

Pursue Holiness

Ponder: How important is it to be holy?

Scripture: “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14, NKJV).

A previous devotional discussed pursuing peace. Let’s finish the exhortation by looking at the pursuit of holiness.

In simplest terms, to be holy (sanctified) is to be cleansed and set apart. Sin makes us unclean, unfit for fellowship with God. When we trust in Jesus and submit to Him in baptism, our sins are washed away (Acts 22:16). Peter verifies this, writing that our souls are purified by obedience to the truth (1 Peter 1:22). This, however, does not end our pursuit of holiness.

Hebrews 12:14 was written to people had already obeyed the gospel; many ought to have been mature Christians (see 5:12-14). Yet the writer urges them to pursue holiness. This blends well with Paul’s letter to the fledgling church at Thessalonica: “For this is the will of God, your sanctification (holiness): that you should abstain from sexual immorality . . . for God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness” (1 Thessalonians 4:3, 7). Holiness, then, is not a one-time state, but a way of life. It has a strong moral component. The Thessalonians came mostly from pagan backgrounds; sexual immorality characterized their culture, as it does ours. Biblical morality was not the norm for them; they would have to work hard to discipline themselves to live holy lives.

Before coming to Christ, the Romans also had behaved in ways that now made them ashamed (6:21). “But now, having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life” (v. 22).

Holiness is not optional! We must pursue it diligently, for without it, we will not see the Lord! Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). Again, we see the connection between purity and holiness.

Holiness doesn’t mean you glow in the dark, work miracles, or have the answer to every question. It means Jesus’ blood washed your sins away when you trusted Him enough to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins. And it means you are pursuing a lifestyle of holiness, which is separate from the world around you.