

Holiness: A Gift of God's Grace ~ Part 22

"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 my last post, we focused on the Biblical discipline of **meditating** on the Word and **perseverance** in pursuing holiness. In this post, I want to focus on holiness in our physical bodies.

Holiness in Our Bodies

True holiness includes control over our physical bodies and appetites. If we are to pursue holiness we must recognize that our bodies are temples of the Ruach HaKodesh and that we are to glorify God with them.

Modern Believers, especially those in the Western world, have generally been found wanting in the area of holiness of body. Gluttony and laziness, for example, were regarded by earlier Believers as sin. Today we may look on these as weaknesses of the will but certainly not sin. We even joke about our overeating and other indulgences instead of crying out to God in confession and repentance.

Our physical bodies and natural appetites were created by God and are not sinful in themselves. Nevertheless, if left uncontrolled, we will find our bodies becoming **"instruments of wickedness"** rather than **"instruments of righteousness."** (Romans 6:13) We will be pursuing the **"cravings of sinful man"** (I John 2:16 ^{NIV}) instead of holiness.

Sha'ul emphasized the need to keep our natural appetites and desires under control. He spoke of his body as his adversary, as the instrument through which appetites and lusts, if left unchecked, would war against his soul. He was determined that his body with these unchecked appetites would be his slave, not his master. He wrote, ***"I treat my body hard and make it my slave so that, after proclaiming the Good News to others, I myself will not be disqualified."*** (I Corinthians 9:27)

Sha'ul further urged us to present our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, and to not be conformed to this world (see Romans 12:1-2). Quite possibly there is no greater conformity to the world among evangelical Believers today than the way in which we, instead of presenting our bodies as holy sacrifices, pamper and indulge them in defiance of our better judgment and our Messianic purpose in life. We need to ask ourselves if our consumption of food and drink is controlled by our awareness that our bodies are the temples of the Ruach.

I've learned first-hand what it means to defile the temple of God ~ my physical body. I have been overweight virtually my entire life. Baby pictures indicate I was pretty chubby. Even after entering puberty I was fat. The only apparent advantage my excess weight provided was as a starter on the interior defensive line on my high school football team. I continued to put on added pounds after graduation. When I finally was able to quit a three-pack a day cigarette habit in 1979, I exploded into morbid obesity. I would later learn that I was using food as my drug of choice to feed the 'roaring lion' within me that was created by my hurts, hang-ups and bad habits. It wasn't until January 5, 2012, that I became serious about controlling what went into my mouth and develop a sensible exercise program. I was able to lose 160 pounds from my highest weight. I'm no longer classified as morbidly obese, but I'm not down to where I want to be.

Another reason we must closely govern our indulgence of food and drink is that when we overindulge our bodies we will find it more and more difficult to mortify other sinful deeds of the body. The habit of always giving in to the desire for food or drink will extend to other areas. If we cannot say no to an indulgent appetite, we will be hard pressed to say no to other crutches we may have, i.e. alcohol, drugs, gambling,

pornography, lustful thoughts, etc. There must be an attitude of diligent obedience in every area if we are to succeed in mortifying any one expression of sin.

Along with such sins of the body as sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires, Sha'ul also mentions greed, which he says is idolatry (see Colossians 3:5). While greed often manifests itself in its basic form - the sheer love of money for money's sake - it more often is seen in what we call materialism. Not many of us want to be extremely rich; we just want all the nice things the world around us considers important.

Materialism wars against our souls in a twofold manner. First, it makes us discontent and envious of others. Second, it leads us to pamper and indulge our bodies so that we become soft and lazy. As we become soft and lazy in our bodies, we tend to become soft and lazy spiritually. When Sha'ul talked about making his body his slave, so that after having preached to others he himself would not be disqualified, he was not thinking about physical disqualification, but spiritual. He knew well that physical softness inevitably leads to spiritual softness. When the body is pampered and indulged, the instincts and passions of the body tend to get the upper hand and dominate our thoughts and actions. We tend to do not what we *should* do, but what we *want* to do, as we follow the cravings of our sinful nature.

There is no place for laziness and indulgence of the body in a disciplined pursuit of holiness. We have to learn to say no to the body instead of continually giving in to its momentary desires. We tend to act according to our feelings. The trouble is, we seldom "feel" like doing what we should do. We don't feel like getting out of bed to have our morning time with God, or doing Bible study, or praying, or anything else we should do. That is why we have to take control of our bodies and make them our servants instead of our masters.

The place to start controlling the cravings of our physical appetites is to reduce our exposure to temptation. Our sinful cravings are strengthened by temptation. When a suitable temptation is presented to us, our cravings seem to get new vigor and power. Sha'ul had definite words of instruction for us on this subject. He told us, ***"Flee the passions of youth"*** (2 Timothy 2:22). Some temptations can best be overcome by fleeing. He also said, ***"Don't waste your time thinking about how to provide for the sinful desires of your old nature."*** (Romans 13:14). Do not plan ahead or make provision for ways to indulge your bodily appetites.

One of my indulgences has been ice cream. Now there is nothing wrong with ice cream in itself; it was just that I had indulged myself so much that it had become a craving. So now, I no longer buy ice cream when I do the weekly shopping. If we occasionally go out to dinner, I may have a small amount or occasionally stop by Mickey D's for a hot fudge soft serve.

We are to flee temptation and take positive steps to avoid it, and we are to avoid thinking how to gratify our sinful desires. ***"The clever see trouble coming and hide; the thoughtless go on and pay the penalty."*** (Proverbs 27:12)

No matter what your hurt, hang-up or bad habit might be, God expects us to assume our responsibilities for keeping the sinful desires of the body under control. It is true we cannot do this in our own strength. Our sinful desires, stimulated by all the temptations around us, are too strong for us. But though we cannot do it by ourselves, we can do it. As we set ourselves to the task in dependence upon the Ruach, we will see Him at work in us. We will fail many times, but as we persevere, we will be able to say with Sha'ul, ***"I can do everything through him who gives me the power."*** (Philippians 4:13)

If you are struggling with temptations of any kind, I highly recommend that you check out your local Celebrate Recovery Program. Click [here](#) for a location near you.

In my next post, we will look at pursuing holiness in spirit.