God is holy. He is awesome, powerful, majestic and invisible. Sometimes the goal of holiness seems to be impossible. But Jesus gives us hope. Jesus declared, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). And Colossians 1:15 says, "Christ is the visible likeness of the invisible God." We can live a holy life by allowing Jesus to live within us.

Jesus gave us a very helpful illustration. He said he is like a vine and we are like branches. The branches only have life and are

only able to bear fruit if they remain united to the vine and the sap of the vine is able to flow into the branches. A branch that is cut off and separated from the vine has no life and quickly shrivels up and is useless. In the same way we must be closely united to Jesus through, prayer, Bible study, worship and obedience. This allows the spiritual life of Jesus to flow into us and enables us to live a life of holiness.

It helps us to understand the meaning of a holy life when we remember that a holy life is a Christlike life.

Jesus Was Filled with the Holy Spirit

Jesus did not work in his own strength. He was filled with the Holy Spirit and did his work through the power of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit came and rested upon him, and God said, "You are my Son, whom I love." After his baptism, Jesus went to the desert and was tempted by Satan, but he was not defeated by Satan. Luke 4:14 (NIV) says, "Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit..." Later Jesus went inside the synagogue of the Jews in Nazareth and said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18). It is important to notice that both before and after the temptation Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus was continually operating in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus did his ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit. When he wanted to leave his disciples and go back to heaven, he told them, "I myself will send upon you what my Father has promised. But you must wait in the city until the power from above comes down upon you." (Luke 24:49). We, too, must let the Holy Spirit fill our lives and empower us to live a pure upright life like Jesus himself did.

Jesus Knew the Scriptures Well

When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit came to him like a dove. Later he was led by the Spirit into the desert. He did not eat for forty days and when he was hungry and weak, the devil came and tempted him. Satan tempted Jesus three times, but every time, Jesus replied by quoting the Scriptures. Jesus had not only read the Scriptures, but he had also memorized them. Then, when he faced temptation, he was able to use these Scriptures to overcome Satan's temptations.

Psalms 119:9 says, "How can young people keep their lives pure? By obeying your commands." And 2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture...is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." The Word of God was very important in the life of Jesus and it must also be in our life too. If we fill our hearts and minds with the Word of God, it will help us to live a life of purity and righteousness.

Jesus Was a Man of Prayer

Jesus spent much time in prayer. He prayed to receive strength. He prayed to receive instructions. He prayed because he enjoyed talking to his Heavenly Father.

☞ *Very early the next morning, long before daylight, Jesus got up and left the house. He went out of the town to a lonely place, where he prayed.* Mark 1:35

☞ He would go away to *lonely places*, where he *prayed*. Luke 5:16

☞ He spent the *whole night praying* to God. Luke 6:12

Prayer was very important to Jesus. Jesus was the Son of God but he spent a lot of time praying. He received power to preach and

perform miracles, because he gave much time to praying and obeying God's instructions. Just before his death he went to the Garden of Gethsemane and spent time in prayer. We must follow his example.

Jesus said, "Remain united to me, and I will remain united to you. A branch cannot bear fruit by itself; it can do so only if it remains in the vine. In the same way you cannot bear fruit unless you remain in me" (John 15:4). Reading God's word and regular prayer are two very important things that we must do in order to remain united to Jesus and be able to follow him in the pathway of holiness.

Jesus Came to Save the Lost

Before Jesus was born an angel appeared in a dream to Joseph and told him that Mary would have a baby. The angel said, "You will name him Jesus—because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). The name Jesus means Saviour—the one who saves others. This work of helping and saving the lost was very important to Jesus. Jesus did not come just to help the good people or the nice people but he came to help everyone, even the worst of sinners.

Some people were very critical of Jesus because he was friendly and ate with people who were classified as "sinners" or "outcasts." The Pharisees were very careful to stay away from people that they thought were sinful, and so they asked the disciples, "Why does Jesus eat with such people?" Jesus overheard their questions and he replied, "People who are well do not need a doctor... I have not come to call respectable people, but outcasts" (Mark 2:17).

Zacchaeus was a tax collector and he was hated by the Pharisees. He heard about Jesus and when Jesus came to Jericho, Zacchaeus wanted to see him. Since he was a very short person and could not see over the heads of the crowd, he climbed up into a tree

to get a better view of Jesus. As Jesus came along the road he saw Zacchaeus up the tree and stopped. He said, "Hurry down, Zacchaeus, because I must stay in your house today." The people who heard this were very surprised and grumbled, "This man has gone as a guest to the home of a sinner" (Luke 19:5,7).

Zacchaeus was delighted to have Jesus come to his house. We do not know what Jesus said to Zacchaeus that day, but Zacchaeus made a public announcement. "I will give half my belongings to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone I will pay him back four times as much." Jesus replied, "Salvation has come to this house today... The Son of Man has come to seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:8-9).

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. If we are to be Christlike, then we must also be deeply concerned about those who are away from God. Paul said, "How I wish with all my heart that my own people might be saved" (Romans 10:1). He also said, "I have complete confidence in the gospel; it is God's power to save all who believe" (Romans 1:16). We must have the same confidence that the gospel is God's power to save all who believe. We should make it a priority of our lives to help others come to know Jesus as their Saviour.

Jesus was a friend of sinners. Some people have felt that in order to live a holy life they must stay away from people who are not Christians and who are living sinful lives. They have separated themselves from non-Christians in order to preserve their own holiness. Jesus shows us a different way. We are to be "like salt for the whole human race" (Matthew 5:13). Salt improves the flavour of food and salt is often added to meat to preserve it. In the same way Christians are to have a positive influence on society. We are to live in the world, but we are to be different to the people of the world. Jesus also said that we are the light of the world. We are not to hide our light from those in darkness, but rather let our light shine so that they can see the light. Holy people work to show God's love and salvation to the world and work together to make

the world a better place.

Jesus Humbled Himself

Jesus was humble. Why would God want to become a human? “The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had: He always had the nature of God, but... of his own free will he gave up all he had... He became like a human being... he was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death—his death on the cross” (Philippians. 2:5-8).

Jesus is the Son of God, but he left all the glory and power of heaven and humbled himself and became just like any ordinary person on earth. This was a hard lesson for the disciples learn. Many times the disciples argued between themselves as to which one of them was the greatest or the most important.

One day Jesus took a basin of water and a towel and he washed the feet of the disciples. They were surprised because washing the feet of someone was not the work of a teacher or master. It was the work of a servant or the least important person. Jesus said, “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet...I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:14-15).

In the Old Testament God said, “I live in a high and holy place, but also with people who are humble...” (Isaiah 57:15). Jesus was a man who humbled himself, and holy people must be humble people.

The Pharisees were people who felt holiness was very important. They made many rules and they tried very hard to follow all the rules, for they felt that if they obeyed all the rules they would be holy. Jesus told a story about two men who went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and he thanked God that he was such a good person. He was not greedy, dishonest, or immoral. He fasted twice a week and was very careful that he paid

his tithe. He glanced over and saw the other man who was a tax collector. He said, "I thank you that I am not like the tax collector over there." The other man did not have much to say. He felt very ashamed and unworthy and said, "God, have pity on me, a sinner." Jesus said that God heard the prayer of the man who was humble, but the proud man went away empty. He concluded his story by saying, "Those who make themselves great will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be made great" (Luke 18:14). We cannot be both holy and proud at the same time.

Jesus Forgives Wrongs

When Jesus was led to be killed, the chief priests made false accusations against him, slapped him and spat on him. They whipped him and made fun of him. They forced him to carry his own cross. Then they nailed him to the cross. While he was hanging up on the cross, Jesus looked down and saw those priests who mocked him and wanted to crucify him. He saw the crowds who cried out, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" He saw these soldiers who whipped and nailed him to the cross. And Jesus said, "Forgive them, Father. They do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

Jesus forgave the wrong things other people did to him. We, too, must forgive the wrongs of others. "Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13).

Stephen was a Christian who was filled with faith and with the Holy Spirit. He is a wonderful example of forgiveness and Christlikeness. He helped the widows who did not have enough food. He was an excellent preacher and spoke with great wisdom. When he was faced with opposition, he stood strong in his faith. The people were so angry that they stoned Stephen to death. While they were still throwing stones at him, he bowed down in prayer and cried in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them."

When he had said this, he fell dead (Acts 7:60 NIV). Stephen was a man filled with the Holy Spirit. He lived a holy Christlike life and forgave the sins of others.

Sometimes people will do things that will hurt us greatly and we will find it very difficult to forgive them. But if we ask Jesus, he will give us the grace and ability to forgive them.

Jesus Had Compassion for the Sick and Helpless

During the time of Jesus, people with leprosy were rejected by everyone. They were people with no hope. They lived outside the city and were not allowed to go near their own families or other people. One day a man with leprosy came to Jesus and begged him for healing. "Jesus was filled with pity, and reached out and touched him" (Mark 1:41). Jesus did not need to touch the man in order to heal him. He could have just spoken the command, "Be healed" and the sickness would have left him. But Jesus was a person who was filled with compassion. He not only demonstrated God's power to heal, but he also demonstrated God's love and compassion.

Other people would never think of touching anyone with leprosy. They were frightened of the disease and would not go anywhere near them. But Jesus had compassion and touched the lonely man who had no hope. Jesus never ignored or isolated himself from people who faced hopeless situations. He had compassion for them and went near to them and helped them. We, too, must behave in the same manner.

Galatians 6:2 states, "Help carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will obey the law of Christ." When we care for others, listen to their questions, worries, and fears we are being like Christ. When we help others in practical ways we demonstrate God's love. Jesus says that a person who does such a simple thing as giving a cup of water to a thirsty people would receive a reward.

Jesus talked about the judgment that everyone will face in the last days. One very important thing that he will examine is our attitudes to others. When we do good to those who are in trouble, we are doing good to Jesus.

He said, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father. Come and possess the kingdom which has been prepared for you ever since the creation of the world. I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you received me into your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me... I tell you whenever you did this for one of the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me" (Matthew 25:34, 35, 40).

When we talk about living a holy life, we do not mean putting on nice clothes and standing in church singing songs, and waiting for Jesus to return. Instead, we are talking about doing the things Jesus did and helping those who are poor, sick, hungry, and rejected by others.

James 1:27 says that "What God the Father considers to be pure and genuine religion is this: to take care of orphans and widows in their suffering and to keep oneself from being corrupted by the world."

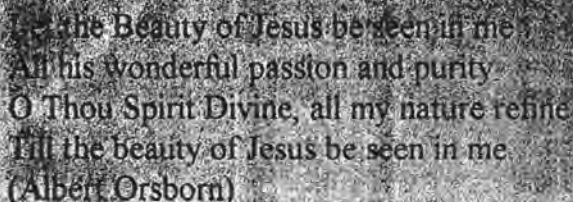
Summary

To live a holy life is to live a life that resembles that of Jesus Christ. To be holy is to be like Christ. In this chapter we have noticed some of the characteristics of the life of Jesus.

- † Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit.
- † Jesus knew the Scriptures.
- † Jesus was a man of prayer.
- † Jesus came to seek and to save the lost.
- † Jesus humbled himself.
- † Jesus forgave people for the wrong things they did to him.

† Jesus had compassion on the lost and helpless.

We need to have the same attitude and qualities that Jesus had. This is the meaning of holiness. When people live a life that imitates that of Jesus Christ, other people are attracted and want to follow Jesus also. Holiness means letting the beauty of Jesus shine through our lives. As we surrender our lives to Jesus, and ask him to cleanse us from the evil desires of the sinful nature, he will fill us with the Holy Spirit. Our lives will be transformed and become more and more like the life of Jesus. This little prayer chorus should be the prayer of each one of us.



Let the Beauty of Jesus be seen in me
All his wonderful passion and purity
O Thou Spirit Divine, all my nature refine
Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me
(Albert Orsborn)