

## CONVICTION OR COMPROMISE - Part 2

I Peter 1:15-16

Occasionally on Facebook, someone will post a question asking friends to describe them in one word. Maybe you have done that. I haven't and I don't plan to.

In a way I suppose what it does is convey how others view your reputation or character, at least from their unique perspective. It is an estimation in which you are viewed favorably by others.

As I was working on the message Thursday, this note was sent to me from someone outside our church: "I was just thinking of GOOD people who I have met over the years and you came to mind. You are a good man!"

We define character as a distinctive mark, a trait, quality or attribute, the pattern of behavior found in an individual.

Those who post such inquiries on Facebook asking others to describe their character in one word receive responses like:

Nice

Funny

Intelligent

Beautiful

Witty

Quiet

Strong

Friendly

Caring

Dependable

We could go on and on and on.

Two things are glaringly absent from those lists. I have never read a negative assessment of the person. You don't see things like:

Boisterous

Cold/Uncaring

Lazy

Ugly

Despicable

Intolerant

Dull

You get the idea.

But there is one thing that is even more obvious that is missing, even and especially among Christians. I have yet to see someone described as godly or holy. Yet our passage tells us that holiness should be a distinguishing mark or character quality of the believer.

Here's a question to ponder.

Would the first word that popped into your mind when asked to describe another believer be godly or holy and really mean it?

Would that be the first word people would use in describing you or me?

Let's recap for a moment where we were last week as we lead into today's message. This is part 2 of my message on conviction or compromise.

Let's read our passage in I Peter 1:13-16 for context.

Last week we considered three guiding attitudes and two guarding actions that are noted in our text.

The three guiding attitudes we discussed were

Be prepared

Be self-controlled

Be hopeful

The two guarding actions we discussed were

Be obedient

Be a non-conformist

There are two parallel passages I think sum up that message, one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament.

II Chronicles 29:1-5

II Corinthians 6:16-18

In II Chronicles 28, it says that King Ahaz shut up the Temple and set up altars all over Jerusalem in order burn sacrifices to other gods which provoked the Lord to anger. As soon as Hezekiah became king he reopened the Temple instructing the Levites to consecrate themselves and the Temple. That means to set themselves apart as holy so that they could serve the Lord. Then they were to cleanse the Temple from anything that had defiled it.

In the New Testament passage Paul says that we are the Temple of God and as His Temple we are to be cleansed of what is defiling.

Zuck and Walvoord in their Bible Commentary write: “Enjoying God’s presence requires personal holiness. Paul cited a portion of Isaiah 52:11 and Ezekiel 20:41, passages that speak of Israel’s redemption. God’s people are redeemed from pagan bondage (“come out from among them and be separate”) in order to be clean before God (“touch no unclean thing”) and thus enjoy fellowship with Him (“I will receive you”)...Paul wrote to Titus that redemption implied two things: (a) deliverance ‘from all wickedness’ and (b) a purified people who are ‘His own, eager to do what is good’ (Titus 2:14). Personal purity makes it possible to serve God and be received by Him.”

I think what they are trying to say about what is in Scripture is that there ought to be a marked difference between how we live and how the world lives. It should be noticeable.

With that I want to transition into our message today and my final point hanging over from last week.

This passage speaks of three things that help us pursue personal holiness.

Guiding attitudes

Guarding actions

Godly aspirations

### III. GODLY ASPIRATIONS – vs. 15-16

The first thing we note in verse 15 is God’s call.

#### A. God’s Call – v. 15

“But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.”

Three thoughts surface from this verse related to God’s call.

In it we see our invitation.

In it we see our imitation.

In it we see our inspiration.

We are called by God for salvation.

Some were called by God to be Apostles.

We are called by God to be saints.

We are called by God to be at peace.

We have been called friends.

We are called out of darkness.

We are called the sons of God.

We are called to the marriage feast of the Lamb.

And in our text we are called by God to be holy.

I Thessalonians 4:7 indicates that we have not been called to live an impure life but a holy life.

The word holy is used some 600 times throughout the Bible. It can also be translated as saint or sanctify.

It literally means to ‘be separated’ and according to the Wycliffe Bible Dictionary “holiness is a general term to indicate sanctity, or separation from all that is sinful, or impure, or morally imperfect.”

If the word holy is used that many times throughout the Bible, do you think that God believes it to be of great importance?

At one time I worked for a company that manufactured cardiovascular surgical equipment. I worked in a clean room environment. In a technical sense you could say it was holy because it was separated from the rest of the factory. To enter the

cleanroom you had to go into an anteroom to put on an outer suit that covered your street clothes. There was a dirty side and a clean side. You sat on a bench, put your suit on, swung your legs over and put on shoe coverings, washed your hands and then put on a hair covering (even the bald people), and latex or nitrile gloves. The room was virtually particle free in order to keep the cannulas from contamination. After it was sealed it went to a facility for sterilization. As a patient having open heart surgery you want to be ensured that the tools they are going to put in your body are not contaminated.

God has called us to be separated to Himself. At salvation we were taken from the “dirty” side and placed in the “clean” side, if you will. We have been taken from the kingdom of darkness and placed in the kingdom of light. God is serious about holiness and about our holiness.

A.W. Tozer states “You cannot study the Bible diligently and earnestly without being struck by an obvious fact – the matter of personal holiness is highly important to God!” He continues by saying “Neither do you have to give long study to the attitudes of modern Christian believers to discern that by and large we consider the expression of the true holiness to be just a matter of personal option... There is something basically wrong with our Christianity and our spirituality if we can carelessly presume that if we do not like a Biblical doctrine and choose not to ‘buy’ it there is no harm done.”

Let me ask you this question: Is personal holiness high on your priority list?

Many consider the matter of holiness to be nothing more than an all you can eat buffet. It has something for everyone and you can choose what you like and skip the rest. There are certain things I avoid like Brussel sprouts and asparagus and really spicy chicken wings. But there are plenty of things

I do like.

Personal holiness is not like a buffet. Here are all these commands from God, and we sit down and pick from this selection but ignore others. God will overlook those we don’t choose, won’t He? After all, my plate is piled high with all this other really good stuff.

Personal holiness is not determined by personal preferences. Let’s read the verse again. “But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in *ALL* you do.” (emphasis added)

This verse doesn’t give me the option to pick and choose as I see fit on any given day. It says I’m to be holy in *ALL* I do. I am purposely avoiding making a list because I don’t want you to walk away thinking that because yours wasn’t listed then that somehow exonerates you. I’m leaving it up to the Holy Spirit and God’s Word to do that. Someone once told me that they thought people avoided reading the Bible so they wouldn’t be convicted about something they were doing. But if you do want a list, I suggest you read Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3 for starters.

There’s a lot of discussion in the past couple of weeks with the confirmation hearings of Judge Gorsuch for the Supreme Court regarding the Constitution. He believes it is an absolute document that should not change. Others, like Senator Feinstein and Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg believe it is a fluid document intended to evolve or change as the country evolves or changes. They believe that changing culture determines the interpretation of the document written by the founding fathers.

It’s the same with the Bible. There are those who believe that the Bible is fluid and changeable, that in some way culture dictates even mandates that it change with the times.

Some of you may remember during the 2007 election cycle, then Senator Barack Obama sat on a stage with Pastor Rick Warren answering a question about same-sex marriage. He stated at that time that he was opposed to it believing that marriage was solely between a man and a woman. Fast forward toward the end of his first term as President when he stated that his view on same-sex marriage had evolved due to discussions with his two daughters.

Now, I have nothing personal against his two daughters, they may be exceptionally bright, but I want to ask you this: would you rather take advice on what is morally right or wrong from two teens or from the definitive, authoritative, inerrant, unchanging Word of a Holy God?

Show me a church or a person who views the Bible as a fluid document meant to change with the times and I will show you a church or a person who will alter it in order to justify their own actions. When there is no conviction about the absolute truth of the Word God you quickly move to compromise, compromise become complacency and complacency leads to corruption.

God's Word says we are called to be holy because God is holy and we are called to be holy in all we do.

Now, you might be thinking you can't live up to such high expectations and you would be right. In our own strength we can't live a holy life. But when God gives us a command, and this is a command, He also enables us to obey the command. So how are we to be holy in everything we do? We do so through the empowering work of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Word of God to guide.

When God's Spirit convicts us of some sin we then have a choice whether or not we will obey. If we choose not to obey we risk incurring His hand of discipline. When Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians he spoke of illness and even the death

of some in the church because they continued to live in a known sin. The writer of Hebrews states that God disciplines those He loves.

Here's the thing about holiness. Holiness does not mean blameless or sinless. That state of sinlessness won't happen until we see Christ when He returns. Holiness is being serious about following God, that we grieve over sin and pursue godly living.

I want to recommend some books to you. The first is written by Jerry Bridges titled *The Pursuit of Holiness*.

The second is by Lewis Sperry Chafer titled *He That is Spiritual*.

The third is *The Pursuit of God* by A.W. Tozer.

In the book by Jerry Bridges he states that holiness is not an option. When we are saved the Holy Spirit comes in and we are considered holy in our position before God. God sees us as holy because the holiness or righteousness of Christ has credited to the believer. But we still live in a fallen world and we still have a propensity to slip back into our old ways. What we call that the old nature. But we have been given a new nature in Christ, and we are to consider our old nature dead to sin and our new nature alive in Christ. At the moment of salvation the Holy Spirit lives in us and part of His role is to make us in practice what we are in position. Now He's not going to force us to comply, we still have a choice to obey or not. The more we obey, the more like God in character we become. Salvation doesn't depend on our holiness otherwise we could say that it is a works based salvation. He doesn't say become holy and then you will be saved. He says be saved and then become holy in all you do. So, salvation doesn't depend on our holiness, but our holiness is evidence of our salvation.

So how do we pursue personal holiness?

1. Read and hide God's Word in your heart

Psalm 119:1-2, 9-11

Colossians 1:16 ("Let the Word of Christ dwell

in you richly”)

John 17:17 “Sanctify them by Your truth...”

2. Transform your mind by God’s Word

Romans 12:2

3. Surrender yourself to God as holy

Romans 12:1

4. Follow God’s Spirit

Galatians 5:16, 24-25 “But this I say, walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.”

5. Put on and use the armor of God

Ephesians 6:10-18 (13)

6. Rely on God’s promise to do His work in you

Philippians 1:6 “Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will perfect or complete it until the day of Christ.”

7. Submit to God

James 4:7-8 “Submit yourselves to God...”

8. Do the will of God

I John 2:15-17 “Love not the world...”

What are some things that can keep us from pursuing holiness?

Pride. Self always gets in the way of obedience when we would rather do what we want than what God wants.

Unconfessed sin or willful disobedience. “If I regard sin in my heart the Lord will not hear me.”

Bad company. I Corinthians 15:33 says that bad company always corrupts good morals. It’s stated differently in Psalm 1:1-3.

I hope Michaela doesn’t mind my sharing this. Last week we after church we talked about her new job down at the UM hospital. It’s a new position and

they are basically designing it as they go. But she said something very important. She said they are doing all they can to make her succeed in this job.

God wants you to succeed at being holy and has given everything you need to succeed.

II Peter 1:3-9

In his discourse on *Biblical Ethics* Oswald Chambers writes “Our Lord’s own life proved that in the midst of the world where we are placed we can be holy men and women, not only talking rightly, but in living rightly.”

We see then in this passage God’s call for us to be holy in this life, in every area of this life “be holy in all you do”.

To become holy in all you do ask the Holy Spirit where you fall short of God’s standard and allow His Spirit to make course corrections in your life. Personal holiness is not compartmentalizing life so that when you are with one group of people you can live one way and when you are with another group of people you can live another way. Jerry Bridges describes that as cultural holiness – adapting to the character and behavior of those around you. I think of it as being a chameleon or camouflage Christian where you just blend in to wherever you are.

“Be holy in all you do” means just that – be holy wherever you go, whatever you do, whatever you say, and whomever you are with.

As we come to verse 16, we note that this call for us to be holy is a command.

B. God’s Command – v. 16a

“for it is written”

This is not just a statement taking us back to something someone wrote centuries earlier quoting from several passages found in Leviticus.

(Leviticus 11:44-45) This is a statement of authority carrying the weight of the author to His recipients, commanding our obedience. It's a strong word meaning "it stands written."

Let me remind you of what I said a moment ago. What God commands, He enables you to do. If we believe God's Word to be the truth then we have an obligation to obey it. "It is written" reveals God's heart and mind and will. It is an action to pursue.

If holiness is an aspiration based on God's call and His command, why obey? For that we need to consider His character.

### C. God's Character – v. 16b

"Be holy, because I am holy."

The word "be" means becoming. We are to become holy because God is holy.

When it comes to holiness as a character of God it means that He is completely separated from sin and evil. He always has and always will be sinless. He will not change.

In his book *Basic Theology*, Charles Ryrie defines God's holiness this way: "In God, His holiness is a purity of being and nature as well as of will and act."

He always acts in holiness because He is holy. Even when the Bible says He is angry it is always in holiness. When He metes out judgment it too is in holiness. When He disciplines us, it is in holiness. His holy attribute always results in holy actions. He can act, think or speak in no other way than out of holiness.

This passage tells us that God's holy character is both the pattern and reason for our pursuit of holiness. Our growing love for God ought to be a

motivation for us to pursue each day becoming more like Him in character, in holiness. He is our pattern. He is the standard. If we want to know what pattern to follow, don't compare yourself to someone else, compare yourself to God. Put your character up to the mirror of His Word which reveals His holiness and then see how you compare. His character is the only standard and it is that standard by which we are judged.

God's Word declares His holiness.

Exodus 15:11

Psalms 99:9

\*Isaiah 6:1-3

Isaiah 40:25

Revelation 3:7

\*Revelation 4:8

Revelation 15:3-4

His holiness deserves our adoration and praise.

\*Psalm 71:22

Psalms 99:3, 5, 9

His holiness is our standard of holiness.

Matthew 5:48

\*I John 3:2-3

His holiness opposes and condemns all sin

Habakkuk 1:1-2:4

I Samuel 6:20

\*Isaiah 6:5

Romans 3:23

His holiness deepens our consciousness toward sin

Exodus 19:5-6

\*Leviticus 20:7-8

God's holiness means that all sinners must by their own sin nature be separated from Him unless a way can be found to make them holy. That was accomplished through Christ on the cross as His righteousness or holiness is then applied to those who by faith repent and receive the free gift of salvation. His holy nature and holy standard should

motivate us to live holy.

God has called us to be holy.

God has commanded us to be holy.

God has given us His character as the standard and reason for holiness.

In this coming week what decisions will you make to become holy in all you do?

What needs to change so your friends will see you as holy?

Maybe it begins with a personal relationship with God through faith in His Son for salvation.

Maybe it begins with confession of some sin you know does not honor God, choosing to remove it from your life.

Maybe it means devoting more time pursuing a growing personal relationship with Him through more time in His Word.

How will you choose to become more holy this week? He has given us everything we need to live godly.