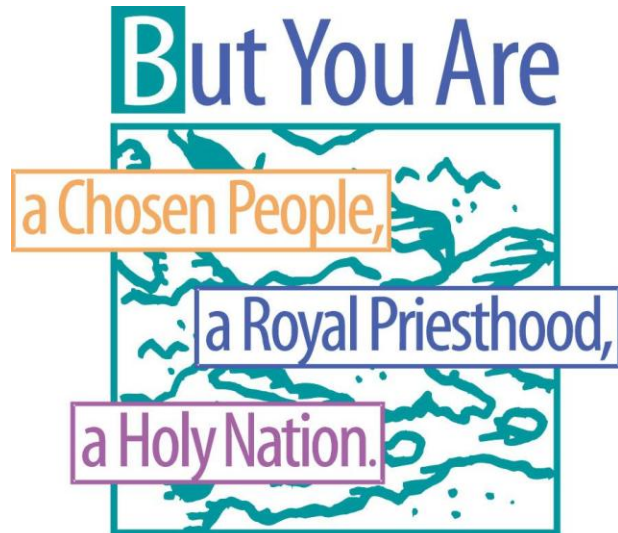


SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 5



HOLINESS, GOD'S PLAN FOR HIS CHURCH

Scripture Texts: Ephesians 1:4-5; Genesis 17:1-2; Matthew 1:21; 1 Peter 2:24-25; Ephesians 4:11-14

That man be holy, free from sin, and filled with God is God's never-changing, eternal plan.

The church has many enemies. Some work boldly from without. Others slyly destroy from within. Which is most dangerous? Some enemies are Communism, modernism, humanism, ecumenical and other movements, indifference, pride, half-heartedness, easy living, etc. Even with evil increasing, the church will be kept clean and holy and will continue to stand, because it is built upon the Rock, Christ Jesus (**Matthew 16:18**).

Looking at the height of the standard God has set for us, can we plead that we have to sin more or less every day? No! The standard God set is not too high. It is God Who does the purifying. He does not ask anything of man but that He does not provide all that is needed to accomplish it.

MEMORY VERSE: Follow peace with all man, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

—**Hebrews 12:14**

Perfection, God's Eternal Purpose

Ephesians 1:4-5 He hath chosen us...before the foundation of the world ... Chosen for what? God, knowing all things, never does things aimlessly. He works by plan. He has one basic, overall plan into which His doings fit. Before the world was made, God's plan for man was formed completely. It is **that we should be holy and without blame ...** Holy, without sin, without blame – nothing that the all-seeing eye of God can object to. Clean before Him. This is perfection. How can a weak human being be so? **In love.** The great love of God transforms the heart. The life is lived in the power of that love. Read **1 John 4:16** and **Romans 5:5**.

A Plan for Old Israel

Genesis 17:1-2 When God separated Abraham to Himself to be the father of His nation of literal Israel, He told him, **walk before me, and be thou perfect.** This was according to His plan formed before creating man. Abraham believed, yielded, worshipped, and obeyed God. He walked perfect by faith, not by his own striving or performing works for credit. His faith reached, took hold of God, and brought from Him life and purity. This is the essence of the Gospel – that a person may be made perfect or holy by faith in God (**Romans 4:3-5; Galatians 3:6-9**).

From **Ezekiel, Chapter 37** we learn God's promise of old to vindicate the honor of His holy name. To do so, He would cleanse the people of sin, give them new hearts, and fill them with the Holy Spirit. They would be **the holy flock (Ezekiel 36:38)**. As dry bones coming alive by means of the wind, so dead souls would live when the Spirit of God came into them. Looking forward to Christ's coming, God pictured the blessedness of the church, cleansed and holy, with Jesus (called David) as their King and Shepherd. **I will be their God, and they shall be my people.** Also, **This is the law of the house ... the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy (Ezekiel 43:10-12)**.

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Christ's Coming Was a Plan for New Israel

Matthew 1:21 The plan of God worked on. It brought the Law to Israel, brought the Prophets' foretelling a Savior's coming. When Jesus came, it was to **save his people from their sins**. His very name, Jesus, told His purpose, that He would accomplish it. One saved from sin is not left in it.

Christ's Death Was in the Plan

1 Peter 2:24-25 To carry out the plan, Jesus shed His blood. He voluntarily gave His life to take our punishment. He **bare our sins in his own body**. It was so **that we, being dead to sins** – separated from sins, out from under their power, free from them – **should live unto righteousness**. Dead, then alive, the completeness of holiness. **1 Peter 2** gives a picture of the new, spiritual Israel as it can be, must be, and is – **A spiritual house, an holy priesthood** following in Christ's steps **who did no sin**.

Holiness, the Ultimate Aim

Ephesians 4:11-14 Looking at the height of the standard of holiness God has set for us, many still believe and teach that we have to sin more or less every day. Did God make a mistake? No, He cannot! But humans do! No man can become as God, of course. Man can never equal Him in knowledge, wisdom, power, and many divine attributes. But in purity, he can. Man was made in the image of God. Only when Satan entered was the image marred. God, through Jesus Christ, completely cleanses away that mar. If He does not, it is because man does not desire to be made holy. Christ made holiness possible for all.

After His death and resurrection – Jesus returned to Heaven from whence He had come. From there, He **shed forth** the baptism of the Holy Spirit upon His people to give them power to live the holy life (**Acts 1:8; Acts 2:33**). Then He gave more gifts to men to further His plan. These gifts were men to lead and teach. He gave the men gifts to enable them to do their respective works (**1 Corinthians 12**). The reason for these workers is **the perfecting of the saints**. How much perfecting does He intend for us to have? **Till we all come ... unto a perfect man** – perfect in purity, in motive, in righteousness. How perfect? The pattern, the measure, for us to fill is Jesus Christ. God's plan and the provision He has made is that we increase in holiness till we come **unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ**. This is in this world (**Titus 2:12**).

To be like Jesus should be the desire of every child of God. It is the only way the world can see God.

JUST A THOUGHT

“Weeds and grain grow in the same surroundings – the only difference seems to be in their parents.”

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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