

### Lesson 3: Holiness Is Initiated and Sustained by God

So far, in our study of holiness, we have discovered:

**Holiness is not achieved by “Morality” or Righteous Deeds.** One can be extremely moral by man’s standards and still be rotten inside, even denying God exists. One can perform mighty works in Christ’s name and never know him. True Holiness results in morals and behaviors defined by God through the believer’s relationship with God. The believer discovers God’s will through intimacy with Jesus Christ, and study of the Bible, and seeks to please God by faithful living. Just as a failure does not destroy a relationship built on love, believers may stumble in many areas, but they seek to grow in the image and knowledge of Christ. The faithful do this because they love God and want to live in harmony with him.

Let’s read a few scriptures to prepare us to receive today’s lesson.

**Colossians 1:9–10 (NASB95)** <sup>9</sup> For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, <sup>10</sup> so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

**Ephesians 4:13–16 (NASB95)** {We are to grow} <sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. <sup>14</sup> As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; <sup>15</sup> but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

**Romans 13:10–14 (NASB95)** <sup>10</sup> Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of *the law*. <sup>11</sup> *Do this*, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. <sup>12</sup> The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. <sup>13</sup> Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. <sup>14</sup> But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

**Today’s Topic: TP3.** Holy Living is the expected outcome of the Positional holiness already given to believers

There are three conditions of Holiness I want to explore with you today. The first is **Positional Holiness** and the second is **Practical Holiness**, the third and most glorious is **Perfect Holiness**—this awaits all believers.

**Consider: God had to act to give us Positional Holiness.**

No one is Positionally Holy, based on his/her personal attributes, except Jesus Christ. The Bible reveals we all are unrighteous and wicked on our own. God sent Jesus because we needed a savior—we could never save ourselves for we were by nature children of wrath.

Jesus did what we could not do. He paid for the sins of the world and exchanged his righteous position for our flawed condition. Those who put faith in the person and works of Jesus are imparted with his righteousness; this is an unearned gift. The person who believes becomes **positionally holy**, for God sees what Jesus has done on the believer's behalf.

**Fact: When God looks down, He sees only two categories of people:**

**The first category contains those lost in sins and darkness.** These people, though offered peace, are hostile to God and are not positionally holy. They may not “believe” they are hostile to God, but by denying their need, and/or denying the gift, they reveal opposition to the plans, ways, and words of God. God must hold their debt against their account, for there remains no other payment for sin but Jesus. No works, no morals, no self-effort can ever correct this... only Jesus. If this person does not repent and believe in Jesus and what he has done, he/she will be lost forever and damned to hell, not because God rejected them! No, they are lost because they rejected God and his free gift, the most precious gift, the very righteousness of Jesus.

**The second person God sees is the man/woman saved and secured by Jesus.** This person, though formerly hostile to God, has found peace through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This person is viewed by God through the greatest exchange. Jesus bore their sins and gave them his position of holiness. These people are set aside, kept, secured and Holy to God forever. What blessed position believers are given in Jesus Christ.

This brings up a great question asked a thousand times in many different forms. ***“Can Positionally Holy people lose their gift if they sin again?”***

**The answer is No:** The person who is Positionally Holy is not sin free immediately; otherwise the position and possession of holiness would rest on the performance and practices of the people. Some people believe God rejects those who sin after receiving salvation. It is as if to say, “God overlooked all your sins, but since you sinned again you are lost”. This is hogwash; a lie of satan. If God expected perfect obedience, after initial confession, why would He instruct us to grow, to mature, to put away sin and sinning, to put to death our

flesh, to put on Christ, or to strive for holiness? It would be silly to tell us to grow if we were expected to be fully mature at the moment of salvation. It would be ridiculous to tell us to strive for holiness if we became practically holy, the second we first believed.

No, practical holiness is of great effort and work, but our successes and failures do not negate the free gift already given. **Note:** Next week we will discuss the Perils and Pearls of Pursuing Practical Holiness. It's a long arduous pursuit but well worth the effort if we want to have the fruits of spiritual living. This journey is based on the love of God and our growing intimacy with him.

There is another category of Holiness awaiting everyone who believes. **This final state is called "Perfect Holiness"**. Though many insist it can be attained on earth, most pastors, teachers, and theologians believe it cannot be found in the mortal realm. It awaits the day all of the mortal realm is swallowed up in the glory of God. The Bible clearly says, perfect Holiness will be given to us on the day we see God.

1 John 3:2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

**Case Study:** St Paul struggled for holiness like few ever had. Even at the end of his journey, he never trusted in his performance, but rested in what Jesus did on his behalf and that he kept faith in Jesus. He confessed in Romans that he still struggled against sin, even at the end, but wrote something beautiful in his second letter to Timothy.

2 Timothy 4:6–8 (ESV) <sup>6</sup> For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. <sup>7</sup> I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup> Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

If Paul believed he was already perfectly holy, there would be no need for a future day on which God would award him a Crown of Righteousness. This was what Paul lived for and reached for daily, as if perfection was just out of reach. But Paul knew, once mortality was entirely swallowed up by true life, He would be Perfectly Holy, in his position and practices. We must notice, God will also award it to you and me who look for him, wait for him, love him and long to see his appearing. How amazing! What a gift you have with even greater gifts to come. Rest in this, believe in this and reach for it with all your strength.

Let us conclude with a great section of scripture that brings all these thoughts together. As we read this look for the three types of Holiness.

*Romans 5:1–10 (ESV) 1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. {positional} 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. {perfect} 3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, {practical} knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, {practical} 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. 6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly {positional}. 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. {perfect} 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.*

Next week we will conclude this journey by looking at the pursuit of Holy Living. For today, end by asking yourself these questions.

1. Have I been trying to earn what God has already given?
2. What does my previous answer say about my faith in God’s priceless gift?
3. Do I live believing I am positionally Holy? Why/Why not?
4. Does my new position before God inspire me, through love, to live out my faith?
5. What landmines interrupt my ability to walk in harmony with God?
6. Is there anything in the world more lovely than being loved by God?
7. What should I surrender today, knowing God already loves me and desires my good?
8. Lastly, since I long for perfect Holiness, how should I live today?

**In preparation for next week read:**

- 1 Peter 1:13–19
- 1 Peter 2:1-10
- 2 peter 3:8-13
- 1 John 3:1-10

Reach for Holiness brothers and sisters; the finish line is in sight.