

Holiness: A Gift of God's Grace ~ Part 16

***"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 continue to examine the help we have in winning the daily battle over sin.

Help in the Daily Battle ~ Part B

As we grow in the Messianic life we face increasing danger of spiritual pride. We know the correct doctrines, the right methods and the proper do's and don'ts. But we may not see the poverty of our own spiritual character. We may not see our critical and unforgiving spirit, our habit of backbiting, or our tendency to judge others. We may become like the Laodiceans of whom our Lord said, ***"For you keep saying, 'I am rich, I have gotten rich, I don't need a thing!' You don't know that you are the one who is wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked!"*** (Revelation 3:17)

David was like this when he committed adultery with Bathsheba and then had her husband murdered to cover his first sin (see 2 Samuel 12:1-13). Was he repentant and humbled over his despicable acts? Not at all. In fact, he was ready to judge another man for a far lesser crime and to condemn him to death (verse 5). How could he do this? Because he was spiritually blind. It was not until the prophet Nathan said to David, ***"You are the man!"*** (v.7) that David was able to see the scandalous nature of his crime.

It is the Ruach's ministry to make us see that we are poverty-stricken because of our sins. He comes to us and reveals that we have been in denial. Even though such a message may come from the loving, caring lips of a brother in Yeshua, it is the Ruach who enables us to accept it and to say as David did, ***"I have sinned against Adonai."*** The Ruach opens the inner recesses of our hearts and enables us to see the moral cesspools hidden there. This is where He begins His ministry of making us holy.

The natural result of seeing God's standard and our sinfulness is the awakening within us of a desire to be holy. This is also the ministry of the Ruach as He works to make us holy. We are sorry for our sins with a godly sorrow that leads to repentance (see 2 Corinthians 7:10).

Sha'ul said, ***"For God is the one working among you both the willing and the working for what pleases him."*** (Philippians 2:13) Before we can *act* we must *will*. To will means to desire and resolve. When the Ruach shows us our sinfulness, He does not do this to lead us to despair but to lead us to holiness. He does this by creating within us a hatred of our sins and a desire for holiness.

Only if we have a strong desire to be holy will we ever persevere in the painfully slow and difficult task of pursuing holiness. There are too many failures. The hang ups, hurts and habits of our old nature and the attacks of Satan are too strong for us to persevere unless the Ruach is at work in us to create a desire for holiness.

The Ruach creates this desire, not only by showing us our sins, but also by showing us God's standard of holiness. He does this through the Scriptures. As we read and study the Scriptures or hear them taught, we are captivated by the moral beauty of God's standard of holiness. Even though His standard may seem far beyond us, we recognize and respond to that which is ***"holy, just and good"*** (Romans 7:12). Even though we fail so often, in our inner being we ***"completely agree in God's Torah"*** (Romans 7:22).

Here then is another distinction we must make between what God does and what we must do. If the Ruach uses Scripture to show us our need and to stimulate a desire for holiness, then doesn't it follow that we must

be in God's Word on a consistent basis? Should we not go to the Word to do our own study with a prayer such as: *"Examine me, God, and know my heart; test me, and know my thoughts. See if there is in me any hurtful way, and lead me along the eternal way?"* (Psalm 139:23-24)

After the Ruach has enabled us to see our need and created within us a desire for holiness, there remains something more that He must do. He must give us the spiritual strength to live a holy life. Sha'ul said, *"Run your lives by the Spirit. Then you will not do what your old nature wants."* (Galatians 5:16) To live by the Spirit is to live both in obedience *to* and dependence *on* the Ruach. There is a balance between our wills (expressed by obedience) and our faith (expressed by our dependence). But at this point we are considering the aspect of our dependence on the Ruach.

No one overcomes the corruptions of his heart except by the enabling strength of the Ruach of God. Kefa said that God has given us *"valuable and superlatively great promises, so that through them you might come to share in God's nature and escape the corruption which evil desires have brought into the world."* (2 Kefa 1:4). Through participation in the divine nature we escape corruption - and this participation is through the indwelling Ruach.

We express our dependence on the Ruach for a holy life in two ways.

1. **A humble and consistent intake of the Scripture.** If we truly desire to live in the realm of the Spirit we must continually feed our minds with His truth. It is hypocritical to pray for victory over our sins yet be careless in our intake of the Word of God.

It is possible to be consistent in our intake of the Word of God without an attitude of dependence on the Ruach. God says, *"The kind of person on whom I look with favor is one with a poor and humble spirit, who trembles at my word."* (Isaiah 66:2) We are to come to the Word in a spirit of humility and contrition because we recognize that we are sinful; we are often blind to our sinfulness; and, we need the enlightening power of the Ruach in our hearts.

2. **Pray for holiness.** The apostle Sha'ul prayed continually for the working of God's Spirit in the lives of those to whom he was writing. He told the Ephesians that he prayed God would *"empower you with inner strength by his Spirit."* (Ephesians 3:16) He also prayed that God would fill the Colossians "with the knowledge of his will in all the wisdom and understanding which the Spirit gives" so that they might "live lives worthy of the Lord and entirely pleasing to him." (Colossians 1:9-10) Clearly, Sha'ul knew we depend on the Ruach for holiness and he expressed this dependence through prayer.

As a young Believer, I thought all I had to do to live a holy life was to find out from the Bible what God wanted me to do and go do it. Believers with maturity will smile at this naive assumption, but I see younger Believers starting off with the same air of self-confidence. We have to learn that we are dependent upon the enabling power of the Ruach to attain any degree of holiness. Then, as we look to Him, we will see Him working in us - revealing our sin, creating a desire for holiness, and giving us the strength to respond to Him in obedience.

In my next post, we'll learn it's about obedience ~ not victory.