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A little boy had difficulty pronouncing some words. The word worship was one of them. He said, "We go to church to wash-up." This is quite true. The process of washing up or cleansing is called sanctification and the end result is holiness. God loves us the way that we are but His desire is that we not stay that way. God wants us to be just like Jesus. This is one of the names which God gave us to call Him. The Hebrew word QADASH means to sanctify or to make holy. Jehovah M'Kaddash means God who makes us holy.

Ex. 31:12 Then the LORD said to Moses, 13 "Say to the Israelites, `You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy.

Lev. 20:7 Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the LORD your God. 8 Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the LORD, who makes you holy.

In these chapters God is forming the Israelites into a nation. In the middle of chapters related to building the temple and keeping the Sabbath, God explains that the purpose of the rules and regulations He was giving were not to make life difficult for the people. They are not just a set of random hoops to be jumped through, arbitrary rules without meaning. They are things that the one who created us calls us to do for our own health and our own good. These are things to bless us by helping us to form habits and attitudes in line with who God created us to be.

I read an article recently entitled Atheists in Praise of Christianity. It is about the fact that many people who are not believers are recognizing the fact that Christianity just works better than secularism and humanism. A guy called Tom Holland who is an atheist recently wrote a book Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World. The book says that Christianity revolutionized sex and marriage. It elevated women and introduced the Judeo-Christian values of love, tolerance, and compassion – without which the Western world could not exist. Another guy atheist named Douglas Murray recently wrote that the decline of Christianity is a dangerous thing. He said that when we reject the idea that all human life is precious that we loose the fundamental foundation upon which our culture has been built.

As a church, we believe that holiness is important because it is only when we live the life that God intended us to live that we find health and hope and purpose. When we speak out about things like abortion or about lying, greed and hate. When we talk about lifestyle choices like adultery, homosexuality and transgender – we are not doing so because we somehow think that we are better than others. We are doing so because we recognize that as a society we are loosing the foundations upon which our culture was built and that doing so has TERRIBLE consequences.

God created us to be different. To be holy means to be different, to be set apart. In Christ we have been set apart. The word for saint (which is what we are in Christ) means one who has been sanctified or set apart to God. When we accepted Christ we died to our old life and were set apart for Him. However, sanctification is not just an event but also a process. We are called to become Holy. We are called to be what we have already become.

Think about a person who is married but later cheats on his wife. Having become married (when he set himself apart to his wife) he later showed he had no intention of being married (staying set apart to his wife only). Likewise as Christians we are declared holy in Christ but called to become holy in our day to day living. We are to live what we are. A set-apart condition must lead to a set apart lifestyle.

1 John 1:5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. 2:1 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin . But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. 3 We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. 4 The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: 6 Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

1. RECOGNIZE that life is a journey (vs. 1:5-10) – if we walk in the light

Life is a journey, and so is faith. It is an ongoing process.

The Pelicano was the world's most unwanted ship. Once termed the "hobo of the high seas" no port in the world would allow her to dock. The problem was not the boat – the 466 ft freighter was in good shape. The problem was not the owner or the crew. The problem was the cargo. In 1986 the city of Philadelphia had a municipal workers strike. Over that long summer the trash piled higher and higher. That's when the Pelicano entered the picture. Thinking to turn a quick buck, the owners of the ship agreed to transport Philadelphia's garbage. The trash was burned and the 15,000 tons of ash laced with toxic and hazardous materials were placed into the Pelicano's hold. When the Pelicano tried to get rid of it's cargo, port after port refused. For years it sailed around the world looking for an open harbor. After many years the ship eventually showed up in Singapore with a new name and an empty hold. Investigators believed they had dumped their load at sea. Months later a suspicious fire destroyed the ship. Most believe that the owners had set the fire for the insurance money.

The Pelicano's plight is a modern parable. Trash filled ships are not welcomed in many ports, neither are trash filled lives. How is the garbage in your own life? Is there anything in your life that you would just love to unload but just can't seem to be able to. Life has a way of unloading it's garbage onto our decks but God has given us a different cargo to hold. We are called to get rid of the trash and be holy.

Phil 1:3 I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

God changing us is a process and not just an event. It's a journey, not an overnight sensation. The word BEGAN means salvation. This is when you first gave your life to Jesus. The word CARRY IT ON is sanctification. That is the process, the journey.

Have you ever been on a long car ride with your family? I remember going to Florida when I was young. The whole way you keep asking “Are we there yet?” That question is a sign of immaturity. The reason that some people walk away from the church is because of spiritual immaturity. They give their lives to Christ and expected immediate and complete transformation. Have you ever said to God “Come on! I’m not changing the way I should. You must not work.”

So many Christians are asking “Are we there yet? Are You done yet?”... I’ve had this problem and have been working on it for a week!” One of our problems is we’re an instant gratification society. We want stuff right now! The reason that we have a problem changing is because we don’t understand God’s economy of time. It’s very different than ours. God’s not in a hurry to change us.

The good news of sanctification is that it is a journey and you have not arrived yet. It is OK if you still struggle. The trip is the vacation. You are a work in progress. God’s not done with you yet.

2. REMEMBER the final destination (vs. 2:1a) – so that you will not sin

If you want to cooperate with God’s change, you set your sights on the final destination. This is basic travel etiquette. If you’re a Christian, the picture of your final destination is Jesus Christ. Another way of saying it is this: the final destination is wholeness.

1 Peter 1: 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

To be holy is to be set apart. It means that we behave and act in a manner that is different than that of the world because we have been set apart for the use of God. Every word we speak and every thing that we do must be seen and done in light of our relationship with Christ. It is the practical response to God’s love in our lives.

Holiness means that we are set apart. That means we are different than the world around us. One of the greatest issues I see with the North American church today is that Christians look and act exactly like non Christians. It is hard to tell the two apart. When we lived in Kuwait it was easy to tell who was a Muslim and who was a Christian. People knew just by looking at you. Here in Canada everyone is the same. The is great pressure to conform to what is “normal”. My kids and others here have certainly experienced this pressure. They grew up in a different culture. When we got back to Canada they stuck out because they did not know how to do ‘normal’ things like ride bikes and play baseball. They were different so other kids treated them differently.

As Christians we are NOT NORMAL. We are different and we should act like it. Perhaps part of the problem is that we have seen holiness as a negative thing. We think that holiness means that you can’t have fun. Nothing could be further from the truth. I had a friend in Kuwait who was pastor of the Anglican church. Before this he had been in part time ministry. He supported himself by being an entertainer (illusionist) and doing kids parties and conferences. One day he was doing a show right after a chorus line. The only place he could dress was in the room with the ladies. As he was taking off his shirt one of the Filipino girls recognized him. They had a prayer meeting in the dressing room.

The goal of holiness is a deeper relationship with Christ. The problem is we often focus more on the appearance of holiness that we do the root. Our efforts towards holiness can often lead to the exact opposite.

Like the youth who goes on a retreat and comes back dedicated to spending a half hour a day with God in prayer – when they fail they feel worse than before. The issue is the relationship with God that prompted them to spend time with Him in the first place. The goal in sanctification is not perfection but a growing relationship.

The secret of true obedience is the clear and close personal relationship to God. All our attempts after full obedience will be failures until we get access to his abiding fellowship. It is God's holy presence consciously abiding with us that keeps us from disobeying Him. I must consciously include the Lord in every thought, activity, and conversation until the habit is established. -- Andrew Murray

Sanctification is a process. It begins when you accept Christ and ends when you go to be with Him in heaven. We will never BE completely sanctified on earth – but that does not mean that we should stop trying to move forward. We need to aim high.

“The person who shoots their arrow at the sun will not hit it but will shoot farther than the one who aims at a bush.”

3. REQUEST help with roadblocks (vs. 2:1b) – if anyone does sin

Roadblocks are areas of life that slow down movement. They slam on the breaks of change.

2 Cor 7:1 Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

Circle that word EVERYTHING. There are many things that can keep us from moving forward in our relationship with Christ.

God's ideal for us is that we do not sin. As a good father it pains God to see us hurting and defeated. What good father does not want to see His children learn the easy way. However, we know that our children will make bad choices. This does not mean that we love them less. We simply pray that they learn from their mistakes, get up and keep going. Sinlessness is the standard but grace is always available.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”

There are two paths to holiness. As John Donne wrote: “Sleep with clean hands, either kept clean all day by integrity or washed clean at night by repentance.”

The way to deal with sin is through confession and repentance. This means that we acknowledge our sin before God and make it our goal to turn away and to not sin again. Confession and repentance is much more for our sake than God's. Sin destroys our relationship with God, not so much because God moves away but because we move away from God. Confession and repentance brings us back to God's feet and removes the barrier.

An old deacon who used to pray every Wednesday night at prayer meeting always concluded his prayer the same way: "And, Lord, clean all the cobwebs out of my life." Week after week he would pray, "Lord, clean all the cobwebs out of my life." Finally, It got to be too much for one man at the

prayer meetings. He heard the old deacon one time too often. So when the he heard that prayer again, he jumped to his feet and shouted: "Lord, Lord, don't do it! Kill the spider!"

4. REFUEL often (vs. 2:2) - the atoning sacrifice for our sins

This is good for a journey motif. You've been driving your car in the middle of nowhere and you pass by that exit with the sign that says it is the last gas for miles, but you figure you can make it and you're on empty. You are too busy to stop, you wanted to keep going and on schedule, your kids are talking. And all of a sudden you're living with this stress and fear and your body tightens up because you know you might really run out.

Generally speaking, you are not supposed to recharge electrical devices until they have been almost completely spent. This helps prolong the battery. While this may be good advice for electronics, it is terrible advice for people. I need to be refueled every day. I've got to be "topped off" by the creator. This involves spending time with God every day in prayer and in His word. It is only then that we will truly see God as He is and ourselves as God intended us to be.

I recently read of an interesting incident in the life of the great military leader Napoleon. One day the commander's prize steed ran away from him. An alert private immediately jumped on a horse and chased after the steed. When the private returned the horse to the general, Napoleon smiled at the private and said, "Thank you... Captain!" The overjoyed private immediately took his old uniform to the quartermaster and exchanged it for that of a captain. He then ran back to the barracks, packed his bags, and moved into the officers' quarters. In an instant with just a word Napoleon had changed his status from that of a lowly private to that of a commissioned officer. He never once doubted the commander's words. Instead, he believed what the general had said and acted accordingly.

5. REJOICE in your progress (vs. 2:3-6) - how we know we are in him

If you're a Christian, God has worked in your life whether you think so or not. You may be slamming on the breaks, buried under a pile of roadblocks but God is working in your life. Don't look ahead and see how far we have to go. Look back and see how far we've come. When you look into the window of your soul, can you see that God is doing some changing. He is. Maybe you don't see the change because you are not looking. You haven't paused. You're not reflecting. You haven't stopped and looked at your life.

Ps 40:5 Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders you have done. The things you planned for us no one can recount to you; were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too many to declare.

In Florence, Italy, a young artist labored long and hard over a marble statue of an angel. When finished, he asked Michelangelo to examine it. No Master looked over the work more carefully than Michaelangelo. It appeared perfect in every way. The young artist waited. His heart nearly broke when he heard, "It lacks only one thing." But the great artist didn't tell him what it lacked. For days the artist could not eat or sleep, until a friend called on Michelangelo at his studio and ask him what he thought. He said, "It lacks only life." What seemed a criticism was in reality a compliment.

God wants you to understand today that sanctification is a process. It is a long process and there will be roadblocks along the way. Cooperate with Him in the process.

I started off by telling the story of the Pelicano. It's last port of call – Singapore - has also had problems with trash in the past. The island nation now deals with it's trash by burning it, creating the same type of toxic ash that the Pelicano was filled with. However, near Singapore special islands have now been built. The burnt trash is compacted and buried making the foundation for a nature reserve which thousands enjoy. Don't you want to see God take the negative destructive things in your life and bring about something beautiful and living through them?

I want to call you to respond today. Maybe you are here and you recognize that you still have a long way to go. One of the things you can do to get moving is Baptism. It is a personal decision to declare your desire to follow Christ. You do not have to be perfect to be baptized. The only prerequisite is a relationship with Christ and a desire to make Jesus first in your life. We have classes starting next week if you are interested.

And for some of you here, you haven't even started the journey yet. The old life is still there. You're a seeker. You're checking this whole thing out. You're walking around the Christian faith, kicking the tires. You're questioning its reliability. I want to encourage you today, would you jump into relationship with Jesus Christ? Say, "God I want that kind of change. I want You to do a work in my life." You don't have to go to any special class for that or wear anything, just talk to God. Say, "God I want a relationship with You. Would You come into my life and forgive me and give me that new life? As much as I understand that." You can say that right now in the silence of your heart or when we pray or during the song or in your car. But if you've never committed to have a relationship with God, would you commit your life to Christ?