

# A Hunger for Holiness - How pt2

REVIEW: Last week we left off by walking through three ways in which our hunger for holiness is fueled, or powered.

- I. The first way we talked about was the Holy Spirit
  - A. We saw that that the Holy Spirit is at work in us to sanctify us (progressive sanctification)
  - B. We also saw that the Spirit is at work in us to strengthen us (Eph 3:16)
    1. The same Spirit that was involved in creation
    2. The same Spirit that saved you, and saved 3000 people in one day, that cause the apostles to speak in tongues and that is the same Spirit that is at work in you right now
  - C. We saw how the Spirit is a source of light for our souls
    1. He points out sin in our lives
    2. He illuminates the Scriptures so we can understand them
    3. And He acts as a spotlight for Jesus Christ
- II. The second way that our hunger for holiness is powered is from the gospel itself
  - A. The gospel should transform us into people that are grateful
    1. Not that we take it so far that we feel we have a debt to pay back to God
      - a) If you couldn't pay for your sins
      - b) What makes you think you can pay God back for His grace
    2. Because of this gratitude we follow God in willing obedience
      - a) God does not want your forced obedience - that is not pleasing to Him
      - b) He wants your loving obedience - one that trusts in God's goodness, faithfulness, wisdom, and understanding
    3. All of that takes humility
  - B. The gospel also tells us the truth about ourselves
    1. We understand that we are sinners - incapable of saving ourselves
    2. We also understand that the gospel tells us that we are children of the King, dead to sin and alive with Christ - among many other things
    3. We often times convince ourselves that we have not changed, or God is disappointed with us in how quickly we change
      - a) And largely this is because we spend little time understanding or reviewing what God changed us into
      - b) We need to preach the glorious change of the gospel to ourselves
- III. The third way we looked at last week to fuel our hunger for holiness is the promises of God
  - A. We looked at the idea of God's "future grace"
    1. There are some blessings that God promises in the future for those that follow certain commands

## A Hunger for Holiness - How pt2

2. There are also some negative promises from God for those that do not obey God's commands
- B. And we looked at the idea that Satan is the "father of lies"
  1. He lies to us about our salvation
  2. About our forgiveness
  3. About the Bible, and about God's promises (remember in the garden, "You will not surely die, God knows you will be like Him")

TRAN: So this week I want to pick up where we left off, and then move into one final way in which our hunger for holiness is powered.

- I. I want to start today by talking about the effort of faith
  - A. Some folks think that effort is a four letter word when faith in Christ is involved
    1. It is true that the Holy Spirit gives us power to seek holiness
    2. The gospel drives us forward into being more like Christ
    3. And our faith in the promises of God help to pour gas on the fire of obedience
    4. But it still takes effort on our part
      - a) We need to be shown by God what to do
      - b) And then we need to go do it
  - B. Without a doubt God is the One that is making us holy
    1. But we still need to pursue the course God lays out for us
    2. When it comes to killing off the sin in our lives, we act the miracle of killing it off (according to John Piper)
  - C. I want us to look at what the testimony of Scripture is on this
    1. Romans 8:13 - we put to death, by the Spirit's help, the misdeeds of the body
    2. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 - run the race and discipline ourselves
    3. Ephesians 4:22-24 - we are to put off the old self and put on the new self
    4. Colossians 3:5 - we are to put to death what belongs to the earthly nature
    5. 1 Timothy 6:11-12 - flee, pursue, fight - these are all action words!
    6. 2 Peter 1:5 - make every effort
    7. So our job as believers is to strive with all of our energy toward the goal of holiness, as the Holy Spirit works within us toward that goal
      - a) Leading us and guiding us along the way
    8. Revelation 3:21 "To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne."

## A Hunger for Holiness - How pt2

- a) The word for victorious is also translated “prevail, overcome, conquer” among others
  - b) What do all of those words: victorious, prevail, overcome, conquer all have in common? They all imply effort
  - c) And Jesus is saying - to the one that has given the effort and overcome, been victorious, prevailed
  - d) Pretty strong encouragement that we are to strive, and put forth effort toward holiness
- D. One of the authors I used to prepare for these messages, Kevin DeYoung said, “Sanctification is not by surrender, but by divinely enabled toil and effort.”
1. This is one I have to disagree with him on to an extent - his point was specific in the book, and I am using his quote as general
  2. I disagree because sanctification is by surrender to the Holy Spirit, and our toil and effort is by surrender also
    - a) We surrender our pride that we know better than God and follow His path
    - b) We surrender our our will to Him so that we will obey
- II. Now, allow me to give you the fourth fuel for the fire of holiness in our lives: be who you are
- A. Before you string me up, thinking I have been watching too much Oprah lately, allow me to explain
- B. That same author, Kevin DeYoung tells the story of playing soccer with his young boys in the back yard. He motioned for his youngest to go for a long pass
1. When he kicked the ball it went past both sons and continued to travel - all the way into the other goal
  2. His five year old turned around and said, “Wow, Dad, only you and Jesus can do that!”
  3. No doubt Jesus could do that with a soccer ball and much more
  4. And this exclamation of his son’s would be amazingly true if it were not for one little word
    - a) Instead of the word “and” we need the word “in”
    - b) Only you IN Jesus can do that
  5. We often profess our desire to be like Jesus - and being like Him is possible, but not by just imitating His example
    - a) We have to know our position IN Jesus so we can live LIKE Jesus
    - b) And, by the way, we are back to Ephesians “in Him” “In Christ”
- C. So what we are talking about here is union with Christ

# A Hunger for Holiness - How pt2

1. We have talked about union with Christ before, but I want to add a little wider picture of it for you to consider
  2. Union with Christ is a great way to describe all of the blessings we receive IN Christ, not just one single blessing
    - a) In eternity past we received election
    - b) In history we received redemption
    - c) In the present we experience our justification and sanctification
    - d) In the future, glorification
    - e) So all aspects of our salvation are included in the union with Christ
- D. This concept, some would even say doctrine of union with Christ is so common in the Bible, it is almost hiding in plain sight
1. We have already mentioned the idea of “in Him” in Ephesians
  2. If we widen that out to all of Paul’s writings, around 200 times we see those expressions
  3. Add the apostle John’s writings, another two dozen
  4. Some of the things that go with those expressions of being “in Christ”
    - a) We are found in Christ - Phil 3:9
    - b) We are preserved in Christ - Romans 8:39
    - c) We are saved and sanctified in Christ - 2 Tim. 1:9
    - d) We walk in Christ (Col 2:6), labor in Christ (1 Cor. 15:58), and obey in Christ (Eph. 6:1)
    - e) That is just the tip of the iceberg - do a search in a Bible study website or software - you will be amazed
  5. Thirty-two times Paul speaks of believers participating in some aspect of redemption
    - a) Being crucified with Christ
    - b) Buried with Christ
    - c) Raised with Christ
    - d) Being seated with Christ (glorification)
- E. Our union with Christ occurs when the Spirit joins us together with Him
1. Then we get to participate in His benefits
  2. But not just the benefits - we participate in Christ Himself
- F. So why does it seem like this doctrine of being united with Christ is downplayed or not brought out as strongly as it should be?
1. It can be hard to grasp. What exactly does it mean that we are joined to Christ?
    - a) Obviously Jesus is not pinned to our shirt after church like a note from the teacher in kindergarten
    - b) Nor is the union physical - Jesus is not swimming around in our body like a virus

# A Hunger for Holiness - How pt2

- c) Union with Christ is like marriage
  - (1) We are joined with Him in a covenant of love
  - (2) Or a body - we are joined to Him in a living manner
  - (3) Or a building -
  - (4) All Biblical analogies - all ways of describing our union with Christ
- 2. The other reason this doctrine is less played than others - it can be misunderstood easily
  - a) Union with Christ does not equal fusion with Christ
    - (1) Union means we are joined with Christ in a covenant relationship - much like God and Israel
    - (2) Fusion means that we meld with Christ so that any distinction is eliminated between God and His people
      - (a) We do not share the essence of God Himself
      - (b) We are not absorbed into God where we cannot tell the difference between Him or us
      - (c) Much like the Trinity
        - i) There are three distinct members
        - ii) They share a union together - but they do not meld into one person, indistinguishable from the others
      - (d) Or like the person of Christ
        - i) He was fully man
        - ii) He was fully God
        - iii) Neither side was absorbed into the other
  - b) Here is something that may blow your mind - while we are not fused with or absorbed by Christ, we can be deified
    - (1) Turn to 2 Peter 1:4 - we participate in the divine nature
      - (a) Sounds a little like Eastern Religions
      - (b) "Become one with the everything"
    - (2) Theology tells us that we distinguish between God's essence, and His energies
      - (a) So what that means is we DO participate in the active life of God
      - (b) We DO NOT participate in the God's nature
  - c) So becoming like God means growing in the qualities and virtues of God
    - (1) We do not mix human and divine
    - (2) What is happening is we remain fully human, and God is working the process of restoring what that means in a sense that we do not understand because of the fall of man

## A Hunger for Holiness - How pt2

- G. If this seems like I am splitting hairs over words in Scripture, trust me, this union with Christ has great bearing on our hunger for holiness
1. One of the first things this reminds us of is that a pursuit of holiness is a pursuit of Christ
    - a) This is a common fallacy that gets put out there in a variety of ways
    - b) People want their kids to be raised to be good people - with a little Jesus mixed in too
    - c) But it does not work that way - we do not pursue being good people, we pursue Christ - and along the way, Christ makes us good people
  2. A second thing it helps us do is see both sides of the same coin
    - a) Some people emphasize justification, the fact that we are declared holy by God because of what Christ did for us, to the exclusion of sanctification, or working out our salvation
    - b) And the reverse is true - some work so hard at being holy, it's as if they forget that God declared us holy already
    - c) Both are gifts from God - justification and sanctification
    - d) Some think that sanctification flows from justification
      - (1) The reality is both come from the same Source - God
  3. One of the greatest things about our union with Christ that helps us in our hunger for holiness is understanding that we are dead to sin and alive to Christ
    - a) If we are not united with Christ, every effort to imitate Christ leads to legalism or just feeling spiritually defeated
    - b) What our union with Christ means is God is not asking us to be something we are not
      - (1) We don't hold on to some "pie-in-the-sky" idea that we can be just like Jesus if we try hard enough
      - (2) Our union with Christ means we fight to live out the life that God has already caused to come alive within us
      - (3) In short, be who your are
        - (a) Remember I told you not to string me up and let me explain
        - (b) That's your explanation - God made you new, He made you alive with Christ - now go and be who God made you to be
          - i) This is not dissimilar to believing that you can be a lawyer, or a doctor, or a CEO
          - ii) You know you have it in you - so you pursue it with all that you are
          - iii) Only, our belief in being like Christ is based on His Word, His promise, and His power

## A Hunger for Holiness - How pt2

- iv) So that means our belief in being like Christ rests on a much firmer foundation
- (4) Allow me to read from one of the books I used - *The Hole in Our Holiness* p. 100
  - (a) God never says, "You were born that way. No problem."
  - (b) He does say, "You were reborn another way."
- 4. Again, let me drive you back to what God's Word tells us about ourselves and who we are in Christ
  - a) In Christ, we are dead to sin and alive to righteousness
  - b) In Christ, we are new creations, the old is gone and the new is here
  - c) Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."
    - (1) Why does it say, "the life I now live in the body"
      - (a) Because we are still in a world full of sin
      - (b) We still have the pull of a sinful world on us
    - (2) BUT, it goes on and says that this life I live in the body, "I live by FAITH in the SON OF GOD"
      - (a) Does that not sound like what we are talking about
      - (b) We believe, we trust, we have faith in who we are in Christ - even though we still live in this body in a sinful world
  - d) In Christ we are no longer children of wrath, dead in sin, but we have been made alive by God in Christ
  - e) In Christ we are holy and precious and called to live life like that (Col. 3:12-14)
- 5. The NT constantly reminds us of who we are in Christ - of the change that God affected in us to change us
  - a) Much of our difficulty is believing and trusting in that
  - b) Largely because we spend too much time looking at our sins and the way we disobey, rather than staring at the Savior who made us new, and alive with Christ
    - (1) Too many of us seek to be holy because we are afraid of God
    - (2) Hebrews tells us to come BOLDY before the throne of grace
      - (a) You know who comes boldly - little kids
      - (b) Ever watch little Norah or Eli - fearless up here
        - i) Ever wonder why?
        - ii) Partly their personalities and the way God made them
        - iii) Part of it is they don't know they are supposed to be afraid
    - (1) And that is what Jesus said - be like little children

# A Hunger for Holiness - How pt2

(2) Approach the throne of grace boldly because you are not afraid

(3) It comes down to our trust in a loving Father

- III. What we have been talking a lot about today is actually two aspects of our union with Christ - justification, and sanctification
- A. Paul does a great job in Romans six of bringing these two ideas together - which in the big picture He is talking about our union with Christ
  - B. The first several chapters Paul has been talking about justification - that we were declared holy by God
    - 1. And that is what we have been saying we need to trust in and believe
  - C. In chapter six, just like a good lawyer would (because Romans is written like a legal case in a court of law), Paul anticipates the objection to being declared holy
    - 1. Does that mean we can keep on sinning - we are holy right?
    - 2. We can have the best of both world - sin in this life, and being with Jesus in the next
  - D. For Paul, our motivation for being holy starts with our identity in Christ - but does not end there
    - 1. Go to Romans 6 because I want you to see this - then we will finish up
      - a) Our identity - V. 3 - we were baptized into Christ
      - b) V. 6 - we were crucified with Him
      - c) V. 8 - we died with Christ
      - d) V. 4 - we were buried with Christ
      - e) V. 4-5 - we were raised with Christ
      - f) That is us - who we are - all that happened to us at the moment of salvation
    - 2. Even when we do not FEEL close to Christ, it does not change our union with Christ
      - a) Romans 6:11 - "Count yourselves dead to sin"
        - (1) Count - I looked it up - it is also translated "realize"
        - (2) Not sure why they did not use that word here because it fits so well - realize that you are dead to sin
      - b) And that is what this whole sermon comes down to - realize who you are in Christ - that you are dead to sin
  - E. When we are united with Christ, it changes our relationship to sin at a foundational level
    - 1. The old self is crucified with Christ
    - 2. Sin has been broke for us so we no longer have to obey it, we are free to obey Christ
    - 3. A great analogy is sports to help you understand this

## A Hunger for Holiness - How pt2

- a) Paul tells us to put off the old nature, and put on the new nature
  - (1) This is not like we are removing a part of who we are and replacing it with something new
- b) It is more like a trade in sports
  - (1) The player takes off his old uniform
  - (2) He then trades it for a new uniform along with his loyalties
- c) How, we used to be on Adam's team - a team of death, sin and punishment
- d) Now we are on "in Christ"
  - (1) We were placed on Christ's team by no skill or talent of our own
  - (2) But yet we want to live up to that role on the team that we have been given
- 4. Or how is this analogy
  - a) Being united with Christ is like a child refusing to be called a baby anymore
  - b) He/she knows they are growing up into a child or teenager, and they begin to act more like what they are
  - c) Not perfect analogies, but hopefully they help
- F. The Bible is still realistic about our struggle with sin
  - 1. Just because we are dead to sin, does not mean there is no struggle
  - 2. Or we cannot choose to go back to our sin
- G. But what Paul is arguing, and this message is emphasizing is simple and direct
  - 1. Because you believe in Christ
  - 2. You have been joined to Christ by the Holy Spirit
  - 3. When He died, you died
  - 4. He rose, you rose
  - 5. He is in heaven, so you are in heaven (positionally)
  - 6. He is holy, so you are holy
  - 7. We are simply to act and live, and obey in accordance with who we are in Christ - so be who you are