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The Grace of Holiness

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Series: God's Amazing Grace

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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Father, there are so many needs and we know just a few of them. We cannot grasp how all of these needs must affect Your heart. Yet we know, Father, that the burden of Your heart is such, that You love and care for each with the same intensity, all at one time. We can't grasp it, but we accept it and we praise You for it.

So, as we bring these needs to You, Father, we know that Your heart breaks much more than ours. Yet, these needs are an opportunity for Your incredible grace to flow from Your heart to the hearts of these who are hurting and these who are ministering. To that end we praise You. Our prayer, Father, is that Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven in each of these lives, each of these cases, and each of these ministries.

Then we pray this morning, Father, that You would be our teacher. We are so aware that only You can teach us and only Your Spirit can change our lives. Father, we have come to be challenged and to be changed. To that end we submit ourselves.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

All you have to do is mention this word, and suddenly, your mind is captured; it's flooded with thoughts. And you're transported oftentimes from the real world where we are so to speak, to the world where God is, and sometimes we forget that the two worlds in Christ are one.

It is a simple word, a word you can define. But somehow, it's one of those words that Satan has tried to redefine, and has done it somewhat successfully, so the average Christian thinks this word is both unattainable and unrealistic. Many of us don't really grasp what it means, and many of us don't really want to know, because tucked within the context of its meaning is a deeper level of understanding of who our God is, what our God wants, and what we can become in Christ. I won't keep it a secret any longer. You have probably figured it out. The word is "holy." Just the look on your faces when I said it—holy.

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It's like a doorway into the inner chambers of God's heart. This one word ushers us into a realm of depth that we can barely grasp and yet, there is an aura of mystery about it as well. The thing we have to remember, beloved, as we continue our study, is without this thing we call "grace," holiness is not within our reach. Grace is ours for the asking, but we tend to shy away from asking for holiness because of the mystery that surrounds it, and because we aren't sure we want it.

Beloved, you and I need to know how to become holy, holy men and women. Not just holier than we are, but holy as He is holy.¹ You say, "Oh, wait a minute. God never expects that." Oh, really? That's not what Scripture says, and Scripture is our only basis for defining the will of God. So, this morning, I'm going to ask you to journey with me as we search for the grace of holiness. We're going to steal into the secret place of the presence of God and ask Him to open our eyes that we may behold wondrous things out of His Word.² He'll do it.

As He makes His nature known to us, we will realize that He has called us to be holy. It is His will. It is not something we do; it is something He does. Without this thing called grace, we can no more be holy than a dog can write a book or a horse can draw a picture. It's impossible. Without His indwelling, transforming, enabling power, we can't become holy, nor can we even possess the desire to be holy.

It is all of grace. But once we understand that and begin to search for it, we can begin to acquire it without so much as a hint of works on our part. God will do it, and we have to ask Him and let Him. That sounds simple, doesn't it? It must not be. If I were to come down with my roving microphone (which we never do, we just always threaten to do) and ask you if you consider your life to be a holy life, most of you would shake your head and say, "No."

Well, let me ask you a question. Would you describe the life of Christ as a holy life? I bet you would. Yet, if we're going to define holiness by Christ and His life, we will have to redefine holiness because His was not a life lived out in a monastery, or up in the clouds of heaven. It was a real life, a real-world foray into the realms of relationships and reality. He fellowshiped with dirty

¹ II Peter 1:16

² Psalm 119:18

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people. He ate with publicans and sinners. He spent much of His time visiting the hospitals of life, the funeral homes of life, and the ghettos of life. The only people He couldn't seem to stomach were the religious zealots of His day; the very ones who had been used to define holiness up to that point.

So Jesus redefined holiness. He broke the mold and refashioned it using inner qualities as His guidelines, and humility and purity as His benchmarks. He not only expected us to understand what it means to be holy, He expects us to seek after holiness, to grasp it, and take hold of it; or rather, to let it take hold of us. Let's go back to Ephesians 1, and begin to read at verse 2.

Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (Ephesians 1:2-4)

Now think about that. Paul was praying that God would give us the grace to be blessed with all the spiritual blessings God originally designed for us in eternity past. What were those blessings? That we should become holy and blameless as we stand before His love.

I know what you're thinking. *Holy? Blameless? I don't think so.* Beloved, I think so. I don't think God teases us by telling us things He wants us to be, that we can't be. The key is not that we are to labor to become holy. The key is that we already are holy, and He wants us to experience that holiness. The quality is built-in to the new nature. You don't have to manufacture it; you can't. You only have to let God be free to be Himself, and you will discover that, in Christ, indeed you are holy. Remember this passage.

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [which literally means in everything you do];

Because it is written, [that's a great phrase; that's all the reason you need] Be ye holy; for I am holy. (I Peter 1:15,16)

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It is saying that holiness is imputed to us. That is why God gave us a “Holy” Spirit. We could never experience true holiness except we be indwelt by God. Holiness is an imputed quality. You cannot look at God and imitate holiness. Man has tried to do that for years. The cults have tried to do that for years. It looks good on paper and impresses an unbelieving world, but true holiness is not behavior that changes your character. It is character that changes your behavior, and character can only be changed by God from the inside out.

God imputed to us His nature at Calvary, and by grace He gave us His Spirit of Holiness to indwell us and transform us into holy men and women. We are holy. You are holy. You may not think so, but you are. Because you’re so neat? No. Because you chose to be? No. You are holy because the One who called you and saved you is holy, and what He is, you are. The only reason you can be holy is because I AM is holy and I AM lives in you if you have trusted Christ. That’s issue number one.

Secondly, holiness is not only imputed, it is imparted. Because you are holy, and only because you are, you are to demonstrate that holiness in all manner of conversation, the Kings James Bible says. It literally means, in everything you do and say, people ought to see demonstrated this quality, which we will get to in a minute, called holiness. It will be repugnant to the natural man and it’s impossible for the unbeliever to achieve, but holy lives must be the result of holy hearts. Never is it the other way around. Never. You don’t become holy by acting holy. You act holy because God in you, when really free to be Himself, can act no other way. That’s issue number two.

What is holiness? You knew we would get to that. We read in Scripture of “holy ground” (Exodus 3:5), of a “holy nation” (Exodus 19:6), of a “holy Sabbath” (Exodus 20:8), of the “holy place” (Exodus 26:34), of “holy garments” (Exodus 28:2), of “holy seed” (Ezra 9:2), of a “holy habitation” (Psalm 68:5), of a “holy temple” (Psalm 138:2), of “holy works” (Psalm 145:17), of a “holy mountain” (Ezekiel 28:14), of the “holy Scriptures” (Romans 1:2), of a “holy sacrifice” (Romans 12:1) of “holy hands lifted up” (I Timothy 2:8), “holy women” (I Peter 3:5), “holy prophets” (II Peter 3:2), and of a “holy city” (Revelation 11:2).

So not only people, but places and things can be holy. And not only individuals, but a nation can be holy, and prophets can be

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holy. What does it mean? If we look at our friendly concordance you will see the Greek word, ἅγιος {hag'-ee-os}, which is simply defined as a holy thing or a saint. It is translated 161 times in Scripture as “holy” and 61 times as “saints.”

That doesn't help a lot, does it? Literally, let's define it this way. It is something set apart unto God. That doesn't help a lot either, does it? Well, let's go one step beyond that. It is something God calls His own and He has separated it from that which is not His own. Does that help at all? It means that God has divided all of life, all of mankind into two parts. Now, think carefully with me; that which is His by creation alone, and that which is His by virtue of divine sovereign selection. Everything in life is in one of these two groups, but everything and everybody in the “holy” or “set apart” group—that's you if you're a Christian—has a special calling and a special purpose. It's part of royalty.

Everything about them and everything about you is supposed to be different. A “Holy Bible” then, is holy because it is set apart by the God who wrote it, as His word to His people for His purposes. It is holy. Moses stood on “holy ground” because God was speaking to him, and God, at that moment, set him apart for a special purpose and He was speaking directly to him. It was holy ground. Look at how God explained it:

For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

(Deuteronomy 7:6)

Isn't that a neat verse? Look at what it says:

1- It was a sovereign selection- God chose you to be special by adoption, not that you have earned sainthood by serving, or even by being. You cannot earn sainthood. Every believer is a saint, a set apart one. You are God's by selection; you are holy. Because you are holy, your title is saint. You are not “Lord Jones” or “Sam, the Earl of Smithville,” you are “Saint Samuel” if you are a Christian, and your name is Samuel. If you are a believer, you are a saint. Be sure you understand that.

Paul wrote a letter to the “saints at Ephesus.” He wasn't addressing a select group of holier than thou believers whose lives or ministries made them special. He was addressing all the Christians at Ephesus, because all the Christians were saints. Sainthood conferred by man because somebody lived a good life,

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or somebody seems to have certain qualities, is heresy. Sainthood is bestowed by a sovereign God to everyone who takes Him at His Word and receives His gift of grace.

...Ye are a chosen generation, [that's you] a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; [we can usually grasp that one, can't we, because we don't understand the word peculiar] that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.
(1 Peter 2:9,10)

Look at those key words in that passage: chosen, royal, holy, peculiar. Their meaning will unfold as we go through it. First of all, you are part of a chosen generation. God called you out of darkness into light. You were not chosen because of what you could do or what you could be. The Scripture says you just obtained mercy.

Part of the problem with today's concept of holiness is that there is some kind of competition going on in the Body of Christ to see who can win the most medals in heaven for what seems to be holy on earth. We build legalistic foundations on top of grace. Until you do this or don't do that, you don't get Brownie points for being holy. And the people who don't do what you do aren't as holy as you are. And the ones who behave in ways you wouldn't are not as holy as you are.

All over the world—and it's particularly true in certain countries—men and women are being born again and let into the family of God, but not being allowed into the church of God because they don't wear this or don't wear that, or they sing this way or don't sing that way. Or their children do this or don't do that. The problem is, based on their criteria, Jesus Christ could never gain membership into their church.

The church is a group of weak, selfish sinners who, by some miracle of sovereign grace, have been born again and adopted into God's family by grace. Jesus died for sinners. That's us. And if the church won't accept them because of how they dress or wear their hair or whether or not they give a certain amount of money, the church, at that time, is not acting on God's behalf. It has ceased being a New Testament church and has reverted back to Old Testament law as its plumb line.

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Holiness is not a badge you wear; it is a privilege you bear. It is not a source of personal pride, but an invisible magnet drawing you to humble repentance and deep recognition of sins. Your sins, not someone else's. God will never allow holiness to be something we use to gain recognition. Never! It will always be an unconscious outpouring of who He is, and the recognition will always go to the Holy One who has chosen to be holy in us. One reason we do not understand holiness is that we do not understand grace. The truth of the matter is, the ultimate degree to which holiness flows through you will depend, not on your determination, but on your willingness to let God be God and surrender.

You possess no holiness apart from God. Until Jesus came into your life, you had zero capacity to be holy. Zero. Not one percent, zero. Since Christ came into your life, you went from zero to one hundred. Now, you have exactly the same capacity to be holy as George Mueller, Charles Spurgeon, Billy Graham, or Mother Teresa. Your capacity to be holy is based on what God did for you in eternity past when He made you a part of the Royal Family. Now, you are holy.

2- It involves a definite distinction- Not only were we chosen; we were chosen to be a special people above all people on the earth. We are a peculiar people. Now, be careful. That doesn't mean what you think it means, because some of us are trying to live up to this, and that's not what it means. It doesn't mean weird. We may be, but it doesn't mean that. It means special. It means that God has chosen you above all the people of the world, to be a member of the Royal Family. And while you have certain privileges as a member of the Royal Family, you also have certain responsibilities. One is to never forget who your Father is. And two is to never forget the price He paid for your salvation.

It was all of grace. Remember, we saw in an earlier study, that God in eternity past, searched through all the orphanages of eternity, and looking for weakness, He found those with the greatest need, and that was us. He called us and chose us to be a people unto Himself. He chose Israel as a preview to show us how He could take people who were destined to be nothing and make them a showcase of glory by turning weakness into strength. He has chosen the likes of us. He has called us out to be the church. He has set us apart and made us different from the inside out. Only to the degree that we are different will grace

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be able to reveal itself.

God never intended the church to run from the world and hide. We will look at that in another lesson. But He never intended the church to run to the world and become part of the world in order to win the world. You and I are to be totally different, and that difference will be the magnet that draws men and women to Christ. That difference is called holiness. It is not simply a difference in what we do, but we read in I Peter 4:1-5, that what you do should be different. It is primarily a difference in who you are which should translate into what you do.

Beloved, it's going to get a little sticky from here on in, so hang on. We've got locks on those back doors now, and this one doesn't work. You can fool the world a lot of the time and fool most Christians most of the time, but you can't fool God any of the time. Holiness is a choice, and while it seems to be an invisible choice, may I remind you, that your Father knows. He sees your heart. He knows whether or not you experience the holiness you possess.

For the remainder of this lesson, we are going to look at three major processes. And until we come to understand those processes, I don't think we can go on to our next lesson, and look at how to make holiness a day-to-day experience in our lives.

3- Those three processes are the pathway to purity. I believe Scripture teaches that a believer should possess a set apart, different temperament and character from the inside out. That is what makes up a holy life. Children of the King just cannot put themselves in a position to be defiled, to damage the reputation of the Crown, or to defame the name of the King who paid such a price to adopt them. You and I are to be different, and that difference should be the character of God working its way through our lives. As we learned in an earlier lesson, God cannot look upon or condone anything that is sin; anything that produces that which is repugnant to His nature, because He is holy. He is set apart, and, as such; He has set us apart to become progressively pure. Holiness is not a static quality. We are to be, "becoming" increasingly holy. That is an absolute.

I would submit to you for the rest of this lesson, that there are three gates that His holiness must pass through on its way from His heart to ours. None of them are "of works, lest any man should boast."³ The gift is still free and undeserved. You couldn't earn it if you lived to be ten thousand times ten

³ Ephesians 2:9

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thousand years old. You don't need to earn it. It was given to you the moment you came to Christ. Scripture says, "Be ye holy, for I AM is holy."⁴ And I AM lives in you. So the issue isn't walking through doors to earn holiness; the issue is, God has given it all to you personally. He positionally, sees you as holy. He has imputed it to your account, and now He wants to impart it experientially. He wants it to be real to you. Why isn't it?

I believe there are three gates. We have to open those gates that block the flow and just let His holiness flow through us. I don't know why we don't do it. I think number one, we ignore Scripture, and number two, we are not good gate keepers. We try in our own energy to become holy by plans and programs, prayers and processes. So, let me remind you one more time, holiness will not be achieved by what you do. It will be imparted by what God has done. Our job, by grace, is to ask for it and keep the gates open. Now what are these three gates? Now these are not popular subjects. In fact, they are so unpopular, that our defenses rise up when we talk about them, and I believe that's a good sign. Satan hates it. Let's look at these absolutes; three gates that block the path to holiness.

Gate 1- The Bible says, you are what you look at. If what you look at and listen to is different, peculiar, and set apart; you keep the pathway open for holiness to flow through your life. It will vary a little from one person to another, but not nearly as much as we would like to think. The Scripture minces no words:

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, [or whole and not diseased] thy whole body shall be full of light.

But if thine eye be [attracted to] evil, thy whole body shall be [a big mess—loose translation] full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, [what hypocrisy] how great is that darkness [if what you pretend is light, is really night].
(Matthew 6:22,23)

Question number one is, how "single" is your eye? The word means sound, without disease. Not physical disease, but spiritual disease. You doctors in the room might argue with this medically, but spiritually, I think it's true. Whatever goes into the eye goes into the brain and into the heart. It's a correct Biblical interpretation. If you think you can program your brain with anything that encourages the lower nature and not entertain spiritual warfare, you haven't read the Scriptures. And if you think you can continually program it with anything less than

⁴ 1 Peter 1:16

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what pleases God and not eventually create in the database of your mind, spiritual strongholds, you are playing the devil's game and listening to his lies. The Scripture says, you are what you look at. Now you say, "What I look at is not wicked by the world's standards." Good for you. It may not even be wicked by the church's standards.

The question is, does everything you look at edify you? Can you turn to God at that moment, looking at that movie or that television program or that magazine or that book, and say, "Lord, isn't this great? Are you enjoying this, Lord? Lord, isn't this helping me to know You better?" If you can't do that, let me give you a suggestion. Turn it off, leave it alone, put it down, or close your eyes, because you are programming the hard drive of your mind with thought processes and visual images. And even though you are not doing it consciously, the Scripture says, eventually you will become whatever you look at.

If you don't believe it, just listen to the radio in your car, and then see what song you are humming a couple hours later. It's amazing. You don't even remember hearing it, but you're singing the same song you heard in the car two hours ago, because it's the last thing you heard, and it's on automatic replay. It goes over and over and over. The music you listen to will program the melody of your heart just as clearly as the things you see. No, you aren't becoming holy by not watching this or not hearing those things. That's legalism. But you are holy. God made you holy. And that positional holiness will never make it experientially into your life unless you guard the gate into your eyes and ears. I told you it wasn't pleasant.

How critical is it? Let Scripture answer that for you:

And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, [I'm not going to get into that now for obvious personal reasons] and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. (Matthew 5:29)

It's better to lose an eye than a soul. I know what you are thinking. *But I am so much more careful about what I watch than most people. You'll never believe what my neighbor looks at.* We call it comparative holiness. And God answers:

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

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Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? [Good grief, Charlie Brown. That's not in the original.]

Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. (Matthew 7:3-5)

Your first responsibility and mine, is not to become the guardian of the eye gate of the world or even of the church. It's okay to write your congressman or picket places that carry lewd material, but that's not your primary calling, beloved. Work on your own eye gate. If every Christian did that, most of our other problems would take care of themselves. While men and women in many cases are affected by different kinds of eye input, the principle is still the same.

Men are more often attracted to that which appeals to the lower nature. If the women in their lives don't understand that, they may unconsciously cultivate or even encourage watching things or reading things that are literally becoming barriers to their husbands allowing the holiness of God to flow through their lives. Women, on the other hand, may tend to be more affected by the things that appeal to a discontented spirit. Men may be more drawn to lust by looking at other women; women may be drawn to lust by looking at others' possessions. The key is that each of us knows what affects us. Oh, do we know. And how holier than thou we can be.

Often, we become champions of self-righteous causes to decry the very things we ourselves are struggling with. Rather than guarding our own eye gate, we become the "eye protectors" of society. That's dangerous. We will justify our own lack of moral discipline by condemning it in others. Let me remind you of one thing, beloved, society has always been rotten. Pornography is not new. Moral infidelity is not a recent invention. Read the book of Proverbs. Society is Satan's playground, and as it hurls itself toward Armageddon, it's going to get worse and worse. But that is all the more reason why every Christian in this room, every Christian listening, and every Christian who bears the name of Christ, ought to become more convinced and more concerned about that which defiles their mind. Stop it!

The Scripture says, in times past you were not royalty; you were not part of the Royal Family, but now you are. As children

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of the King, you can't give the eye the liberty of ushering into the mind, things that will destroy it. If you want a word to study this week, let me give you one—flee. Not the kind your dog has. I noticed some of you started scratching. Listen to Scripture:

And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him:
for they know not the voice of strangers. (John 10:5)

Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the
body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against
his own body. (I Corinthians 6:18)

Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.
(I Corinthians 10:14)

But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after
righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.
(I Timothy 6:11)

Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith,
charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure
heart. (II Timothy 2:22)

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he
will flee from you. (James 4:7)

Flee moral impurity. Flee idolatry. Flee youthful lusts. Resist the devil and he will flee. What does it mean? The Greek word is פֹּגַעוּ pheugo {fyoo'-go}. It means to escape safely out of danger; to vanish. To go bye-bye quickly—loose translation. I didn't find this in the concordance, but literally it says to get on your Honda and get out of town. It means you don't hang around long enough to see what's going to happen. You are to flee youthful lusts as though they could murder you and are out to kill you, and you have one way of escape. You can stand there and expect to be killed, or you can seek safety by flight.

God has given you a way of escape. It begins with the gateway to the soul which is the eye. Protect it. If your eyes have been dilated by an eye doctor, and you are not to be exposed to bright light, and he gives you these special glasses, what are you going to do? Are you going to wear them or are you going to go out, throw the glasses away and look straight into the sun to see what happens? Well, I hope you have more sense than that. What if you're on a job that requires you to wear protective goggles or you know your eyes would be destroyed. You would you wear them, wouldn't you? Then why in the world do we refuse to put on the protective shield of holiness that God gave to us.

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Now, I know a lot of you can make jokes about computers and the time it takes to keep them operating so we don't have time to use them. I agree with all of that, but I think it's incredible that in this generation we have computers to use as parables or illustrations of how the mind works. I can remember all these years trying to think about the Scriptural implications of what the mind produces and takes in, and I never could get a handle on it. As we look at computers and see how they receive and retain information, how difficult it is to erase information, how they access and categorize information, I can begin to understand with my simple mind, how the brain works. So, I think it's great that we have computers. I happen to have a MacIntosh mind. It's got to be simple and user friendly, or I still can't get it. But no matter what it is, study the way your computer works, and you will understand how data comes into your mind.

Gate number one involves what you look at, and what you look at, the Scripture says, will determine what you become. And the degree to which the holiness of God can flow through your life and transform you, will be impacted directly by what you look at. If you don't believe that, try watching something this week that is suggestive or compromising and try worshipping God for who He is at the same time. Try it. You'll find out.

Gate 2- If there are any of you left, the second one is the heart. Let me remind you from a previous lesson, what the heart is. The heart is what you think when you think no one knows what you think. Your heart is what you would do were there no restraints and no consequences. It is the real you. It's not the one we see at church on Sunday. It's not even the one your family sees at home. It is the inner chamber of your thoughts. It includes those not so silent movies that keep playing in the theater of your mind. Yours may be immoral; they may be X-rated. They may be outbursts of anger or bitterness you hold inside, and you would never let anyone else see it, but you are not afraid to replay it in your thoughts because you don't think anyone but you sees it. It may be some kind of fantasy that you feel comfortable with because you have concluded it will never really come to pass and no one will see it but you.

It may be a constant rerun of your saying things you wish you could say to your wife or husband, your children, your pastor, or your neighbor, and you know you never will, so you just run it over and over in your own mind. God looks at the heart. You are

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not the only one looking at that movie. The psalmist said:

Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

For there is not a word in my tongue, [in other words, that is yet to be spoken] but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. (Psalm 139:2-4)

That word on your tongue yet to be spoken, God has already heard it. He has a front row seat in the theater of the mind; He sees every scene; He hears every word. He hears you railing at your husband inside while you paste a smile on your face for your children's benefit. He sees you lusting after that person or that thing while pretending to campaign against lust. It breaks His heart. He sees us as hypocrites. A hypocrite is a "play-actor" who is acting on the stage of life one kind of existence, while the heart is showing a totally different production.

What goes into the eye gate goes into the heart. And what is manufactured in the heart is the real you. If we do not begin to monitor our thoughts second-by-second, shut down the theater and unplug the projector before the production begins, we will become neurotic hypocrites, fooling even ourselves into thinking we are becoming holier all the time, when all we are doing is improving our performance, and it's a lie.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

The literal translation is, your heart wins. It is the most deceitful thing in the universe. Somehow, we each think we are the exception, don't we? We say, "Yeah. I understand the heart is deceitful, but boy do I have mine under control." Let me tell you, if you think that way, you are doubly deceived. Guard the heart. It is the real you. The second your thoughts begin to drift toward that which does not magnify the name of the Lord, shut it down. Close the doors. Enter the room of the Word and begin to meditate on Scripture. Satan will flee from you, and your heart will begin to become increasingly holy.

Gate 3- This will be the focus of another study, but it is the key. If you have guarded your heart and eyes, the pathway becomes clear for the thoughts of God to become your thoughts;

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for you to progressively love what God loves and hate what God hates. God hates anything that defiles His nature. He is grieved over anything that produces lust, greed, discontentment, anger, or fear; anything that interrupts the fruit of the Spirit being produced in you.

Let's be honest for the last two or three minutes. Even if we agree with what has been said today, we can't seem to stop. We have programmed our mind computers with unholy thoughts, and we have focused the lens of our eyes on unholy things for so long that even if we make resolutions, become accountable, and grit our teeth until we have to see the dentist, we still seem to drift back into that folder in our computer marked "spiritual strongholds," and it opens and spits out things we don't want.

Let me remind you in closing, the key is spelled G-R-A-C-E. The key to holiness is grace. The key to grace is weakness. The key to weakness is humility. I know it's hard. No, it isn't hard; it's impossible. It is impossible for you to behave holy even though you are holy, except for the grace of God because naturally, you will follow the patterns. You have programmed your eyes and your mind all these years. But supernaturally, you and I can become experientially holy; increasingly holy day-by-day. It is a money-back guarantee given in Scripture.

But if you mean business, you must come to God in desperation and humility, and with an understanding that you do not deserve God's holiness. You cannot pay Him back for His holiness, and apart from Him you could never be holy—never. Having reached that mindset, you cry out to God daily, minute-by-minute, every time the enemy attacks, "Please, Lord, give me the grace to becoming increasingly holy."

If you do that on a regular basis, something will happen; something supernatural. The patterns on the hard drive of your mind will slowly be erased. The motivation to be holy will begin to increase, and you won't even believe that your wicked, deceitful heart is longing to be free from the hypocrisy that has characterized your Christian life. The warfare won't go away; Satan will come at you in ways he never has before. But that's good because it will remind you that it's a spiritual battle you can't win apart from grace. Instead of focusing on your becoming holy, the focus will be on God who is holy, and the incredible grace He wants to give you. He wants you to be holy because He

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is.

As you cry out to God, you must understand that only time spent in His presence will acquaint you with His holiness enough for you to continually desire it. And as you spend more and more time in His presence, your own sin and hypocrisy becomes clearer and clearer and clearer, and you begin to hate what you have been and the years you have wasted being satisfied with less than an increasingly holy life.

You begin to hunger and thirst after righteousness in ways you never did before. Most of all, your character will be changing. You will be, becoming holy. It will be a miracle; it will be a joy; and it will be all of grace.

There will be a price. Beloved, the things you have enjoyed and pretended not to enjoy will have to go. Your inflated opinion of your own spirituality will have to dissolve in an ocean of humility and reality. And yes, the facade will have to go. But in its place, there will emerge day-by-day, a new you. And that new you will be the person you have longed to see all of your life. The grace of holiness is ours for the asking. And there will never be a better time to ask.

OH, FOR THE GRACE TO BE HOLY

Oh, for the grace to be holy
Progressively set apart,
Wonderfully from the inside out
Receiving God's dear heart.

Loving only the things He loves
Hating our every sin,
Longing, seeking to have at last,
Purity from within.

Eyes that will not look upon
The things that make God grieve,
A heart that will not clutch at things
God longs for you to leave.

A life of grace that understands
It's undeserved and free,
And yet, cries out, "Lord, holy
Is what I long to be."

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Oh, for the grace to be holy
Progressively set apart,
I AM is holy, child of God,
And I AM lives in your heart.

Do you long for the grace to be holy?
Oh, dear believer, it's true.
You have the grace to be holy
But the choices are up to you.

Let's pray.

Our Father and our God, some of us need to look You straight in the eye and honestly say, "Dear God, the game is up. I'm tired of playing and play-acting. I don't want to pretend to be what I'm not. I want to be what You are. And You who have called me, are holy, and that holiness lives in my heart.

By Your grace, and Your grace alone, I ask You right now, to begin accelerating the process of causing Your holiness to flow through my life. And if a lot of garbage has to go, dear God, let's get rid of it, and let's get on with the process of becoming the holy ones we are."

In Jesus' name. Amen.

A Challenge to Further Study

1- Take the Scriptures found in the paragraph at the bottom of page four and look them up. What do these "holy" things have in common? How did the New Covenant change our concept of holiness? Can you find Scripture to confirm your answer?

2- Why is the third person of the Trinity called the "Holy" Spirit? What is His function in the Godhead? How does what He does for us confirm His title?

3- Have you ever thought of yourself as a "saint"? Why not? When Paul wrote to the "saints" in Ephesus or Corinth or Philippi, to whom was he writing? Read I Corinthians 1:2. Does the tone of this letter indicate these were especially "holy" people?

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A Challenge to Further Application

1- Imagine in your mind that God has placed a sentinel at the gateway to your eyes. All He asks is that before anything passes through that gate, you seek the permission of the sentinel. The sentinel's name is the Holy Spirit. How would that affect the things you normally watch? Does what you watch have to be evil by the world's standards to be wrong for you? Make three lists. Make one list of the things you look at that you know do not edify you. Make a second of things that take time away from you that ought to be spent with God, and make a third list of things that actually create in your mind and heart visual images of things that defile you. Pray seriously for one week over those three lists. Ask God for wisdom to refocus your eyes on that which will free God's holiness to flow through you.

2- Ask God to monitor the theater in your mind this week. Be honest with Him about the things that go on there. Make a list and begin the process of shutting down the theater before the productions begin.

3- Spend the next week worshipping God for His holiness. Confess sin honestly and openly. Plead with Him for the grace to become progressively holy. Pray expectantly. Watch Him do a miracle in your life. He will. When He does, be sure to praise Him.

A Challenge to Scripture Memory

Memorize I Peter 1:15,16 and Matthew 6:22 and 23 this week.

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