

A Verse to Live by

“Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”

Hebrews 12:14 ESV

June Prayer Focus

Living a holy life can seem overwhelming and impossible; it is without the power of the Holy Spirit. Pray for a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit in your life. The result of the Spirit in a believer's life is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control. They are the kind of believers that make the kind of church people want to come to. Also, we need to pray for our fathers. In our society, the importance of fathers has been down played and at times their leadership vilified. A loving, strong, Godly father and husband is one of the greatest blessings for a family.

Life Application Challenge

Take some time this month to study what it means to live holy. What areas of your life need some cleaning up? We all have them. We read in Hebrews 9:14 that Jesus' blood will "...cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!" Ask God to reveal areas where your conscience may be lacking. A holy life is not a burden but frees us from the burden of carrying shame and guilt. Sins promises everything but leaves us empty.

Recommended Scripture Reading

1 Peter 1 - A great chapter to renew our hope and encourage us to holiness.

Philippians 2 - reminds us what Christ-like living looks like.

Church On Fire!

Eleventh Street Church of God | June 2021 Prayer Newsletter

Uncondemned Believer, You're called to Holiness

Last month I wrote about having assurance and living without condemnation. If you were one struggling with insecurity; I hope you have found some peace. You are loved, saved, and set apart. You have been justified, made right in the eyes of God. What an honor!

Though salvation is a free gift of God, it is not a free license to sin. It is by grace we are saved; because really how could we earn Jesus dying on the cross in such a horrible way? Let's put that in perspective, if someone died for you, would you ever say, "well I am such a good person, I deserved them to do that for me"? Of course not! There is absolutely no way we could ever earn that kind of love and sacrifice from God. He did it, simply because He loves us, "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Ro. 5:8 ESV)

Living free of condemnation in no way means we can continue in unrepentant sin, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Mtt. 7:21 ESV) Our gratitude for what Jesus did should spur us toward obedience to God. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." (Jn. 14:15 ESV) Thus, we should be living differently once we are saved, "when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." (Eph. 4:21-24 NIV) The fact is, our behaviors, choices and lifestyles should be directly impacted by our salvation and our lives should be a reflection of that. Being reborn implies a new person and becoming Christ like should be our new goal.

When was the last time you really thought about living a holy life? Yet, each of us should be taking the call to holiness seriously. We have been sanctified, meaning set apart by God, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Pet. 2:9 NIV) This should change how we talk, think, react, and live. No longer should our eyes be fixed on worldly things, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Ro. 12:2 ESV)

We will meet God one day, and that is not something to take lightly, "So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." (2 Co. 5:9-10 ESV) Sobering thought, isn't it? We need to live in such a way that shows we actually believe that! "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'" (1 Pt. 1:15-16 NIV) Our time on earth as Christians should be spent loving the Lord with all our heart, soul and mind; and loving our neighbor as ourselves knowing one day we will kneel in front of His judgment seat.

If all this talk about holiness has that blessed assurance you felt before feeling a little less blessed and a lot less reassuring - be encouraged! There is help, and it will give you lots of hope. When you became a Christian the Holy Spirit came into your life, "And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38 ESV) The Holy Spirit teaches and guides us, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." With the power of the Holy Spirit we can live a holy life, growing and maturing with consistent progress forward. "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness." (Ro. 8:26a ESV) Our growth will not be overnight but continuous until we go to Heaven. And maturing will not always be pleasant but at times painful. This is where your assurance comes in. You will fall, you will mess up. And God may discipline you because He loves you. But your Heavenly Father is long suffering and loving, "...God is love." (1 Jn. 4:8 ESV) You still love your children even while they make mistakes; and oh, how much more our God still loves us. That unconditional love is not condoning the sin, but loving us despite the sin.

Living without condemnation is in no way condoning sins. It is the assurance we are a child of God and nothing will separate us from His love. But being a part of His family, we also have a responsibility to live a holy and reverent life.

Watching God Work,

Carolyn Abel