

## **P4: HOLINESS**

### **(Known also as ‘Total Purity’)**

#### **P4.1 Prelude**

*Nothing discredits the notion of ‘holiness’ more than ‘holier than thou’ Christians. Pray for the Lord to save us from such abject creatures*

#### **P4.2 Definition**

This potentially shared attribute of ‘holiness’ refers to God’s moral purity and complete freedom from any trace of evil or sin; also His strongly felt repugnance toward all forms of corruption.

Divine purity is implied by the name **Elohim Qedhoshim** – meaning ‘*Holy God or Gods.*’ An example of this name being used in scripture occurs in Joshua 24:19, which reads, “*And Joshua said unto the people, ‘you cannot serve the Lord for He is a Holy God (Elohim Qedhoshim); He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.’*” It demonstrates that God should He so decide, can refuse to forgive human sin.

#### **P4.3 Bible Exposition**

Two further Bible passages demonstrating the existence of this attribute are Leviticus 11:44 and 1 Peter 1:15.

##### **Leviticus 11:44**

*“For I am the Lord your God; you shall therefore sanctify yourselves and you shall be holy for I am holy – neither shall you defile yourselves with any manner of creeping things that creep upon the earth.”*

One reason for the complex dietary laws in books like Leviticus is to point out the irreconcilable opposition that exists between the ‘*clean*’ and the ‘*unclean*.’ These represent the good and evil which can exist in every area of life. However, it would be mistaken to view these qualities as two equally valid manifestations of the same God.<sup>1</sup> In turn, the words “*You shall therefore sanctify yourselves*” do not imply that we can make ourselves holy by our own efforts. Both Biblical teaching and the evidence of human history show that self-sanctification is impossible. As the example of the Pharisees shows, self-sanctification often ends in self-satisfaction. Rather, this passage presupposes that the Lord has already brought us out of the ‘*Egypt*’ of sin and has given us freedom to co-operate in our own spiritual growth. It is also worth stating that God wants all of His people to be holy. Contrary to popular impression, holiness is not an attribute reserved for some ‘*super-spiritual*’ religious caste. Rather, it is a characteristic to be displayed by all believers in the ‘*rough and tumble*’ of daily life. In practical terms, sanctification can involve anything from honesty in business dealings through to faithfulness to one’s marriage partner.

##### **Peter 1:15**

*“But He who has called you is holy, so be holy in all manner of conversation.”*

Here, the Apostle Peter is focusing upon the practical side of the Christian life. The level of holiness in a person is shown in the language he/she uses. Without being supercilious or false, Christians are expected to adopt a speaking posture free from profanity, harshness and backbiting gossip. This seems to be something of a ‘*tall order*’ and yes, it happens all too often that we do speak harshly or enjoy a piece of gossip that we should not be enjoying. Whilst we all fail to be consistently holy in our manner of conversation we can nevertheless state that if a professing Christian is casually profane or deceitful in their use of language something has gone badly wrong. In truth, such people perhaps have never really repented and believed in Christ. Christians should ‘*watch their lips*,’ for by them and by their actions people will decide whether they are genuine followers of the Messiah. Also to be avoided is any slippery evasiveness of language, which tends to deceive, not by what it says but by what it fails to say. This sin is particularly common amongst religious ministers who are beginning ‘*to*

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<sup>1</sup> This is the error of Pantheism, a world view suggesting that God is equally present in everything. It forms the basis of Eastern religions like Hinduism.

*go off the boil*' as far as their loyalty to Christ is concerned. They usually confine their preaching to the 'nice' things of Christianity like God's love. 'Less nice things' like God's wrath and judgement of sin are conveniently ignored.

When viewed alongside Joshua 24:19, these two passages show that: -

- 1) The holiness of God challenges people to choose whether they are serious about following Him
- 2) The holiness of God draws a distinction between right and wrong
- 3) The holiness of God is displayed in the words of scripture

#### **P4.4 Application**

In response to God's 'purity' believers would be wise to: -

- 1) Think carefully before choosing to serve God in any capacity
- 2) Actively co-operate with God in the process of being made holy
- 3) Avoid company where there is likely to be suggestive or unpleasant conversation

At the close of this study, it is reasonable to conclude that God is concerned that holiness extends into all aspects of life

#### **P4.5 Conclusion**

- 1) Divine 'holiness' shows that God may deal with the sin of apostasy by withdrawing His Holy Spirit from corrupt Churches so that they can be destroyed by human sin and the devil's wiles
- 2) Jesus demonstrated this attribute by experiencing the abandonment of His Father's comforting presence as He took the punishment for human sin on the cross

For further study please refer to the words 'holy,' 'holiness' or 'sanctify' in any Bible Concordance or Dictionary

#### **P4.6 Epilogue**

*Lord, let your holiness  
Fill my heart,  
Fill my lips and  
Fill my actions  
So that I may glorify your name  
Through witnessing  
Your truth to others, amen<sup>2</sup>*

#### **P4.7 Questions**

- 1) Why can't people make themselves holy?
- 2) Outline the likely effects of 'self-sanctification.' Why is it something Christians should **never** attempt?
- 3) Why may it be difficult to maintain a holy manner of conversation with others? Suggest ways to maintain an unblemished conversation in a workplace full of profane language?
- 4) How can we help both ourselves and other believers to grow in personal holiness?

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<sup>2</sup> This prayer was first made on Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2000. It expresses the need to ask for divine holiness to influence all areas of life.