

Growth in Holiness

by Zac Poonen

True growth in holiness is accompanied by an increasing consciousness of one's own sinfulness in the sight of God.

Scripture: Ezekiel 36:26, Romans 7:18, 1 Corinthians 15:9, Ephesians 3:8, Philippians 2:3, 1 Timothy 1:15

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Holiness"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes that the Spirit-filled life is marked by continuous growth in holiness, with a direct correlation between personal holiness and the recognition of God's absolute holiness. Using Paul's progression in holiness as an example, Zac highlights the importance of self-awareness and humility in acknowledging one's sinfulness despite spiritual growth. He stresses the need for a genuine desire to please God rather than just having correct theological knowledge, as true holiness is revealed through a sincere heart devoted to God, not just intellectual understanding.

Transcript

The Spirit-filled life is a life of growth in holiness. As a man's own life increases in holiness so does his consciousness of the absolute holiness of God. The two go together. In fact, the latter is one of the tests of whether a person really has the former.

Twenty-five years after his conversion, Paul says, " I am the least of the apostles " (1 Cor. 15:9). Five years subsequently, he says, " I am less than the least of all the saints " (Eph. 3:8). Still a year later he says, " I am (notice, it is not " I was," but " I am") the chief of sinners " (1 Tim. 1:15). Do you see his progression in holiness in those statements? The closer Paul walked with God, the more he was conscious of the corruption and wickedness of his own heart. He recognised that no good thing could be found in his flesh (Rom. 7:18). In Ezekiel 36:26, 27, 31, God says, " I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you...Then you will loathe yourselves for all the evils you did." Only such a man who loathes himself will be able to fulfil the command in Philippians 2:3 to esteem others as better than himself. Having seen his own corruption, he will no longer despise anyone else.

He will also be ready to confess failure immediately and will be willing to call sin, sin. The Spirit-filled man does not merely seek to give others the impression that he is growing in holiness, but will actually be doing so. He will not testify of experiences, and try to convince others of his theology of sanctification. He will have such holiness in his life that others will come to him, of their own accord, and ask him the secret of his life.

It makes no difference what our doctrine of holiness is. True holiness comes only to the man who seeks after it with all his heart, and not to the one who has merely the correct teaching in his head. There have been godly men in past centuries whose understanding of doctrine led them to believe that they were `entirely sanctified' and who called their unconscious slip-ups `mistakes'. There have been other godly men who called their unconscious slip-ups `sins' and who bemoaned their sinfulness and their lack of devotion to God constantly throughout their earthly lives. But both these groups of men could have been equally saintly in God's eyes, despite the radical difference in the way they evaluated their own lives. Their different temperaments and their differing understandings of the doctrine of sanctification accounted for their differing estimate of their own hearts. The secret of holiness is discovered not through a study of Greek words and tenses in the New Testament but through a wholehearted and sincere desire to please God. God looks at our hearts, not at our brains!

Growth in holiness, will always be accompanied, as in Paul's case, by an increasing consciousness of one's own sinfulness in the sight of God.

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