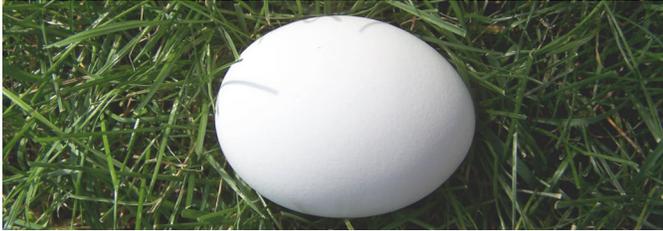


Defining Holiness Part III



By Philip E. Busby

Question #13 - *“What is the difference between The Holy Ghost and holiness?”*

Now, we do not have the space in this writing to go over all the details about what sin is, but one of the basic facts we need to understand is that sin is not just sin because God said so. Sin is sin because it's sin. What I mean by this is, many people think God just came up with these do's and don'ts for humans and anyone who does not agree with them and/or follow them is sinning. This is not the proper way to see the issue. Sin is about how we interact with God and others. “Free will” means freedom to do as we choose, but we sin when our choices are harmful to others. So, with freedom comes great responsibility, and this is why sin demands the ultimate punishment of death. This issue is easiest to see in its harshest forms. For instance, we can choose to kill another person. We have the free will to at least attempt such a thing, and many people have accomplished it, which proves the point about our freedom! However, is it right to murder another person just because you can? No! Why? Because that person has a free will just as we do, and that free will was given to them, by God, just as it was to us.

Another example is something we touched on earlier. Can we have physical relationships outside the bonds of marriage? Yes, but even in a modern world

of devices and drugs meant to keep it from happening, people still conceive children. Is it right to kill the child just because you did not intend to give it life? No! That child deserves all the love and nurturing all children deserve! Children are people too, and one person does not have the right to use their freedom to squelch another. The people who chose to have a relationship, made a choice which greatly affects the life of another. Whether they want to or not, they have a responsibility to put aside what they may want to do with their time and care for the life they chose to bring into this world!

Simply put, it's not possible for everyone to have everything they want. Thus, there are natural rules which exist when it comes to interaction with others. This point should be obvious to us all, but what we often forget is that these rules are not just about the big obvious interactive offences like murder, they are also about small, not so direct things, like doing something which tempts others to do something wrong. This is why the knowledge of good and evil suddenly caused Adam and Eve to be concerned about being naked. Wrong is not just doing wrong, but also the failure to do right! That brings us to a discussion about righteousness.

Righteousness is a very hard thing to obtain and it takes a lot of effort on our part. For many, this is the reason they simply go back on their relationship with God or fall into a liberal, religious state of mind. (Hosea 4:15-19) Most people simply do not want to put forth the effort to be right in their actions; and if salvation is a free gift, many ask why should they care? The problem is that many people have went to church their entire lives or for many, many years and never been taught the basics of salvation. Far too many people believe salvation is something you receive by saying a sinner's prayer - or the like. People are also often told they are “born again” at this point. I like to call this theology “The magical ticket of salvation.” Simply put, you are not saved until you are born again, and being born again has to do with receiving those new forms we have been talking about. So, again, we must die; and the hope we have for salvation from death is the opportunity to be, “born again.” This is not a birth which is according to the will of man (like our first birth) but according to the will of God! (John 5:21-24)

Again, we are saved by the fact God, in His grace, still wants to have a relationship with us even though

we are not perfect as He is perfect. This is why we say God forgives sin. God is willing to put the past behind us and walk with us in spite of our past failures. However, because God is Holy, and we walked away from the innocence we were created in, He cannot be close to us in the way He created us to originally be. This is why for the tabernacle, given to Israel in "The Law," God's presence rested on the mercy seat which was behind a thick veil which separated it from the rest of the tabernacle. The tabernacle itself was enclosed with a courtyard which had only one gate, and standing between the tabernacle and the gate were the brazen laver and the altar of gold. (Ex. 40) This entire structure was separated from the everyday lives of the Children of Israel by the priestly tribe of Levi encamping around it, and the tabernacle was separated from the world at large by the rest of Israel camping on all sides of the Levites. (Num. 2) God stands back from us to a great enough degree that we are not consumed by His Holy Presence. If He did not, we would be consumed, because the wages of sin is death. (Rom. 6:23) By standing back, God is putting off the inevitable - so to speak - and allowing us to live our life span. This is why He did not kill Adam and Eve in the garden but only separated them from The Tree of Life. This means we will still die someday, but this is a problem God can work with if in our life span we choose to let Him. The bottom line is this, if God, through His grace, is willing to forgive our sin, and our sin will ultimately be dealt with by the death of our flesh, then all that is needed to overcome the consequences of sin is for us to be born again! Jesus took care of that, and so we say the blood of Christ covers all sin! (I John 1:7)

The structure of The Tabernacle illustrates to us how necessary death is for those who want to be close to God. God simply cannot be with us in the way He wants to while we are here in this flesh. (Rom. 3:20-26) These kinds of illustrations are why all true believers must study the law to gain understanding. Being Jewish has a lot to do with illustrating the law through acting these illustrations out, but the fact the temple does not currently exist means many illustrations are not currently being performed for both the Jew and the non-Jew to see. So, now more than ever it is important that we study and know the scriptures for ourselves, especially the first five books of the Old Testament. This should make another part of Revelation understandable to us. The Word of God is the little book John is instructed in Revelation to take and eat. It was sweet as honey in his mouth but made his stomach

bitter. (Rev. 10) The last Jewish temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. It would become the job of those who believed in God to take the written Word into all the world at all costs! (Rev. 20:4) Why? Because "...faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17

The more we can rebuild what God laid out in the law, inside our head, the clearer it becomes that God is not trying to hide from us. He is trying to be with us! Our sin is holding our relationship back, but that does not stop God's desire to be with us; thus, He offers to every man a measure of faith. Faith does not stop us from dying someday, but through Jesus, the ultimate opportunity has been opened to us through the truth of death. Death not only takes away sin but it envelops the consequences of it. Jesus' work pulls us out of the jaws of death, and in our new state we can, once again, be with God exactly the way He created us to be. The catch is that after death is removed from the equation, our new state will be permanent! (I Thess. 4:16-18)

At first glance, eternal life may sound like a good thing, but God did not provide eternal life just so we could all go on living. He only provides eternal life for those who desire to be free from sin: for those who desire to be with God in the way He created us to be. There is no point in providing new forms to those who only want to continue living a life of sin. In fact, that would be unrighteous because that would allow individuals to continue harming other individuals, which again, is why the wages of sin is death in the first place.

Holiness has to do with the fact our actions and choices, in the here and now, reveal what we really want! We were created to be freewilled beings. God will not force us to live forever with Him in a place where sin cannot be. So, the bottom line is, God will not rebirth any human who has not chosen for themselves that being with God, in an environment void of sin for all eternity, is what they want! Humans cannot have an eternal relationship with God just because heaven sounds better than hell. To have a relationship with God, there must be a desire to be as God is. It's like the old saying, birds of a feather flock together! As individuals, we must desire holiness to obtain an eternal relationship with God. (Rev. 17:10-14)

Now, what is holiness? Actually, something very simple, but as I mentioned earlier, language tends to fail us. Look at the word "faith." The true definition of



“faith” is a relationship with God. So, instead of “faith,” why do we not simply say “relationship?” Because we need a name which denotes something more specific than just “a relationship.” We need a name which tells us we are talking about a relationship with God! This is what the word “faith” is meant to be. Now, people have tried to distort or change the meaning over the years, and almost no one in today’s world would tell you the definition is, a relationship with God. Today the English word “faith” is used to denote any number of religious beliefs, but that should not keep us from understanding the truth! (Hosea 4:6) As the word stands in scripture, “faith” means: a relationship only with The One True God, and that is what the word should mean to us!

This kind of weakness in language is exactly why it should not be important to us, as believers, to attempt to bring the Bible into more and more modern English phrasing. Instead, we should be looking to find what the words actually mean in spite of the distortions translation and weakening linguistics have already caused. This means, all believers should have a growing interest in learning ancient Hebrew; but even if you never learn the slightest bit of Hebrew, it should be important to us that we know the entire Word, not just pieces here and there. (II Tim. 3:16) The Bible does not contradict itself. If you think it does, then there is some part you are not understanding. We should spend our time seeking The Holy Ghost’s guidance and understanding, not just the most watered down modern “translation” of The Word. The Holy Ghost’s availability to teach us directly, no matter which language is our native tongue, is what God meant when He told Israel He would write His laws in the heart! (Jer. 31:33) This truth is amplified by seeing the fact that even many Jews were losing touch with Hebrew by the time The Holy Ghost was poured out; and all God’s promises are first to Jerusalem, then unto all Judea, then Samaria, and on to even the uttermost parts of the world! (Acts 1:8, Gen. 12:3) With all that in mind, you can stop and take the time to read Acts chapter 2. What happens when a person is baptized in The Holy Ghost should make far more sense to you!

Weakness in language comes from weakness in human understanding. The more fleshly and one-sided we become, the more simplistic, primitive and literally two dimensional we become. This has gotten so bad, we almost do not speak a language which has the words or rules to form words we can use to understand

many concepts. However, holiness, like the word faith, if put into context can show us the truth. The word “holy,” simply means set apart. This is a concept which prevails in many religions, but not in a truthful or real way. Things can be designated as “holy,” but all that means, often times, is the item is only used for certain ceremonial purposes, or it’s looked at in high regard. When it comes to true biblical holiness, just like “faith,” we are talking about things which are not just set apart from other things but set apart specifically for God’s purposes. This means the item also needs to be purified. Then it may be used by God, and God will dictate how the thing is used. This is why the Tabernacle, and later the Temple, and all their elements were called “Holy.” God even told the children of Israel that those things which were touched by holy things became holy. (Ex. 29-30)

Things which are truly holy belong to God, and are to be used for His purposes. They are not to be mingled with the things of the world. This is why God said the children of Israel are holy. They, as a people, were to be set apart from all other people of the world. (Num. 23:8-10) This was so they could serve God’s purpose on this earth. Now this relates to them as a people, holding the oracles of God, which is an earthly service. (Rom. 3:1-2) In heaven, all people will be holy, which is a perfection the nation of Israel is meant to represent here on this earth. All Jews, as individuals, must still choose, as any human must choose, if they desire to be eternally holy!

Simply put, a desire to be holy is a desire to give our lives to God for His purposes. This is why Romans 6:19 refers to righteousness leading to holiness. Righteousness is being right in our actions, but holiness is about separating ourselves for the purposes of God. Many people often get the two confused, and that is a shame; because not understanding what holiness means causes people to miss the fact that desiring holiness is what makes us a true believer. When people do not understand a desire for holiness is what being a “Christian” really means, they miss the importance of seeking after righteousness. Seeking after righteousness is not something true believers do because they think it will earn them salvation. The Bible tells us our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. (Isa. 64:6) Salvation must be a free gift. (Eph. 2:8-10) We could never hope to earn it, and just being a “good person” will never get us to heaven.

We should also understand the fact, just because people choose not to serve the Lord does not automatically mean they have completely failed when it comes to righteousness. All humans since Adam and Eve have had the knowledge of good and evil, and some people care very much about righteousness as it relates to human interaction. Now, we will need God's help to ever get it truly right, but God's help does not have to be important to us in order to obtain a fair amount of righteousness. This is why some true believers may not currently live as right as any number of nonbelievers around them. This truth is also why even many people claiming to be Christians think the golden rule is to do unto others as you would have them do unto you, when Jesus clearly told us the golden rule is to love God with everything you have. Loving your neighbor as yourself is like the first, but it's the silver rule not the golden one. (Matt. 22:35-40)

Righteousness is something we must learn to pay attention to, something we must care about, before we will truly begin to grow in it; and righteousness can be greatly affected by the kind of family we are raised in. The bottom line is that obtaining true righteousness is a long, hard road, one which we may or may not get very far along in our lifetime. What can be said with certainty is that no amount of it will make up for the mistakes we have already made and are making by currently not being perfect in righteousness. We must desire to be righteous because we love God and His ways. All this is why the Bible tells us God counts faith in place of righteousness. (Rom. 4:1-8)

Faith and righteousness can work hand in hand. Faith is a relationship with God which we are attempting to grow; but in order to draw closer and closer to God, we need righteousness. Thus, faith begets righteousness. What God is willing to look at in place of our being righteous is actually a process for gaining righteousness; and as faith pushes us to be righteous, it also examines whether we truly have a desire for holiness! (I Pet. 1:5-9) In the same way God can forgive our past failures, He can forgive our current failures as we seek to grow in righteousness. This is why James 4:17 tells us simply, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." This verse is talking to the one who is walking in faith. Those who do not care to walk in faith are what we call "dead in sin," already. (I Pet. 4:1-7) The path to salvation is by grace through faith, and this is why we are told that without faith it's impossible to please God.

He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Heb. 11:6) If we believe God is out there, we will find faith, but we must still understand that God does not simply reward us for finding faith. He rewards those who diligently seek Him.

To put it in the simplest terms I know how, let me say it this way, you can seek after righteousness without desiring holiness, but you cannot desire holiness without seeking righteousness. We do not even have to be desirous of God to put our spirit to work. This is not to say yielding to God is not the best way to do such a thing and the best way to grow in righteousness, it's only to also point out, not everyone who claims to be, or even tries to be, "spiritual," cares about having a relationship with God. Everyone has a spirit just as they have a mind and body. So, we must understand while Jesus' work on the cross overcame death, hell, and the grave for all humanity, a desire for holiness is what separates the sheep from the goats! (Matt. 25:31-34)

Holiness is separating yourself unto the service of God and for His purposes. There is no way for one to do this who does not care about being right in their actions. Sinfulness is not in the plan of God, nor can it be. (James 1:13-15) Jesus simply put it this way: you cannot serve two masters because you will either hate the one or love the other. (Matt. 6:24) It's just not possible to serve unrighteousness while at the same time serving the will of God. This is what holiness is about. We should not simply seek to be righteous for the sake of being a "good person." We should seek to be righteous first and foremost because we desire to draw closer to God. In doing this, we begin to separate ourselves out from the world and yield ourselves to the plan of God. In Biblical language, we should seek to be "holy"!

Now, this discussion brings us to another word which often is confused in doctrine, and that word is "sanctification." Sanctification is not a separate issue or thing from righteousness and holiness. It's simply what we have been talking about. Sanctification is a name for the process of attempting to be holy. Christians like to say things like, "I'm sanctified," but that is really a silly thing to say. Sanctification is the name for the process we are continuously in throughout this life, which leads to holiness. One of the reasons we use it is because obtaining full holiness while struggling

daily with our sinful flesh is really not possible. Our flesh can never be truly holy and that is why it must die. This is why God describes sacrifices as a “sweet savour.” (Ex. 29:18) The process of burning the flesh and blood of animals and plants upon fire, is symbolic of the dust to dust truth of our lives. (Gen. 3:19) Once the flesh is gone and the life of it poured out, (Gen. 9:4) sin is destroyed. (Rom. 6:5-7) The spirit and the mind are then freed to return to God, if that is what we have desired. This gives God an opportunity to make us truly holy so we can live with Him, and that is what God and every true believer hopes for.

Death, in other words, is the ultimate sanctification for our physical forms. This is why we celebrate the work of Christ through water baptism. Water baptism is not the sprinkling or pouring of water on someone’s head. Biblical water baptism is a full emersion in a flowing body of water. This is why John the Baptist used the river Jordan. It is also intended to be done in a public place where all who care to take the time can see. Water baptism is a proclamation; and it celebrates the fact we believe, if we die in Christ, we will rise again just as He did, in a form which is holy! Going under the water is symbolic of going into the grave. The running water symbolizes our sin being washed away through the death of our flesh, and coming out of the water is symbolic of being resurrected just as Christ was resurrected! (I Cor. 15:42-45)

Again, death is ultimate sanctification for our physical forms; but what about our mind and spirit? They do not die and are not raised in a new form! This is why we are instructed to walk in newness of spirit. (Rom. 7:6) While we seek to be righteous in our actions, we must also work to sanctify our mind and spirit. As we do this, we will see the fruits of the spirit begin to emerge. Many people think when the Bible speaks of the fruits of the spirit it’s talking about The Holy Spirit; but while it’s true that The Holy Ghost is here to develop those fruits in our lives, the fruits are of our spirit. Again, we have come to a subject which deserves its own book. The fruits of the spirit are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. (Gal. 5:22-23) As we seek after righteousness, we will begin to be right in our actions; but as we seek to sanctify our mind and spirit, we will see the development of qualities which superseded just being right. These fruits make us more and more useful to the work of God, and this is important to the true believer. True believers in God desire to be used of

God in the here and now as much as they can. They desire to know God and grow in faith as much as they can. If we truly desire to be holy, we are not going to wait until heaven to care about working for and knowing deeper the God who created us, and whom we are committing our lives to spend eternity with!

Simply put, holiness is the whole package God is looking for in man; and because no man is truly holy in the here and now (with the exception of Jesus, of course) only God can judge who is truly seeking after holiness. Man can only see the outward appearance of another man, but God can see the desires of the heart, in spite of how crude the outside way may be judged by other men. (I Sam. 16:7) This is why God tells us not to judge. (Luke 6:36-38) We can attempt to instruct to the best of our ability, but we should never judge, because we never know when we may be putting ourselves at odds with God, and we never want to do that!

Now, when it comes to the subject of righteousness, holiness, faith, sanctification and, of course, The Holy Ghost, the teaching can go on for many, many, pages; but hopefully, the pages we have gone through here are sufficient for the purpose of understanding the difference between The Holy Ghost and holiness. Just remember, God’s Spirit is Holy. God does not need a process like sanctification, He has always been Holy; and this is why our spirit is simply our spirit, but God’s Spirit is The Holy Ghost. Holiness is being separated out from others for the purpose of God, which requires pureness. We show we desire this by holding fast to the faith God has offered us. Through seeking righteousness, we can begin to sanctify every part of our being unto God. If this is what we desire to do, then we have chosen the ways of God, and what we cannot accomplish, God will complete; but make no mistake about it, there is no magical ticket of salvation. There is no formula which will get us into heaven. We either desire to be holy as God is Holy, or there is only death and then the eternal place God prepared for those who desired not to be separated for His purposes. (Isa. 5:14)