

Voices: The hope in our holiness

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Throughout the Old Testament, we see the concern for the holiness of God's people over and over as God calls Israel to repentance and renewal of their covenant commitment. "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2).

This emphasis continues throughout the New Testament: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). From the Sermon on the Mount to the rest of the teaching ministry of Jesus through the epistles, especially the letters of Paul and Peter, we see the importance of holiness for the life of the believer.

The fruit of progressive holiness shows the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and, without this fruit, we should examine our hearts.

More than behavior

Much of the discussion surrounding holiness in the church seems to be more focused on morality. We are wrong to equate holiness with morality; they are not the same thing.

In fact, when we distill holiness down to morality, we miss the point and become more like the Pharisees than like Jesus. Holiness is much more than just right action. Holiness is a heart issue; it is a transformation of our whole life.

How do we grow in holiness?

This question is often answered with ways to change our behavior. There is

a place for replacing habits that lead us into temptation and sin with habits that lead us to righteousness, such as Paul's call to present ourselves as instruments of righteousness in Romans 6, but this is not all there is to growing in holiness.

In fact, there is something more essential to this process.

Grow in the hope of the gospel

In 1 John 3:3, we are told, "And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure." Here, the hope John is calling us to is the hope of the return of Christ and what that means for us as children of God. We are children of God because of the love the Father has given to us in Jesus and our faith in him.

We can try to change our behavior all we want, but, if our hearts and our lives are not anchored to the hope of redemption and restoration found in Christ alone, we will not grow in holiness. We may become more moral or fit a contextual standard for behavior, but we will not be holy. Holiness is built on the foundation of gospel hope.

To grow in holiness is to grow in hope.

In Romans 8:30, Paul is writing to give confidence in the process of sanctification. "And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified." Through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, God is leading us to glory, to the day promised in 1 John 3, where we will see Jesus as he is. This is our hope, and our confidence in this hope helps us to be pure as he is pure.

To grow in hope is to continually come back to the faithful promises of God over and over again and to remind ourselves what God has done in order to

prepare for what God will do.

We grow in hope when we remember and proclaim the faithfulness of God.

We grow in hope when we obey Psalm 139 and tell the coming generations “the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.”

We grow in hope by pointing our hearts forward to the New Heavens and the New Earth promised in Revelation 21:4, where “he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

Holiness is not optional. It is a command. We cannot grow in holiness by seeking to only change our behavior. We grow in holiness when we build our lives on the hope of the gospel. We become holy as he is holy when we look back to what God has done, open our eyes to see what God is doing and hold on to the promises of what God will do when Jesus returns.

Do you want to grow in holiness?

Grow in the hope of the gospel.

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