

Holiness: A Gift of God's Grace ~ Part 9

"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 consider that holiness for us as Believers is NOT an option that we can ignore.

Holiness Is Not an Option ~ Part A

As we learned in my first post in this series, the author of Hebrews wrote, ***"Keep pursuing shalom with everyone and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord."*** (Hebrews 12:14)

Just what do these words, ***"the holiness without which no one will see the Lord"*** actually mean? Does our salvation in the final analysis depend to some degree on our attaining some level of personal holiness?

On this question the Scripture is clear on two points:

1. Believers can never merit salvation through their personal holiness. The prophet Isaiah graphically tells ***"All of us are like someone unclean, all our righteous deeds like menstrual rags."*** (Isaiah 64:6). Our best works are stained and polluted with imperfection and sin. It was said centuries ago, *"Even our tears of repentance need to be washed in the blood of the Lamb."*
2. Scripture repeatedly refers to the obedience and righteousness of Yeshua on our behalf. ***"For just as through the disobedience of the one man, many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the other man, many will be made righteous."*** (Romans 5:19) ***"For the Messiah himself died for sins, once and for all, a righteous person on behalf of unrighteous people, so that he might bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh but brought to life by the Spirit."*** (1 Kefa 3:18). These two passages teach a twofold aspect of Yeshua's work on our behalf. They are often referred to as His active and His passive obedience.

Active obedience means Yeshua's sinless life here on earth, His perfect obedience and absolute holiness. This perfect life is credited to those who trust in Him for their salvation. His **passive obedience** refers to His death on the cross through which He fully paid the penalty for our sins and placated the wrath of God toward us. In Hebrews 10:5-9 we read that Yeshua came to do the will of the Father. Then the writer said, ***"It is in connection with this will that we have been separated for God and made holy, once and for all."*** (Hebrews 10:10) So we see that our holiness before God depends entirely on the work of Yeshua for us, by God's will.

Does Hebrews 12:14 refer then to this holiness which we have in Yeshua? No, for at this point the writer speaks of a holiness which we are to strive after; we are ***"pursuing shalom ...and holiness."*** And without this holiness, the writer says, no one will see the Lord.

Scripture speaks of both a holiness which we have in Yeshua before God, and a holiness which we are to strive after. These two aspects of holiness complement one another, for our salvation is a salvation to holiness: ***"For God did not call us to live an unclean life but a holy one."*** (I Thessalonians 4:7). To the Corinthians Sha'ul wrote: ***"To: God's Messianic community in Corinth, consisting of those who have been set apart by Yeshua the Messiah and called to be God's holy people..."*** (I Corinthians 1:2). The phrase ***"set apart"*** here means "made holy." That is, we are through Yeshua ***made*** holy in our standing before God, and ***called*** to be holy in our daily lives. So the writer of Hebrews is telling us to take seriously the necessity of personal, practical holiness.

When the Ruach comes into our lives at our salvation, He comes to make us holy in practice. It is true that this desire for holiness may be only a spark at the beginning. But that spark should grow till it becomes a flame - a desire to live a life wholly pleasing to God. True salvation brings with it a desire to be made holy. When God saves us through Yeshua, He not only saves us from the penalty of sin, but also from its dominion.

The whole purpose of our salvation is that we be ***"holy and without defect in his presence."*** (Ephesians 1:4). To continue to live in sin as a Believer is to go contrary to God's very purpose for our salvation. Holiness, then, is not necessary as a ***condition*** of salvation - that would be salvation by works - but as a ***part*** of salvation that is received by faith in Yeshua. The angel said to Joseph, Miryam ***"will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Yeshua, [which means 'Adonai saves,'] because he will save his people from their sins."*** (Matthew 1:21)

Therefore, we may say that no one can trust in Yeshua for true salvation unless he trusts in Him for holiness. This does not mean the desire for holiness must be a conscious desire at the time a person comes to Yeshua, but rather it means that the Ruach who creates within us saving faith also creates within us the desire for holiness. He simply does not create one without the other.

Sha'ul said, ***"For God's grace, which brings deliverance, has appeared to all people. It teaches us to renounce godlessness and worldly pleasures, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives now, in this age."*** (Titus 2:11-12). The same grace that brings salvation teaches us to renounce ungodly living. We cannot receive half of God's grace. If we have experienced it at all, we will experience not only forgiveness of our sins but also freedom from sin's dominion.

In my next post, we will continue to explore that holiness for us as Believers is NOT an option that we can ignore.