

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
March 6, 2016

To Be Holy

1 Peter 1:13-17

1:13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1:14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,

1:15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,

1:16 since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

1:17 And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile.

1. Purpose of Salvation

In the First Letter, up to the chapter 1 verse 12, Peter taught about the salvation of Jesus Christ, and from verse 13, he moved to the new subject. It appears in verse 15 and 16, “but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, You shall be holy, for I am holy.” As it said, the people who are saved, are called “to be holy.” “To be holy” is synonym for “sanctification” or “holiness”. Sanctification is God's work to make the people who believe in Jesus Christ and are saved, not to commit the same sins repeatedly, be transformed to the children of God, follow and serve God. Holiness is the fruit of sanctification and the personality formed by God's grace.

In the Old Testament era, when God rescued Israelite from Egypt and made them the people of God, he said “I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore, be holy, because I am holy.” (Levi 11:45) God made Israelite “the people of God” so that they would be the witness of Holy God for the gentiles who were worshiping idols and committed moral disorder at that time. In order to show that God is the Holy One and requires pure heart and faithful life, Israelite needed “to be holy.” Therefore, God required Israelite “to be holy.”

If you believe in Jesus Christ, you are “the People of God” in the New Testament era. God wants us, Christians, as well as the people of God in the Old Testament era “to be holy.” In the 1 Thessalonians 4:7 “For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness” It says “God called us in holiness” clearly. We are saved by Jesus Christ “to be holy.” “To be holy” is the purpose of salvation. If you loose the purpose, you also loose the meaning of it. When you travel, you can enjoy it because you have a destination. If you don't have the destination, the travel becomes wandering. The life of faith is the travel to heaven. If you forget about the fact that you are saved “to be holy,” you will get lost on the way to heaven. We should remember why we are saved.

2. Calling and Promise

However, then, is it possible for human beings to be the saints by themselves? What did you think of after reading “be holy” for the first time? If the Bible required us to be smart, kind, or patient, you might be able to make some efforts to achieve them; but being saints, “holy”

in other words, should be the limited for few, who does extraordinary and live the way close to God. God is holy, needless to say. He is above all and full of glory. Although angels praise Him “Holy, Holy, Holy” day and night, it still not enough. Even angels living in heaven are afraid of His holiness, and how human beings could follow the calling of “being holy” as verse 15, “as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.” In this world where people desire to be rich, outstanding, famous, or have fun, and compete each other to gain those lusts, being holy is considered as the least priority and such foolishness. Even if some of Christian doesn’t prioritize “being holy” over everything, it’s not surprising. Then, how could we follow His calling after all?

Of course, people cannot; yet He is able. Well, He already did. In chapter 1 verse 2, Christian people are called as “those who are in the sanctification of the Spirit.” When you believe in Jesus Christ, you are reborn as His child through Holy Spirit, and Holy Spirit lives in those who believe. Since He is Holy and cannot live in dirty place, He cleansed us to be His place to live. So, those who believe in Jesus Christ are all called as “Saints.” Therefore, when we believe that we are already holy, nourish our heart as the saints, and walk the way of holiness, we could be the saints ever more.

If we translate “to be holy” more accurately, it says, “Let God make you holy.” This is the passive imperative form. In the Bible, this form has the particular meaning, and the biblical scholars call this “theological passive.” That means, “to be holy” is imperative, but it is the promise from God that He makes us holy at the same time. His calling is always along with promise. He calls us to do something, and

gives us strength to achieve them when we follow His calling. For example, Lord Jesus said to us, “Do not worry,” and “Your heavenly Father knows that you need them” at the same time, and gave us the promise God fulfills our needs.” (Matthew 25:34) If we concern God’s call is overwhelming or cannot accept them sincerely, that’s because you lost the part of His promise. He called us “to be holy” and promised, “I will make you so.” We shall believe this promise, pray and call up on, “Make us holy” and follow His calling throughout our life.

3. Response to Promise

Then, how can we seek to be holy? The scripture this morning describes how. The verse 13 says, “Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” What does “your minds for action” or in Japanese: “the hip of your heart” mean? In Japanese, it means central part of the body, so it refers to the most important part of your heart. Of course, the most important part of the heart of those who believe in Jesus Christ is faith. In modern society, so many different doctrines are out there. If you don’t learn the faith in the Bible systematically, you will be tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrines. The verse 13 says, “set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” and teaches us about hope toward Heaven. As you learn, a hope that never vanishes only comes from the faith. Spend enough time to study faith and have a firm faith and let God make you holy.

The verse 14 says, “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance” and teaches us to be obedient to God. Before we obtain faith, we followed our own passions and were conformed to this world. In a sense, we had a meaningless life. However, when we have faith and decide to follow God, we experience the force that prevents us from following God and therefore we struggle in our heart. But this is a necessary battle “to be holy.” Those well-respected Saints had gone through the same battle in their heart. However, they defeated temptations and chose to obey God’s will. They had received the blessings that this world could never give but only obtainable by following God.

The verse 17 describes one more reason to be in sanctification of the Spirit. As it says “if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile.”, all the people will have a time when God asks what kind of life we have had. We have to reap what we sow. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who seek “to be holy” reap fruit of holiness. Even if you don’t reap what you sow on the earth, you will reap what you sow in your life when you will stand before God. If you think about that, you will naturally have fear in your heart and you will want to, and want to ask God, to live a life that pleases Him. Let’s seek this through our prayers. Let’s take the word “Be Holy” seriously and seek and pray to be holy.

As the verse 15 says, “you also be holy in all your conduct”, being holy does not mean you have to do something special, but this should be done in your daily life. Having faith to God, being obedient to God

and feeling fear to God are something you can do in your daily life. Mother Teresa says, "Holiness is not the luxury of the few. It is a simple duty for you and for me and for all of us.... Holiness does not consist in doing extraordinary things. It consists in accepting, with a smile, what Jesus sends us. It consists in accepting and following the will of God."

One Christian Radio program always ends by saying "Be a saint! What else?" Amen to this. To live as a saint and to be holy is something everyone should seek for and everyone can obtain. We ask God for what God wants from us, and that is the first step to be holy. Let's take the step together.

(Prayer)

Dear Holy One, you have sanctified those who came to you and made them saints. Please help us remember that we have become saints. Lead us to walk as saints, and to be holy more. Please help us put the first priority to be holy, that is holiness, in our hearts. In the name of Lord Jesus we pray, Amen.