



Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,  
and thou shalt be saved.  
Acts 16:31



From a child is known by his doings.  
Prov 20:11



Honour thy father and thy mother.  
Ex 20:12



O give thanks unto the Lord,  
for He is good.  
Ps 118:1



Look unto Me, and be ye saved.  
Isa 45:22



Ye are the light of the world.  
Mt 5:14

We are all called to be holy; “for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’” (1 Pet. 1:16)

The call by Apostle Peter for holiness had its source in Leviticus. Read Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 20:7, 26.

Leviticus 19 New International Version (NIV)  
  
Various Laws  
  
**19** The LORD said to Moses,  
<sup>1</sup>“Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: ‘Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.’

Leviticus can be comprehended in two parts:

- The first part is about how the Israelites might approach God through sacrifices, the investiture of priests, the offering of sacrifices and being committed to the ordinances on cleanliness.
- The second part is about living a holy life, of which Chapter 19 is most expressive.

Reflecting on the two parts of Leviticus, we can also contemplate the two parts of Scripture overall – the first is about the precepts (principles, teachings, guidelines, laws and such) while the second part is about the application of our relationship with God in our daily walk of holiness before Him.

It does not do well for Christians to “like” one part and therefore focus on it at the exclusion of the other part. The two parts are interconnected as a continuous framework that brings out the full effect of God’s will in the evolvment of life events as man experiences and engages them. In the course:

- Some of the practices of the OT are no longer applicable to us. For e.g., sacrificing burnt offerings. Nevertheless, as we learn about the laws on sacrifices before the Advent of Christ, we can imbibe useful insights on their importance in their time and meditate deeper on the seriousness of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God sacrificed on the Cross for our sake.
- Some of the commands of the OT are perennially relevant for us to obey. For e.g., many of the commands such as against

stealing, lying, deceiving one another and profaning the name of God ... (Lev. 19:11 ff).

- Some of the commands are not possible for us to comply with directly, being very specific to the farming livelihood of their time. Nevertheless, we ought to see the rationale behind the commands and comply with them in spirit. For e.g., regarding Lev. 19:9-10, most of us are no longer involved in the physical farming of land and reaping therefrom. However, we do reap our wealth through our modern ways of investing hard work, and the spirit of showing generosity to the poor and the strangers is very much possible for us to uphold in our walk of holiness by our willingness to let the poor and the strangers (“foreigner”) have a go for the “grapes that have fallen” (i.e., the remnants of our reaping) instead of coveting every bit for ourselves. In this modern day, many instead go so far in their walk of unholiness as to withhold the wages of the “foreigners” (the foreign workers and domestic helpers) in direct affront to the spirit of Lev. 14:13b.

To be holy is God’s requirement for us to abide by. It serves humanity well if everyone understands and willingly submit to holiness without the need for reminders. Reality, however, is that people tend to wander off the straight path of holiness when there are no reminders or no laws to comply with. How many people avoid polluting the environment because they want to serve humanity well by saving gaia or because they are led to do so by the anti-pollution laws? God’s statutes and ordinances similarly have the effect as reminders and warnings to His people to live the holy life – the life that is right not because God demands it but because it is the right thing good for us, good for humanity.

When the holy life is lived out by everyone, there will be fewer conflicts between people. The daily news is evidence staring in our face that most people (because of selfish motives) do not delight in the walk of holiness. God’s commands are treated with disdain. The Ten Commandments inscribed on stone are treated as if they are written on paper scraps to be flung off at whims. There is heavy price to pay. Indeed, the world is paying the price – snowballing turbulence!

There are various types of “holiness”. One popular type is called “ceremonial holiness”. What is it?

## The Religious Law of the Pharisees

They upheld the authority of oral tradition to be of equal value with the written law.

They reduced the practice of religion to the observance of many ceremonial rules to encourage self-sufficiency and spiritual pride.

They were a major obstacle to the reception of Christ and the gospel by the Jewish people.

They believed that because they openly obeyed many strict rules they were more righteous than other Jews.

The Pharisees created many religious laws.

On the Sabbath you could only walk a certain number of steps before you broke the law.

Keeping the Sabbath holy was not a matter of what was the intent of the heart but what was visible to others from the outside.

Pharisees pretended to be righteous while their hearts could be full of wickedness and hatred.

“Ceremonial holiness” is obedience towards the performance of rituals on a specific day or occasion. Rituals have their proper place in Christian life, and are definitely important because God directed them. However, a display of holiness by devoted attendance to the observance of rituals or customs becomes hollow if the spiritual fervour is separated from our holiness in everyday life outside of the specific day or occasion. The “ceremonial holiness” then is tantamount to a mere show that is detached from the reality of the person’s life testimony. Such “ceremonial holiness” was what Amos blamed his people for, because their egregious wicked deeds in life (Amos 5:11-12) were completely at odds with their staunchness towards festivals and offerings:

*“I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!” – Amos 5:21-24*

The false holiness of the Pharisees was lambasted by Jesus when they were doing bad things (devouring widows' houses) and made lengthy prayers for a show. (Mk. 12:40)

The term "His/Your Holiness" is an honorific title used in addressing certain religious leaders. It is a status title regarding their high office; yet not to be confused with the holiness we talk about, that Christians seek to live out in their life, which is to set a framework for our thoughts and actions to follow the holy character of God, guided along by our obedience to His commands.

It is easy to associate status with holiness, and the disciples of Jesus showed no exception of being misguided in this respect when they argued about who was the greatest. (Mk. 9:13) The mother's request for her two sons (Matt. 20:20-21) is another outstanding example of such a misunderstanding.



Our pastors are our spiritual leaders and we look to them for guidance on how to be holy while also getting inspiration from their holy lifestyle. This said, however, we must be reality-conscious that they are in a basic respect like everyone else – being human, on the same path as we walk in holiness. Being similar as mutual

brethren, we encourage one another to be holy. We do not treat our pastors or spiritual leaders as holy targets of adoration. This may seem obvious to readers of *The Vine*, but misguided worship of human leaders (as holy) by followers is not unheard of, especially in cults.

God commanded Moses to say to the Israelites: "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy." (Lev. 19:2)

God's people are not just called to be holy, but to be holy with regards to God himself who is holy.

Our God is "majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders." (Ex. 15:11) Who among us all who are sinners (Rom. 3:23) can emulate fully God's holiness?

Frankly, the answer is "We can't." Nevertheless, we can aim our spiritual sight high at God's holiness, looking in that direction as we forge ahead in our striving to be holy. Whether we run along as a hare or plod on like a tortoise, we should be able to tell ourselves that we are fulfilling our aim of moving forward.

If any of you think that you must be a giant in order to make the grade of being holy, you are very wrong. In relation to the mother's request mentioned above, Jesus said this to His disciples:

*"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." – Matt. 20:25-28*



So, if you are not a giant, you still stand a chance to make the grade for holiness.

If you think and serve God like a servant to your brethren, then you stand another chance.

If being holy has anything to do with status, then the "lowly"

status of servanthood with a humble heart for service should be ours to go after.

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