

Holiness: A Gift of God's Grace ~ Part 17

"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 learn that holiness is about obedience ~ not victory.

Obedience ~ Not Victory

"For if you live according to your old nature, you will certainly die; but if, by the Ruach, you keep putting to death the practices of the body, you will live." ~ Romans 8:13

God has made provision for our holiness and He has also given us a responsibility for it. As we have discovered in earlier posts, God's provision for us consists in delivering us from the reign of sin, uniting us with Yeshua, and giving us the indwelling Ruach to reveal sin, to create a desire for holiness, and to strengthen us in our pursuit of holiness. Through the power of the Ruach and according to the new nature He gives, we are to put to death the practices of the body (Romans 8:13).

Though it is the Ruach who enables us to put to death our corruptions, Sha'ul says we a responsibility as well. The very same work is from one point of view the work of the Ruach, and from another the work of ourselves.

In this post I want to look at our responsibility – ***"you keep putting to death the practices of the body."*** It is clear from this passage that God puts responsibility for living a holy life squarely on us. We are to do something. We are not to *"stop trying and start trusting"*; we are to put to death the practices of the body. Over and over again in the epistles - not only Sha'ul's, but the other apostles' as well - we are commanded to assume our responsibility for a holy walk. Sha'ul exhorted us to, ***"Put to death the earthly parts of your nature - sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed (which is a form of idolatry)."*** (Colossians 3:5)

The writer of Hebrews said, ***"So then, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us, too, put aside every impediment — that is, the sin which easily hampers our forward movement — and keep running with endurance in the contest set before us."*** (Hebrews 12:1) He says *let us* put aside every impediment (sin) and *let us* run with endurance. Clearly he expects us to assume responsibility for running the Messianic race. James said, ***"Therefore, submit to God. Moreover, take a stand against the Adversary, and he will flee from you."*** (James 4:7) It is we who are to submit to God and resist the devil. This is our responsibility. Kefa said, ***"Therefore, dear friends, as you look for these things, do everything you can to be found by him without spot or defect and at peace."*** (2 Kefa 3:14) This is something we must decide to do in assuming our responsibility for our holy walk.

Some of you may believe that any effort on your part to live a holy life was *"of the flesh"* and that *"the flesh profits for nothing."* That God would not bless any effort on your part to live a holy life, just as He would not bless any effort on your part to become a Believer by good works. Any effort on your part was just getting in God's way. 2 Chronicles states, ***"You won't even need to fight this battle! Just take your positions ... stand still, and watch how Adonai will deliver you!"*** (2 Chronicles 20:17) Many of us have misapplied this to mean that we are just to turn it all over to the Lord and He would fight the sin in our lives. I know that I certainly did.

How foolish I was. I misconstrued dependence on the Ruach to mean I was to make no effort, that I had no responsibility. I mistakenly thought if I turned it all over to the Lord, He would make my choices for me and would choose obedience over disobedience. All I needed was to look to Him for holiness. But this is not God's

way. He makes provision for our holiness, but He gives us the responsibility of using those provisions. He made us His children, not His puppets.

The Ruach is in us; He is working in us, and empowering us, giving us the ability. Sha'ul said it this way, ***"For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."*** (Philippians 2:13) The Ruach is working in us ***"both to will AND to work."*** It is because we are not left to ourselves; it is because we are not "absolutely hopeless" since the Ruach is in us, that we are exhorted to work out our own ***"deliverance with fear and trembling."*** (see Philippians 2:12)

We must rely on the Ruach in our putting to death the deeds of the body. But our reliance on the Ruach is not intended to foster an attitude of *"I can't do it,"* but one of *"I can do it through Him who strengthens me."* The Believer should never complain of want of ability and power. If we sin, it is because we choose to sin, not because we lack the ability to say no to temptation.

It is time for Believers to face up to our responsibility for holiness. Too often we say we are "defeated" by this or that sin. No, we are not defeated; we are simply disobedient! It might be good if we stopped using the terms *"victory"* and *"defeat"* to describe our progress in holiness. Rather we should use the terms ***"obedience"*** and ***"disobedience."*** When I say I am defeated by some sin, I am unconsciously slipping out from under my responsibility. I am saying something outside of me has defeated me. But when I say I am disobedient, that places the responsibility for my sin squarely on me. We may, in fact, be defeated, but the reason we are defeated is because we have chosen to disobey. We have chosen to entertain lustful thoughts, or to harbor resentment, or to shade the truth a little.

We need to brace ourselves up and to realize that we are responsible for our thoughts, attitudes and actions. We need to affirm that we have died to sin's reign, that it no longer has any dominion over us, that God has united us with the risen Yeshua in all His power and has given us the Ruach to work in us. Only as we accept our responsibility and appropriate God's provisions will we make any progress in our pursuit of holiness.

In my next post, we will look at putting sin to death.