



2. Made Different (Col 3:1-14)

In our first instalment of this series we discovered that rather than holiness being a mysterious idea, scripture paints it simply. Holy means set apart, different. Our God is a holy God. He's set apart and different. He's not different for the sake of it; but He's different in a particular way, which contrasts with our society and with our earthly nature.

So, God is holy – different. How is God different? Let's allow Scripture to answer that for itself. **12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.**

There's some of what it means to be holy. All of them are attributes we associate with God Himself – compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness (meekness), patience, forgiveness, and over all those love which, as the scripture said, binds them all together in perfect unity. Go to other scriptures and you would have no problem adding to that list.

The opposite to all these is given too so we are left in no doubt what being holy actually is. So here's what holy isn't: : sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry, anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language. No surprises there. In fact, like the other list, this is by no means comprehensive. Go to Galatians and Ephesians and you could add: hatred, discord, jealousy, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envy; drunkenness, gossip. All this is the flesh – the earthly nature. This is what we are by nature. We're born to it. It's all sin. What a contrast to the nature of God!

LIST 1 – characteristics of holiness

compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness (meekness), patience, forgiveness, and over all those love which binds them all together in

perfect unity.

LIST 2 – definitely not holy!

sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry, anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language, hatred, discord, jealousy, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envy; drunkenness, gossip.

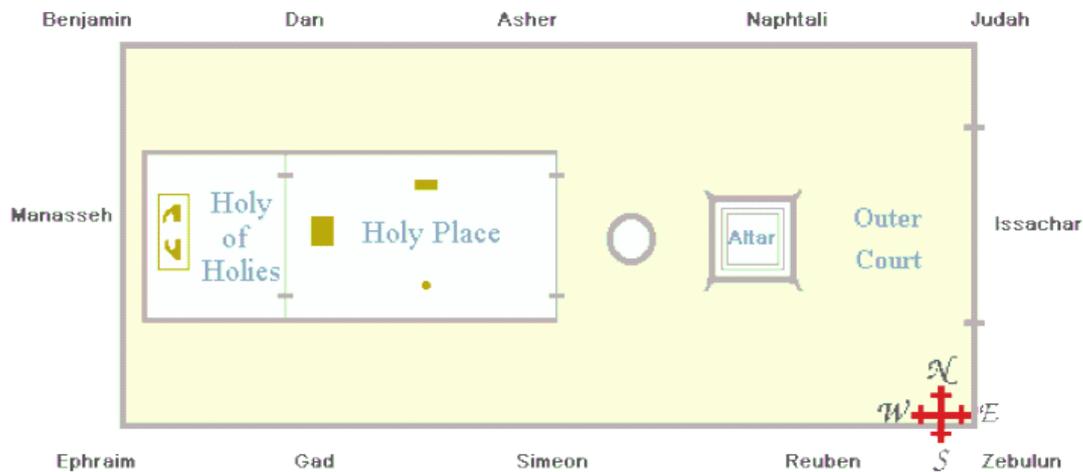
God says, "Be holy because I am holy". What should we be? Holy – look at the list. Which one is you? The truth is, we desire List 1 but quite frankly, all of us have done one or more of List 2, not just in our lives, but probably this very day!

Anyone here who doesn't commit List 2 and never has? I didn't think there would be. If there was, I can assure you that we would erect a shrine in your honour as no-one since Jesus has claimed to never be List 2 and always List 1. And no-one is going to be either! ***All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.***

Let me take you back to the Tabernacle. It was a holy place. It was sanctified: it was set apart for the worship of God. It was different. Because God is holy, He can't tolerate sinful, disobedient people into His presence. But He desires to know them and commune with them. The tabernacle existed in the camp of Israel to show that God was with and amongst His people. Yet there were areas in it that only the priests could enter into and only the High Priest could enter into the Holy of Holies (Most Holy Place) once a year and only with blood. Because of sin the people could not enter into the presence of God, the nearest they could get to is the presence of God in the camp. Sin was dealt

with on a temporary basis by the sacrifice of animals.

The Tabernacle



Why do I say all this? God requires us to be holy because He is holy. So how can we be holy enough to be in His presence if we still sin despite being the people of God? How do we make sense of this? How are we made holy enough to know God, to be in His presence and to have the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives – after all He is a *Holy Spirit*. This brings us to the word *sanctification*. Sanctify means to make holy, to set apart, to make something different.

How do we get to become holy and acceptable to God? By our good works? We know the answer to that one. Definitely not. Here's the answer in 1 Peter: *1Pet 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, 2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.*

What a wonderful verse! Chosen by the Father, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by His blood. God has chosen us to be followers of Jesus and to be sprinkled by His blood – to have our sins cleansed and dealt with. How does this happen – by the sanctifying work of the Spirit. The Spirit causes us to be set apart. Paul uses the same words in *2 Thess 2: 13 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.* How did you get to become a Christian? You believed, yes but the Holy Spirit did a work within you – setting you apart; sanctifying you.

Let's go back to the Tabernacle picture and read from Hebrews 10: 19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, *20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.*

We have confidence – the AV puts it as boldness – to enter the most Holy Place. The High Priest could only enter the presence of God once a year and only having gone through the ritual of slaughtering animals. Yet because of the shed blood of Jesus we can confidently – *boldly* – enter the most holy place. We can go right into the presence of God. Why, because we have been set apart, made different, made holy, made fit to be seen in the presence of God because of the shed blood of Jesus and because of the sanctifying work of the Spirit.

Do you feel inadequate this morning. You know your life doesn't live up to what God requires of you? Then join the club! That's all of us. And we find ourselves coming into the presence of the risen Lord Jesus Christ as we meet around His table. We knowingly enter the presence of a Holy God, but we do it in the knowledge that in His broken body, in His shed blood we can enter such a

holy place because the Holy Spirit has set us apart, made us holy, sanctified us so that we can enter that holy presence. By the blood of Christ, we are cleansed and forgiven. Let's come into that holy place this morning, thankful for what Jesus has done for us.

Just a minute, I hear the sharp ones amongst you think: what about the command "be holy as because I am holy". If the blood of Jesus makes you holy and you don't get saved by works, then why are we commanded to be holy.

Let's go back to the tabernacle. The High Priest was fit to be in the presence of a holy God because of the blood. When he left that place, he went about his life until the next year. He was still a man and went on sinning and all the slaughter continued the next year when he went back with more blood into the presence of God. Every time we leave God's presence and get involved in the world we sin just like the High Priest did. And every time we enter the presence of God, we do so on the basis of the shed blood of Christ because that makes us fit to be there.

We have a command – be holy because I am holy. If we have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, then shouldn't we live holy lives? We know what that means and we have Holy Spirit within us who gives us the power to be like Jesus. So sanctification isn't just something that happened in the past, but something that should be ongoing so that we become like Jesus. We're going to explore that next week.

So, we were sanctified by the Spirit because of the shed blood of Christ. We're being sanctified and when we get to eternity, then we will be sanctified – we will finally reach the holiness God requires of us. So there it is in three tenses. Because we've been made fit for the presence of God, we now have to live it until the day when we are finally made perfect in Christ. That's a glorious hope!

And while we're here we have a meal that is designed to remind us of that situation. We have the broken body and the shed blood of Jesus to remind us that the Holy Spirit has already set us apart and made us fit to be in the presence of God.

The broken body and shed blood is here to remind us that we are less than perfect and we need to come to the table pleading for forgiveness, knowing because of the shed blood God grants that forgiveness so that we can repent and lead a holy life.

Finally the bread and wine remind us that all this is "until He comes". When Christ is revealed then we will be like Him.

So while we wait, let's make our actions to match what the Spirit has wrought in us. Let's be holy, because God is holy.