

The Ways of God 4

Read Isaiah 35:8

When we arrive in heaven, we will hear this chorus, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." (Rev. 4:8b) Holy means "set apart, completely separate from and above all else." When we think of this word, we think of God. He defines the word. His ways are perfect. (Ps 18:30).

Read 1Peter 2:9-10

Because God is holy, His people should be holy. In our opening passage we read that God's holiness is like a highway we travel upon. "the unclean shall not pass over it." When we act as God's children and walk in His ways, we are traveling the highway of holiness. Only God's children can do that because it is God's presence in them that enables them to do so. But if their mind is unclean, they will find themselves desiring something they are unable to do. Though He is present in their life, the uncleanness of heart or mind will hinder the enabling power of God in our life.

Read 1Peter 1:13-16

Holiness is what is right, what is consistent with the nature of God. As children of God, we are required to be holy, to live holy lives. We know that is not possible, for we sin constantly. Once we have received Christ's atoning sacrifice, we are holy in God's eyes. This is referred to as positional holiness. In our daily life though, we fall way short of how God sees us. He wants our lives to express holiness so that others can see Him in us. That makes us eternally effective in ways that really matter. The process of becoming increasingly holy is called sanctification. See the contrast in Hebrews 10:14.

The process of sanctification is working the holiness of God into our heart, mind, will, and actions. It is an increased yielding to the Spirit of God in us. It is a surrender of ever deeper areas of our heart. As we walk with the Lord, spending time in prayer and His word, He transforms those areas of our life. We face situations that reveal unsundered areas. We can recognize them, because they are inconsistent with the fruits of the Spirit. When they come up, we feel uncomfortable because we are born again and realize that those thoughts or actions are inconsistent with who we are now.

When this happens we need to take time to examine the roots of those problems and consider what areas of our thoughts or desires need to change and why. We need to side with God on the issue and recognize His way is the right way and so much better for us and all concerned. Then we put into practice that new way of thinking or responding that is consistent with the holiness of God.

During the first century, Christians allowed themselves to live on the highway of holiness. They were God's highway of holiness throughout the Roman Empire, and it changed the whole empire. Since then, men and women of God that have lived in the same way have affected their surrounding environments and changed the course of history.

When sin is allowed to remain, it greatly hinders our usefulness for God's purposes. See Isaiah 59:2. Constant compromise ends in a callousness that prevents us from the work of the Spirit. It may even demand the judgment of God in our lives. Consider Acts 5. When a congregation gets serious about serving God, God gets serious about their testimony. The more they are seen as representing Jesus, the more He requires in the way of obedience. See Galatians 6:7-8.

How do we stay on the path of sanctification toward experiential holiness? We must abide in Jesus. See John 15:1-4. What is pruning in this parable? Relate that to your life. Relate it to Proverbs 16:20. Discuss the flow of sap. To actively obey God on a continual basis helps us down that road. In contrast, disobedience sets us back. See Hebrews 12:14.

What does it mean to be the people of God?

How do people show God's holiness?

Have people seen God's glory in you? Give an example.

How is sin the opposite of holiness?

Pray about the life of Christ being manifested to a greater extent in our lives.