

Swimming against the Tide – Being Holy in an unholy world

The Way of the Salmon

why should we be a holy people? (other than cuz God tells us to)

Sure enough that the Bible has a lot to say about what the Christian shouldn't do, but I think that as a people we can get so caught up in the tide of the don'ts that we neglect the do's. This leads to our own set of rules and regulations of what a Christian doesn't do. Sadly, many Christians today are defined by what they don't do.

If you're like me; when I deal with personal holiness things like: sexual purity, not swearing, not gossiping, not lying, not being greedy and envious of what others have, not doing this and not doing that come to my mind.

When I work through my personal holiness, I can get so caught up in the don'ts (don't drink, don't swear, don't...you fill in the blank) that I forget that living out the Christian life isn't about what I DON'T do.. it's about what I DO.

Why should the Christian be 'holy as I Am holy'?

Holiness is a calling to God's people, not something for outsiders. **1 Thessalonians 4:7** For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.

Holiness is progressing to become more like Christ

1. Perfect holiness is the aim of the saints on earth, and it is the reward of the saints in Heaven"

Joseph Caryl – English preacher in the 1600's

Holy living is living against the grain/going against the tide of culture

From a purely human/carnal perspective, how does holy living benefit me or why should I live this way? I could simply say, 'because the Bible says so'... but today people need more than just the cliché or reasoning of 'the Bible says so.'

I am going to give you some Biblical and rational reasons as to why should we be living holy.

Living holy does not mean that you have to sign up for the brotherhood and join a monastery.

a. We carry less baggage (emotional, physical, mental, spiritual)

ii. If we make God-honoring choices, then we will reap the benefits of a God-honoring life.

iii. Jesus calls us to lay our burdens upon Him

1. 'Exchange your unholiness with My holiness'
2. To be holy, I must receive God's own holiness. The holiness I present to God is what He has given to me. It is not my own holiness, but God's holiness given to me.
3. The holiness of God is His character that is set apart from the world. Our holiness is our lives being set apart for Him. We become holy by conforming to the image of Christ and

becoming like Him. We adopt His character and inherit His holiness. This can only happen through obedience.

b. We are blessed with a purer conscience (we are not found as 2-faced people/hypocrites)

iv. Hebrews 13:18

2 Peter 3:10-12 – c. *We ought to be holy because of the end days*

i. Holiness, not happiness, is the chief end of man.
Oswald Chambers

d. We are living proof of a God-changed life

ii. God is in the business of changing lives because He loves us and knows what's best for us like a parent for a child

2 Cor.6:16

iii. God wants our complete loyalty, the temple of God does not allow a room in the corner or a secret closet for idols

*Here's the 'and more...' part

Living holy is a choice that must be made by each Christ-follower (daily), and that choice should stem from the desire to please God. It is unreasonable for an outsider to want to live holy because they do not desire to please God.

Prov. 4:23-27 Sets the tone for holy living, our actions reveal our hearts condition toward God.

iv. **Hebrews 12:14** It is impossible to have a relationship with God and not be pursuing holiness. The 2 go hand in hand. *If we attempt to pursue God but not holiness, the image of God that we portray will not be clear* (an opaque piece of glass).

One sermon on Sunday is not sufficient for us to manifest holiness in our lives.

Living holy is like swimming against the tide

God wants His people to pursue holiness because He wants us to live in unity with Him.

For us, living in communion/oneness with Christ means saying no to sexual immorality, lust, swearing, adultery, gossip, idolatry, witchcraft, drugs, drunkenness, etc. because those things are everything that God isn't and saying yes to sexual purity, wholesome thinking and speech, loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and your neighbor as yourself.

The life of wild salmon (begins in fresh water and ends in fresh water). After the eggs are released and fertilized, the adult salmon die. The life cycle is complete.

These salmon risk their lives swimming upstream, against the current, against the flow in order to produce life. We could look at the life of a salmon and say, wouldn't it be easier to just live in one place or the other? But for some unknown reason it seems they must have this sojourn. They think it necessary to take this journey in order to continue life in something else. Isn't it interesting at the climax of their life (swimming upstream/overcoming obstacles/predators and laying their eggs; producing life) they die?

The same is true for the Christian. The climax of our life should be dying to ourselves (overcoming our obstacles and our predator (Satan) in order to produce life in someone else.

When we pursue Jesus Christ (who is at the core, everything holy), we become conformed to His image (being made holy). We begin to die to ourselves in order to produce life in someone else.

This is the heartbeat of our church. Making disciples who make disciples. The only way that we can be making disciples is through daily choosing to be holy in order that our new life can be lived to produce life in someone else.

Because of our sin; us wanting to become like God; that communion/spiritual unity has been tainted.

If I claim to believe in the new life that Christ can give, then my life needs to reflect it... **just as evidence demands a verdict.. my faith demands action;** a change of attitude and belief. *I need to be living a life (in thought and action) that reflects the pursuit of holy living.*

Purity in my mind and body, watching what I say and how I say it, saying no to my temptations, and no to Satan. Overcoming the critical/crucial points in my personal life which act as times of critical faith-growing opportunities.

To grow in my faith and holiness means not watering and feeding the seeds that produce ungodliness/unholiness, but rather starving them so that they will cease.

CASTAWAY CLIP: There are critical points in life that seem to be the times in which my faith is defined, honed, focused, and sharpened. It's like a huge wave that I'm up against on my dinky raft called life and at the right moment I need to know when to paddle to make it through, because 1 wrong move means that I've screwed up, and consequently I won't overcome the wave. But if I overcome the wave, then I can rejoice and thank God, no matter how badly bruised or beaten things may be, because I made it through the other-side in one piece. *It's by my faith and His grace when up against a wave that can rip me apart, that I press on no matter how hard it is. Through that*

faith-filled determination and perseverance, I am trusting God to help me be more like Him.

For us as people, it's realizing that the most satisfying, fulfilling life is found in pursuing holiness to become more like Christ. If we aren't pursuing Christlikeness then what are we pursuing??? we are all pursuing something whether we realize it or not. That's just another deception that Satan will try to get you to believe. We can settle for the better life, but when the best life is out there, why wouldn't you and I strive for the best!?

God wants you and me to live in spiritual oneness with Him. What will it cost you? your reputation, being exposed for what you've done, unhealthy relationships (that are pulling you away from Christ), fighting and struggling with addictions

If we aren't fighting and struggling to live holy, then we are losing the battle.
Holy living is not for the casual Christian.

We looked today at a couple of reasons why we should be holy, but I think the bigger question should be 'why not?!' 'what's keeping you from being holy?'
Maybe you have some baggage you need to unload on Jesus.
Maybe you realize time is short and you need to get somethings straight with God and people.
Maybe your temple is divided.
Maybe you have a secret closet that needs to be opened.

Today, you have the chance to pick up your sword and begin to fight back and reclaim the life that God wants you to have in Christ.