

Call to Obedience
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
www.schultze.org

By Pastor Reimar A. C. Schultze

MORE ON HOLINESS

In my last article I wrote to you about the queen of all the attributes of God: Holiness! Today I shall share with you about the essence of holiness and on how we become holy.

The Essence of Holiness

When I talk about the essence of holiness, I mean that we need to know what holiness is all about. In the Revelation of John we read about the four unique beings at the throne of God, perpetually saying, *Holy, holy, holy*. If we don't know what that means we don't know God. You subtract holiness from the attributes of God and you no longer have God. You subtract holiness from the Christian and you no longer have a Christian, for Hebrews says that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. (Heb. 12:14).

You need to have what God has. If you are connected to Him you have it. Of course, not in His magnitude, but enough to be unmistakably defined as being one of His children. But if you allow known sin in your life, that sin will disconnect you from God. You will be unholy and you will be cast into everlasting darkness. Therefore, holiness is a defining factor when it comes to man's eternal destiny. So to be holy is to be godly and to be godly is to be *other* than anything of that which the world produces. It means that you are *other* in character, *other* in your choices, *other* in what you love and despise, *other* in your goals and aspirations, *other* in your meditations, *other* in what you allow in and keep out of your head, *other* in what you speak, *other* in your priorities, *other* in your worldview, *other* in how you treat your spouse, your children, your friends and your enemies, *other* than the world! One of the most distinguishing marks of a Christian is his *otherness*!

A holy man is an enigma to the world. Although he is in the world he is not of the world. As Paul says it, the Christian is a stranger or foreigner in this world. He operates on different principles than the men in the world. Things of the world - things that glitter, shine and are praised by the world - mean little or nothing to him. Things that the world enjoys vex his spirit. To him, anything that does not proceed out of the holiness of God, anything

that does not relate to, or promote holiness, is of no interest to him. The happiness of a holy man is in the invisible things to the natural eye. He frequently talks to someone he has never seen, he sings when there seems to be no reason to sing, he chooses things that seem worthless, and yet he acts like a billionaire, like one who has everything although it looks like he has nothing. He has resources the world does not know of. When everything stops he keeps going. When everything looks gloomy he keeps smiling. When he is hit on one cheek, he offers the other also.

A holy man is in a constant pursuit of moral perfection, not in a frantic way, but rather he is seeking Christian perfection in the spirit of a *bridegroom coming out of his chamber* or *as a strong man rejoicing to run a race*. You see a man like that and you have a glimpse of a holy God. In other words, a holy man reflects a holy God. You can see that holiness cannot be easily defined; it is too vast to be put in a couple of short sentences in some dictionary. That is why I am describing it and not defining it. That is why the old Greek word *hagios* (holy) means awe. It is this awe of God that rightly makes moral demands of us, causing us to fall on our faces to worship Him. And it is this awe of our Maker that defines more than anything else all we should be.

The whole eternal purpose of God's plan of redemption is that man be like God. It is that the bride be as the Bridegroom; it is to make a new man out of the old man, a successful man out of a failed man, a seeing man out of a blind man, a clean man out of an unclean man. That means that we make holy living our highest pursuit. This is why our Savior made *hallowed be thy name* the first petition of the Lord's prayer. For what are you worth, what is the value of all your earthly accomplishments that you are being praised for by man, if you have not lived holy? So notice that you have six petitions in the Lord's prayer. The first, *hallowed be thy name*, is His wish list for you. The other five are your wish list for Him. When you are holy you begin to sit *in heavenly places in Christ Jesus* while your feet are still planted on this perishable earth. It is a grand "feeling." It is joy unspeakable. And we can do that whether we are down to the last loaf of bread, whether we are paraplegic, whether we are in prison, suffer shipwreck, or are beaten with *forty stripes save one* (2 Cor. 11:24). The presence or absence of things has no effect on us sitting with Jesus in heavenly places. Holiness pays good dividends now and forever. Sin is a horrible task master. It does not pay. It only punishes, deceives, impoverishes and kills.

With holiness come all the spiritual fruits mentioned in Galatians 5. So many sincere believers work so hard to become more patient, loving and gentle. You cannot get these fruits without living a holy life no matter how much you pray to acquire them. They are not fruits of human effort, but of the Spirit. When you come into holiness all these fruits will follow. This is another reason why Jesus put holiness on the top of the list of things we need. Once you get that, everything else will fall in place. It is that simple. Now, have I defined holiness? Hardly! Have I given you an idea of what it is all about? I think so.

How Do We Become Holy?

Holiness is a choice. Many churchgoers believe it is God's choice. They believe that God clothes those who have been baptized or born again with holiness as a window dresser clothes a mannequin: man being totally passive in the process. Many of these dear souls also believe that holiness comes by theology. But God wanting us to be holy does not translate into us becoming holy until it becomes our choice as well. If Christians were to become automatically holy at their rebirth, why then do they act so unholy after it? Wouldn't all of them immediately adopt a godly lifestyle, frequent prayer meetings, witness for Jesus at every opportunity and never say another critical word of anyone? The reality is that there's quarreling, division, strife, jealousy, selfishness and pride in most people's hearts in our churches. They have not yet chosen holiness. Again, holiness is a choice. You must make a conscious decision to become holy and remain holy on a daily basis. When God created Adam, He did not create him holy, He created him innocent, sinless. God wanted Adam to choose to be holy. He did not want a robot. He wanted Adam to exercise his will to choose to be holy. Adam was the son of God by creation - but God wanted him to become the son of God by choice. So God put a forbidden fruit in the Garden. This was an opportunity for Adam to become a son of God by choice! If Adam would choose to obey God, he would choose to be holy. God and the devil also put forbidden fruit in our pathway every day to test us. Just as Adam, we need to choose to be holy every day . A holy man is none other than a man who is successively making holy choices - one day, one hour, one step at time.

Do not wear yourself out praying to become holy. God wants to see action, He wants to see the works of repentance. You can pray until doomsday to become holy. It will not happen by prayer alone. No my friend, start

by throwing all the ungodly things out off your life: all the idols, all the forbidden things, all the things that don't advance the kingdom of God. All of them. *Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2Co 7:1).*

Show God that you mean business, that you are done with the world. Once you throw out all the things within you that you are responsible for, God will take responsibility to cleanse you from all the things only He can cleanse you from. *If we walk in the light as he is in the light...the blood of Jesus cleanseth us from all sin (John 1:7). And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly (1Th 5:23).*

God will purify the inner man. Once you start putting off, God will start putting in. He will, yes, He will. So holiness is both the work of God and man. But it starts with you.

When Joshua challenged believing Israel 1,400 years before Christ with *choose ye this day whom ye will serve (Jos. 24:15)*, he called them to holiness of life. That call is waiting to be answered by you today.

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