

Do You Understand the Real Meaning of Holiness?

When a man has come to the place where his love for Christ has surpassed his desire for all else, only the presence of God will satisfy him, and the will of God becomes his delight. It is in this place of satisfaction that true consecration is born. If a person's longings are satisfied in Christ, he no longer desires the bitter taste of sin. But without this divine fulfillment, there is an endless search for satisfaction for which the pleasures of sin provide a temporary but attractive solution.

Have you ever noticed that things taste so much better when you're hungry? But after you have eaten and you're full, you could walk right past a buffet of delicious delicacies and not have the slightest desire for them. Proverbs 27:7 says it this way: "The full soul loathes a honeycomb, but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet."

Perhaps you have heard the cliché that we were created with a God-shaped hole inside of us that only He can fill. Augustine said it this way: "Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee." But if that hunger is not satisfied with God, then even the bitter taste of sin becomes appetizing. If a person strives to be holy by desperately trying to avoid the buffet of worldly indulgences without having satisfied his soul in God, that person will remain hungry, and the temptation to sin will become greater and gain more and more power over him. Without love you just might need to live atop a pillar for 68 years to avoid temptation. But when you get full of God, sin will lose its appeal. If you become satisfied by the ultimate delight of God's presence, you will not want to waste your time with anything less.

Holiness is not a miserable discipline; it is the natural consequence of the discovery of ultimate delight! The psalmist said, "They will drink their fill from the abundance of Your house, and You will cause them to drink from the river of Your pleasures" (Ps. 36:8). God is not against pleasure—in fact, He wants to satisfy us with pleasure as we have never known. Psalm 16:11 (NKJV) says, "In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." A person who has found complete satisfaction need not look anywhere else for fulfillment, and there are no longer any rivals for the throne of his heart because he knows that no one else can compare to Christ. Can you see it? This is how a person becomes consecrated, separated and holy—not through self-flagellation, mutilation and penance, but through complete satisfaction in Christ alone!

Take for example an accomplished concert pianist who has spent many years of his life refining and honing his extraordinary skill. How many times did he deny himself the pleasures his peers were enjoying? During childhood, while his friends were outside playing football, he was sitting at the piano. While they were playing video games, he was practicing tedious scales and repeatedly rehearsing the same piece. Why was he willing to deprive himself of what others enjoyed?

Did he have to strive to avoid football and video games? No! His motivation came from a greater desire, and his energy was directed toward the pursuit of that greater longing. He desired a pleasure far greater than what was being offered on the sandlot or in front of the television. Maybe he longed for the applause of the crowd and the warmth of the limelight, or maybe he simply loved music and found in it a freedom for his soul. Whatever the motivation, one thing is certain: He forfeited a lesser amusement for a greater delight. {eoa}

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