

How to be holy

I don't know if you noticed the title in the NIV. It is called rules for holy living. Can I ask, 'honestly what comes to mind when you think of holiness?'

last Monday night Stuart Moffat came and trained folks in elementary food hygiene. He managed to make quite mundane material fun and memorable. At one point he had us repeating back to him the phrase 'Pathogens are harmful bacteria'. Well here is something to get into our minds. 'Holiness is not boring'. Let me hear it!

Okay so what is it? Is it a list of rules? I have searched high and low for a good definition of holiness but the best one I can come up with is holiness is being like Jesus. Look through Col 3 with that in mind and you can see how what Paul writes is but a reflection of the Lord himself.

vs2 mind set on things above

vs 3 no immorality

vs 8 no unfettered anger, rage, filthy language

vs 12 but clothed with kindness, compassion and so on

vs15ff a man of peace, in whom the word dwelt deeply

The bible takes the whole idea of holiness quite seriously. Montgomery Boyce comments, that if we do not take holiness seriously then we become complacent in the Christian life. What does he mean? Holiness is the stuff that draws us deeper into God. Think about it. The writer of Hebrews (12:14) said,

'Without holiness no-one will see the Lord'. It's hard to find a deep bond with someone you have nothing in common with. Part of our bond with God is holiness – our likeness to him, or sharing of his priorities and so on.

I was listening to a testimony of a professional basketball player who is a Christian. He was saying that in the world he lived where his lifestyle was very different – no drugs, drunkenness, sleeping around. He was living away from home and it was just him and the Lord to rely on. He felt helped through the story of Joseph. Joseph sought to live a life honouring to God, holy and what is the constant refrain throughout the story of Joseph? 'The Lord was with him' – the bond was there wasn't it?

Sometimes we complain 'Oh I don't feel close to God' – there can be lots of reasons for that, sometimes simple tiredness but we have to ask a few questions of ourselves and on is this – are we living lives that are honouring him, that are Christ like? Are holy. What is holiness? (Not boring) draws us closer to God.

Okay so what is leading a Christ like or holy life going to look like in the 21st century?

Paul outlines for us how to live a holy life in relation to the church vs 1-9, in the church vs 10-17, in family life vs 18-21 and in the workplace vs 22-4:4. We are going to look at the first two of those in relation to Christ vs 1-9 and then to the church vs 10-17.

vs 1 “Since then you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God”.

Here is the basis of our Christian living. 3:20 we died with Christ. When we put our trust in Christ a death occurs – the death of our old sinful nature and we are made new. Paul talks about it in Gal 2:20

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me. The life I live I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me”

2 Corinthians 5:17 *“Therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation the old has gone and the new has come”*

The changing of his name from Saul to Paul kind of signifies what has happened to Paul and happens to us when we follow Christ. Our old nature dies with Christ and Christ raises it up and you are made new.

You know how it is. There are days when you wonder if you are a Christian or if God can be interested in you because you are not a great Christian person. You mouth or something let you down. You need to know this. Your old self died. There is no going back. You are made new. That is why Paul address Christians he writes to as saints – which means set apart for God not sinners! Christ has raised you up. You have been brought spiritually alive. You were lost but now are found.

So set your minds on these things – things above. The things of God's word. This is more than just positive thinking because it is enabled by the work of God in your life. He is the one who has raised us up. But we have a part in it don't we.?

Why the mind? - it is through the mind that God primarily speaks to us – as we study and think about his word, we grow in grace and faith as he renews our minds (Rom 12:2) and with it we win others as we give defence of the hope we have (2 Pet 3:15).

The computing term GIGO (Garbage in Garbage Out) applies very well here. What are you reading, watching, talking about and so on? What we read etc can be like fuel. It fuels envy, jealousy, lust, temptation or godliness, christ likeness and so on.

‘Supersize me’ illustration – burgers diet d liver.

We are indissolubly connected to Christ. He is our head, our lives are hid in him, he is our lifegiver (spiritually and physically). Oft times we live as though we are completely disconnected to Christ but nothing could be further from the truth.

So no wonder Paul continues, set minds on this above – trickle down effect.

vs 5 *“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to the*

earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other ”

put to death e.g. Joseph – feeling from potiphar’s wife.

You can see the logic can't you?

You are irrevocably connected to Christ whether you feel like it or not. He is Immanuel – God with us. We are in Christ and he is in us and if that is so we should not be surprised if we find ourselves being changed by him.

You'll have heard the phrase – '*you get like the people you work with*'.

When I was a student I worked in a kitchen during the summer with a particularly crabby chef. It was so tempting just to be as angry and shouty as him. We all affect each others behaviour don't we? It is the same principle here. We are in Christ he is our God, our Lord, our master and our friend. When we walk closer with him our appetite for these worldly principles will lessen.

Christ in you will be evidenced by a transforming life. It will not happen at once and we may even have set backs in these things but if our hearts are open to his

will, our consciences sensitive to his leading, our minds applying and learning his truth we will experience less of these things. But rather as Paul tells us in Galatians bear the fruit of the Spirit's work – love, joy, peace, patience and so on.

And here is the challenge – to do all this in the 9-5, in the 24/7 where uncertainty dwells, where sleeplessness lurks, where the taunts of others berate, where everything can throw a wobbly all at the same time, when the kids are playing up, the cats been sick on your new jacket, someone's crashed your car, interest rates on the mortgage go up, someone at work is doing your head in and that is just monday morning!

The boys I play football with are at the cutting edge of this. Everything that is here they do. And I hear them wonder what it is all for. Work hard, earn money for what? Retirement? Death? It's all meaningless and so they give vent for whatever takes their whim – violence, fun, drink, work, drugs, love, cheating, all manner of expletives. Christ saves us from all that and leads us in another direction. And it is good to be seeking to be holy.

People notice – friend of mine doesn't go to church talking about work, commented on kindness and extra mile attitude of a colleague and she goes to such and such church. Here character and integrity got the faith she followed noticed.

Holy living in the church

It seems that Paul is talking about folks in the church manifesting these things! There is nothing new under the sun! from vs 11 people are being racist, looking down on each other because of what they feel is lacking – Greeks saw themselves as wise and everyone else as stupid, the Jews thought themselves chosen and everyone else to be despised, slaves were of course the lowest of the low. To which Paul says Christ is all and is in all. The one you put down Christ has died to save and therefore you are putting down Christ and what he is doing.

The divisions in churches today may not be over race but rather to do with age, employment, how many times we go out to church, how long we have been in the church, what authority we have and so on, whether we are traditional or progressive and so on. Where Christ is present we need to be respectful of others.

John Calvin comments that the person who is holy lives the least they can for themselves. I think that is seen in vs 12-14

“Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievance you may have against each other. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all in perfect unity”

What is the thing that you most struggle with at the moment from this list? forgiving others? humility? patience? Who is that you find it hardest to be like this to? Who really invades your personal space, who is it you avoid? who is it that rubs you up the wrong way and tests you in these? How is that going to change? Remembering that Christ is in you and with you? Remembering that you are not perfect and there but by the grace of God you go. How do we love when it is hard to? Again John Calvin says – first turn you sight to God who engenders love, who fills you r heart with love for him and then turn to man.

Then there is a lovely little list of tips.

vs 15 let the peace of Christ rule in your heart. You anxious give it over to Christ.

vs 15 be thankful

vs 16 let the word dwell, tabernacle, live in yourselves

vs 16 keep each other on the right track.

vs 17 have a song in you heart for God

vs 17 remember whatever you are doing do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. Remember I said this morning to ask God each day how you can serve him. Here is Paul saying the same. Everything – work, washing dishes, ironing, sports and so on do it for the Christ who is with you and in you. That he might use it and he might get the glory from it.

Holiness in reln to X

Holiness in reln to church

(Holiness is not noring – holiness is being like X)