

Living in Purity

Welcome to Harvest Community Church

Series: Holiness Matters

Text: Psalm 24:3-4

Holiness principle # 2 – God calls me to be pure, not dividing my allegiances or mixing worldly pleasures and principles with Godly ones.

No matter how hard you try you cannot mix oil and water. The oil will contaminate the water and make it undrinkable; they will always separate; oil and water do not **mix**. The same is true for anyone who tries to combine a Godly lifestyle with a worldly one.

One of the ways that demonstrates the purity of God's character is that He is called a consuming **fire**. **Hebrews 12:29, Deuteronomy 4:24** Just as fire is used to purify metal by heating it until all the impurities rise to the surface, the fire of God in our life **exposes** the impurities in our character. The impurities that rise to the surface is called **dross**. Just as the impurities in metal would weaken it, so do the deficiencies in our character weaken our spiritual walk.

Proverbs 27:21AMP, Proverbs 17:3 Without the fire, the dross is indistinguishable from the valuable. When the dross rises to the surface the impurities can easily be removed because they are clearly seen.

In the Old Testament, a great deal focus is placed on the **clean** and the unclean. On the pure and the impure. Much attention is given to the idea of **mixture**. For example, even the mixing of cloth in the making of garments. **Deuteronomy 22:11, Leviticus 19:19 (NLT)** Today we would be hard pressed to find any of our clothing that does not contain several blends. Literally God was weaving the principle of separation into the very fabric of the culture.

In the New Testament the principle of clean and unclean still applies but the focus is on purity and impurity, not mixing the sacred and the common, on not mixing sin and righteousness. The Bible calls us not to be **unequally** yoked in our relationships and in our allegiances.

2 Corinthians 6:14 Unequally yoked is a farming concept. You don't harness a buffalo and a horse together or a cow and a goat. The call to purity is a reminder that light and darkness are not compatible in the least. **1 John 1:5-7**

In the Old Testament, purity is represented through the categories of clean and unclean. Things associated with **life** were clean. Things associated with **death** and sickness were considered unclean. Certain animals were divided into these categories. **Numbers 19:14-16** Much of the Old Testament law was very practical and prevented the spread of disease and promoted cleanliness. Each of the principles also carried spiritual implications. Clean things bring life while unclean things are associated with death and sickness. Separating the unclean from the clean protected the community and brought life. The same is true when we are diligent to keep the spiritually unclean things out of our homes, churches, relationships and lives. The purpose of distinguishing meant that **everything** was closely looked at to determine how it would interact with everyday life.

As we study holiness, it becomes clear that cleanliness is not just about what we do and what is on the outside. Purity is not only about the actions we commit but about our heart and our attitude before Jesus. **Psalm 24:3-4** In the New Testament clean and unclean translate to pure and impure. Paul, in 1 Corinthians chapters 8-10, addresses the idolatry surrounding Christians in the Roman Empire and calls actions such as sexual immorality and murder impure. In the book of Matthew, Jesus rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for having the appearance of being clean but inwardly they were unclean. **Matthew 23:23-27**

Impurity can infect Christians and the church if we do not guard our hearts. Without purity we cannot be a part of God's Kingdom. The purifying work that Jesus does in our lives on the inside will most certainly be visible on the outside.

The Bible tells us that Christians are known by two distinct things:

Our love **John 13:35** and our fruit. **Matthew 7:15-20**

Holiness requires that we live a pure life before God and others. Our choices affect our purity. By choosing to obey Christ and the Holy Spirit, we choose life. By giving into the distractions of temptation, we choose a path of death.

The process that Jesus uses to make us holy and to move us towards purity is called sanctification. **1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 (AMP)** Sanctification is God's will for every Christian. He uses the word 'walk' to describe the journey of living our life in Christ by faith to please God. It is a walk, a journey and an adventure.

At the moment of Salvation, God declares us completely holy because of Jesus' sacrifice for us on the cross. **1 Corinthians 1:30** Jesus stood in our place and because of that we are justified, and He gives His righteousness to us. **2 Corinthians 5:21, Philippians 3:9**

Holiness Principle # 3 – God is making me holy so that I can dwell with Him.

The process of sanctification is easy to understand. The Holy Spirit will bring matters that displease Him into the light. Once He does, we must listen to His voice, acknowledge His voice and then obey what He instructs us to do. This involves a commitment to do and obey whatever He directs us in.

Romans chapters 6-8 explains the process from salvation to glorification. In chapter 6 the Apostle Paul uses some illustrations to describe the process.

Water baptism relates Jesus' crucifixion to our dying to our old life and rising again to live our entirely new life in Christ. **Romans 6:3-14** We have the power to reject sin because we are dead to it. We are now in charge of our bodies and passions.

Paul's second illustration involves the idea of slavery. Before Christ we had no power or control over our passions. We were in bondage to sin, and it could do whatever it pleased to us. **Romans 6:15-23** Slavery and bondservants (indentured slaves because of debt) were a common practice in those days. The idea of slavery was just as repulsive then and it is now. Before Christ we had no choice but to serve sin. It owned us. In Christ we are no longer slaves to destructive sin, we are now servants of God because of love.

Our freedom from sin does not give us the freedom to sin. It is precisely because we are free that we now have the power and the ability to choose a life of holiness.

In Romans chapter 8 we are reminded of the victorious Christian life and our glorification in the end. Paul reminds us that, as children of God, adoption is not just legal but gives us access to everything, heaven, His family, His promises and God Himself. God is showing us and revealing that we have His glory in this life and in the one to come. **Romans 8:28-30**

Living a life of holiness and growing in sanctification is not easy. It can bring suffering, adversity and it can stretch us. Paul actually uses the word groan to show how we and all of creation are looking forward to the fulfillment of His entire plan. **Romans 8:22-26**

As long as we live on this earth we are going to have to walk out and work out our salvation. **Philippians 2:12-13**

With fear and trembling we are to work out our own salvation. All of us have our own walk. All of us are figuring things out with God. **Philippians 3:13-14** Living a life of holiness is a daily thing. We are being sanctified and renewed by the Holy Spirit, day by day. Day by day we are matching who we are now with who Christ says we are in Him. Sanctification is daily submitting our life to the Lord to be more like Him. Some people believe that sanctification is all God's work. They do not believe that we play a part. The truth is that God commands our obedience in the process.

We cannot achieve salvation or sanctification on our own. Will-power can be there but the harder we try the more we realize that without God's help, we are helpless.

Romans 7:15-20 (NLT) Just like our salvation, sanctification and a life of holiness needs both the grace of God AND our obedience. **Ephesians 2:8-9, Philippians 2:13**

Sanctification works from the inside out. Inside God refines our character, integrity, thoughts, motivations, intentions and our emotions. As these are transformed, they begin to change our speech, habits, behaviors and actions so that, in all situations and circumstances, they resemble Christ's.

The Bible describes our own works and our own righteousness as dirty rags. **Isaiah 64:6** This is why we are encouraged to clothe ourselves with Christ.

Isaiah 61:10, Romans 13:14 (AMP), Ephesians 5:26-27, Galatians 3:27

While we are being sanctified, we will still face temptation. It is important to understand that while God will use temptation to our advantage to bring victory, it is never initiated from Him. **James 1:13-15** Remember there is nothing about wickedness that God ever finds attractive even in the remotest sense. Temptation gives us a look at the things that our flesh still desires. Now we must choose to gratify our flesh or choose to be pleasing to God. The great thing about temptation is that while God will not tempt us, He will protect us.

1 Corinthians 10:13

The other things that perfect our character are tests and trials. **James 1:2-4**
It is these things that help to perfect and refine and hone our faith.