

Holiness: A Gift of God's Grace ~ Part 15

"I am Adonai, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. Therefore you are to be holy, because I am holy." ~ Leviticus 11:45

"Following the Holy One who called you, become holy yourselves in your entire way of life; since the Tanakh says, 'You are to be holy because I am holy.'" ~ 1 Kefa 1:15-16

In this post, we will begin to look at the help that God gives us in the daily battle for holiness.

Help in the Daily Battle ~ Part A

In Parts 12 & 13, we saw how God has delivered us from the realm and reign of sin through union with Yeshua in His death. We were slaves to sin and in slavery we committed sins. We developed sinful habits regardless of how "good" we were. But Yeshua came into this sinful world and took our place on Calvary. He died to sin and through our union with Him we died to sin also. Now we are freed from sin's reign; we are no longer its slaves. We are to count on this fact and resist sin so that it does not reign in our mortal bodies.

In my last post (Part 14), we saw how sin still lives within us, waging its **"guerrilla warfare"** through evil desires and deceiving our minds. It may well seem that whatever hope for holiness was held out in Parts 12 & 13 was effectively taken away in Part 14. You may be wondering, *"What good does it do to be told that the war with sin was won by Yeshua in His death on the cross if I am still harassed and often defeated by sin in my heart?"*

To experience practical, everyday holiness, we must accept the fact that God in His infinite wisdom has seen fit to allow this daily battle with indwelling sin. But God does not leave us to do battle alone. Just as He delivered us from the overall reign of sin, so He has made ample provision for us to win the daily skirmishes against sin.

This brings us to the second point in Romans 6:11 that we are to count on and keep before us. ***"In the same way, consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive for God, by your union with the Messiah Yeshua."*** (Romans 6:11) We are not only dead to sin; we also are alive to God. We have not only been delivered from the domain of darkness, we also have been brought into the kingdom of Yeshua. Sha'ul said we have become ***"enslaved to righteousness."*** (Romans 6:18) God does not leave us suspended in a state of neutrality. He delivers us from sin's reign into the reign of His Son.

What is the significance of being alive unto God? How does it help us in our pursuit of holiness? For one thing, it means ***we are united with Yeshua in all His power.*** It is certainly true we cannot live a holy life on our own strength. The Messianic life is not a do-it-yourself thing. We have to live it out in community with other Believers.

Notice the attitude of Sha'ul in Philippians 4:11-13. ***"Not that I am saying this to call attention to any need of mine; since, as far as I am concerned, I have learned to be content regardless of circumstances. I know what it is to be in want, and I know what it is to have more than enough - in everything and in every way I have learned the secret of being full and being hungry, of having abundance and being in need. I can do all things through him who gives me power."*** He is talking about how he has learned to be content whatever the circumstances, whether plenty or want, whether well-fed or hungry. He says he can respond this way through Yeshua, who gives him strength.

How does this apply to holiness? Our reactions to circumstances are a part of our walk of holiness. **Holiness is not a series of do's and don'ts, but conformity to the character of God and obedience to the will of God.** Accepting with contentment whatever circumstances God allows for me is very much a part of a holy walk.

This is the first implication we should grasp is that we are "alive for God." We are united with the One who is at work in us to strengthen us with His mighty power. We have all known the awful sense of hopelessness caused by sin's power. We have resolved scores of times never to give in again to a particular temptation, and yet we do. Then Satan comes to us and says, *"You might as well give up. You can never overcome that sin."* It is true that in ourselves we cannot. But we are alive to God, united to Him who will strengthen us. By reckoning on this fact - counting it to be true - we will experience the strength we need to fight that temptation.

Only as we reckon on these twin facts - that I am dead to sin and its reign over me and that I am alive to God, united to Him who strengthens me - can I keep sin from reigning in my mortal body. To count on the fact that we are dead to sin and alive to God is something we must do actively.

To do it we must form the habit of continually realizing that we are dead to sin and alive to God. Practically speaking, we do this when, by faith in God's Word, we resist sin's advances and temptations. We count on the fact that we are alive to God when by faith we look to Yeshua for the power we need to do the resisting. Faith, however, must always be based on fact, and Romans 6:11 is a fact for us.

A second implication of being alive to God is that He has given us His Ruach to live within us.

Actually this is not a second result, but another way of looking at our union with Yeshua, for His Spirit is the agent of this union. It is He who gives spiritual life and the strength to live that life (see Romans 8:9-11). It is the Spirit of God who works in us that we may decide and act according to God's good purpose (see Philippians 2:13).

Sha'ul said, *"For God did not call us to live an unclean life but a holy one. Therefore, whoever rejects this teaching is rejecting not a man but God, indeed, the One who gives you the Ruach HaKodesh, which is His."* (I Thessalonians 4:7-8). Here Sha'ul connects the giving of the Ruach with our living a holy life. He is called the Ruach, and He is sent primarily to make us holy - to conform us to the character of God.

Why do we have the Ruach living within us to strengthen us toward holiness? It is because we are alive to God. We are now living under the reign of God, who unites us to Yeshua and gives us His Ruach to dwell within us.

The Ruach strengthens us to holiness first by enabling us to see our need of holiness. He enlightens our understanding so that we begin to see God's standard of holiness. Then he causes us to become aware of our specific areas of sin. One of Satan's most powerful weapons is making us spiritually blind - unable to see our sinful character. The Bible says, *"The heart is more deceitful than anything else and mortally sick. Who can fathom it?"* (Jeremiah 17:9). No one can understand it and expose it except the Ruach.

Even Believers can be deceived about their own sins. We somehow feel that consent to the teaching of Scripture is equivalent to obedience. We may hear a point of application in a sermon or perhaps discover it in our own personal Bible reading or study. We say, *"Yes that is true; that is something I need to act on."* But we let it drop at that point. James says, *"Don't deceive yourselves by only hearing what the Word says, but do it!"* (James 1:22) We cannot afford to continue to live in denial!

In my next post, we will continue to examine help we have in winning the daily battle over sin.