

# Overview of the Subject of Holiness

By Dean H. Harvey

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Introduction: My presentation will be primarily Biblical, because I believe that right theology and principles are absolutely necessary before we can move on to right practices.

## I. Basic views of holiness

A. What I call the legalistic righteousness (probably the most common "Christian" stereotype) view: Teaches that godly living is equated to a list of prohibitions. We are familiar with various lists, i.e., card playing, dancing, movies, etc. (Ill-the donkey who was elected to the deacon board) This is in contrast to a list of "do's", which we have in the two greatest commandments: (Matt. 22:36-40) "Thou shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind," and "Thou shalt love your neighbor as yourself."

1. Are externals important? Matt. 23:26-Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

B. What I call the imputed righteousness (probably the most widely taught in evangelical churches) view: That we are unable to keep the commandments of God, and therefore the only way we can be holy is by way of imputation, i.e., Christ's righteousness is imputed to us by God, and therefore in God's sight we are holy, regardless of how we actually live in this world.

1. Within evangelicalism, most Christians I have known have believed two things, which show how much work we have to do.

a. We cannot obey God to point that we do not sin,

b. Jesus could not help not sinning.

C. What is often called perfectionism: This view historically holds that sinful acts are a natural, inevitable result of having an inborn sinful nature, usually thought to be inherited from Adam. (We sin because we are sinners, not, We are sinners because we sin.) So the first step is to eradicate the sinful nature,

through an experience sometimes called sanctification, a second work of grace, or the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

1. As long as we are moral beings, we will never be able to escape the possibility of sinning, in that, as free moral beings, we can always respond to any situation in a sinful way.

D. Outside of evangelicalism, liberal churches, as far as I know, do not talk about holiness. Christianity, for them, becomes conformity to the "church's" (their particular stream of the church) current agenda for the world, usually with socialistic or humanistic programs.

E. What I believe is the Biblical view, that we are forgiven of all our sins when we come to Jesus in repentance and faith, and then begin to obey God from the heart according to the light we have up to that moment.

## **II. Definition of holiness**

A. Holiness is usually defined primarily as "to set apart, the separation of a person or thing to divine use..." Examples are:

1. Ex. 3:5-holy ground
2. Ex. 28:38-holy things and holy gifts
3. Ex. 28:2-holy garments

B. Holiness is usually defined secondarily as "to be righteous and obedient, in regard to behavior." This comes from the primary root meaning of the word "clean, or cleansing." I believe that this should be the primary meaning when applied to individuals.

1. It would be easier to live a "holy" life if we would underdefine sin.
2. It would be harder to live a "holy" life if we would overdefine sin.

## **III. God's clarion call to holiness:**

A. Leviticus 19:2-Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." Note the specifics which are included in this context.

1. v. 3-Honoring one's mother and father

2. v. 3-Honoring God by observing the Sabbath
3. v. 4-No idolatry-honoring God by having no other gods
4. vvs. 9-10-Honoring God by having compassion for and provision for the poor
5. vvs. 11, 12, 35-Attention to truth in word and deed
6. v. 13-Pay one's obligations
7. v. 14-Kindness to the handicapped
8. v. 15-Avoid respect of persons
9. v. 16-Avoid gossip and slander
10. v. 16-Value human life
11. v. 17-Love your neighbor as yourself: Honest, open dealings with others
12. v. 19-A general commandment with three specific applications. Obedience to God's commands, He knows better than we do.
13. vvs. 26-28-Avoid any contact with the (occult) spirit world
14. v. 32-Honoring the aged
15. vvs. 33-34-Love for brother (in cross cultural situations)
16. v. 35-Honest and just business dealings

B. This call to holiness is renewed and confirmed in the New Testament. The Old Testament informs the New Testament.

1. I Peter 1:15-16-...like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves in all your behavior, because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."
2. Eph. 1:4...that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love...
3. Col. 1:21-23...and you, who were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his

sight, if you continue in the faith grounded and settled, and not be moved away from the hope of the gospel...

4. II Pet. 3:11...Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation (lifestyle, or way of life) and godliness...

5. The best practical working definition of holiness I ever heard came from Alan Snyder,

Love plus Faithfulness = Holiness

6. "I think it is important to define sin. However, it should be made very clear that it is not necessary to define sin in order to argue moral perfection! If people have a different definition of sin, then they need only insert their definition of sin wherever the Bible mentions sin. One must still conclude the Bible commands us not to do it, that we do not have to do it and if we continue to do it we will go to Hell. Some will divert a holiness argument to quibbling about details of possible scenarios of sin. Then (they) try to claim they have a higher standard, etc. Again, the definition of sin is important but we must first recognize God's command is not to do it, whatever "it" is (John 5:14; 8:11; Psalm 4:4; I Cor. 15:34)"

[John 5:14-...Do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse may befall you. John 8:11-...From now on sin no more. Psalm 4:4-Tremble (Be angry-KJV) and do not sin. I Cor. 15:34-Become sober minded as you ought, and stop sinning, for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.]

a. Take some time to show from Rom. 14 and I Cor. 8 that the weak brother could not walk in holiness and violate his conscience (I Tim. 1:5...a good conscience)

#### **IV. Elements each of us must take into consideration in evaluating whether or not we are living in holiness.**

A. Ultimate intention-God instead of self.

B. Motive-What is my motive in the action I am contemplating?

C. Knowledge-What is my knowledge about God's will in the action I am contemplating?

D. What effect will my action have on God's reputation (Matt. 5:16), on a weaker brother (I Cor. 8:10-13)? This shows us that we have a responsibility to both our own consciences and to other Christians.

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