



### 3. Be Different (Col 3:1-17)

In our first installment 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 and we examined that difference in our second installment last week.

And we also saw last week, that people are so different that we are separated from God. All have sinned and come short of God's glory. We are only fit to stand in the presence of God to worship and pray because Jesus has made us acceptable because He died on the cross for us and we have personally accepted his offer of forgiveness. We saw how the Holy Spirit *sanctifies* us - he sets us apart - he makes us fit to come before God so we are presentable in God's presence whenever we come. God is holy, different and He wants to make a difference in our lives. I still find it an exciting idea that God actually desires all people to come to know Him. He actually wants to make a difference in our lives.

That first difference is that we need to know Him. And through accepting Christ, the Holy Spirit makes that difference, he makes us holy - set apart - difference - and fit to be in God's presence; not on our own efforts, but because Jesus died so that through Him we can come into a relationship with a holy God.

I hope you haven't found that rocket science. It's not supposed to be. You don't have to strive or work at getting to know God. He's done that bit for you. All you've got to do is to accept and trust Him.

And God wants us to enter into a deeper relationship with Him and that applies whether you are a Christian or aren't one. God wants to make our lives different. Do you need your life to be different this morning? God wants you to be difference and as we shall see, He is the one that makes the difference by His Spirit.

Coming back to us we have these words which we considered in our first week: "be holy as I am holy" - be set apart, be different. We are called to be different. How different is different? I showed you these lists last week drawn mostly from Colossians 3 with bits from a couple of other places.

#### 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.

Sounds like a tall order doesn't it? We'd be radically different people if our characters were like this wouldn't we? Can you imagine what an impact you would have? But how can we be changed?

Next Sunday is Pentecost Sunday. We remember the time when the promised Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples. Let me read a little of it.

*Now when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all with one accord in one place. Suddenly there came from the sky a sound like the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. Tongues like fire appeared and were distributed to them, and one sat on each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit gave them the ability to speak.*

*Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under the sky. When this sound was heard, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because everyone heard them speaking in his own language. They were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Behold, aren't all these who speak Galileans? How do we hear, everyone in our own native language?" (WEB Acts 2:1-8)*

In this story we see the lives of the disciples changed; in fact as we would read in Acts, their lives were transformed from ordinary people hiding away for fear of being arrested to boldly speaking about Jesus and changing other people's lives. How? The Holy Spirit was poured out on them. They were changed. They became different. They were the same people but all their attitudes had changed. And they changed others.

And when we believed, we received that same Spirit. and He set us apart so that we can enter right into the presence of Go. But He's a Spirit who wants to be part of our lives; to change us. To make us different. To set us apart, to make us holy. The Spirit can take us as He took the disciples and mould us into a person that honours God, and like the disciples, infectiously blesses and changes other people around us.

And by faith, that can be ours today. He is a *Holy Spirit*, so logic should tell you that His characteristic is holiness.

So, we know that the Spirit sanctifies us so that we are fit to be in the presence of God. But how does the Spirit produce day to day sanctification in our lives – in simple English, how is it that our lives can be made to be set-apart, different, Christ-like?

It depends on the amount we are prepared to surrender to the Spirit and therefore how much we let Him work in us and through us. There's a word that's used when people allow God's Spirit to move in them. It's called *consecration* – as in "Take my life and let it be, consecrated, Lord to Thee." I'm sure by now you'll find it no surprise to find out that the root word used in the NT is *hagios* the same used for holy and sanctified. When we consecrate ourselves to God, we set ourselves apart; we make ourselves different. And the Spirit gives us the power and ability to do that.

*Roma 8:4 So now we can obey God's laws if we follow after the Holy Spirit and no longer obey the old evil nature within us. 5 Those who let themselves be controlled by their lower natures live only to please themselves, but those who follow after the Holy Spirit find themselves doing those things that please God. 6 Following after the Holy Spirit leads to life and peace, but following after the old nature leads to death.*

Do you want to be different as God is different this morning. The Holy Spirit is willing and ready to bless your life. God wants us to be different and empowers us to be different by His Spirit. So what needs to happen? The passage in Colossians helps us here.

◆ **Get the right context**

*Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

What have you got your mind set on? A promotion? A new job? A new house? A new car? Or just managing to struggle along in life? Where are you going - to glory. That's Jesus' future. That's our future. Holiness is about our minds being where God's is - and that's on eternal priorities? And that will involve the next items....

◆ **Put away earthly lusts and desires**

*5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. 7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.*

We start by putting away what is worldly - the sexually wrong things, the evil desires, those things which aren't of God, those things which cause us to want more for their own sake even though it's bad for us. To put aside the sins of the mouth. We need to be people of integrity, living lives of integrity. In other words - different lives. To use last week's table - all these things are definitely not holy. So the short conclusion to all this is to put aside all unholy things. Which means to be different from almost every one else. But God is different like this - so should we: "Be holy as I am holy, says the Lord!" Which is nicely summed up in the next item

◆ **Clothe yourselves with holy living**

*9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. 11 Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. 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.*

No surprises here as all these appeared in the first part of our table as characteristics of holiness. We are called to be different, holy. There is a single term in all of this which probably describes best what holy living should be. and *over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.* A characteristic of God's holiness is love - agape - that self sacrificing love that puts others before self. It's a characteristic of God and it should be of us too. That's different from the world - it's holiness and it's of God.

◆ **Have the right heart**

*15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

Being holy is desiring peace in our hearts and being thankful. It reflects the love we have just talked about. Holiness is about being at peace with one another in the body of Christ. Are we striving for peace and unity? It's a mark of holiness.

◆ **Do things in the right name**

*17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Lastly, being holy is about doing things to please God and for His glory. We see plaques on church walls don't we? They will say "...to the glory of God". We are called to be different - to be holy. Above all, holiness is about doing things for God's glory and in His name. As we look at this subject we see this morning that so often we fall short of what God wants for us. How can we be like this?

We come straight back to the point I made earlier. God calls us to be holy and we see it's a tall order - but He gives us His Spirit to remake and mould us into the person God wants us to be. He makes us fit for God's presence as we saw last week: and He gives us the grace and the strength to live as we should. Let's open our hearts and minds to Him this morning as we pray.

*Spirit of the Living God  
Fall afresh on me  
Spirit of the living God  
Fall afresh on me  
Break me, melt me,  
Mould me, fill me.  
Spirit of the living God  
Fall afresh on me.*

(Daniel Iverson © 1935, 1963 Moody Bible Inst)

*Preached as Swaffham Baptist Church 28/5/06  
Unfortunately the original text for this sermon was  
deleted and this was reconstructed from my notes. It isn't  
quite what it was originally but hopefully you'll get  
the gist.*

*(c) Mark Reid 2006,7*

*Scripture quotes NIV unless otherwise indicated.*