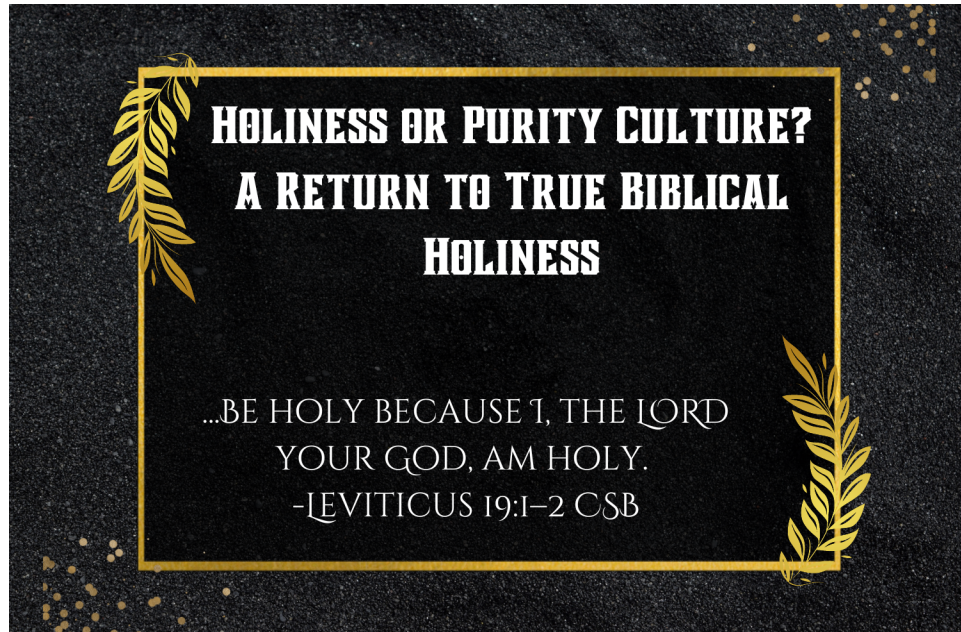


Bread of The Word

Trail of Breadcrumbs

Tyler Noe | January 18, 2023



Your eyes have seen what the LORD did at Baal-peor, for the LORD your God destroyed every one of you who followed Baal of Peor. But you who have remained faithful to the LORD your God are all alive today.

-Deuteronomy 4:3-4 CSB

The LORD spoke to Moses: "Speak to the entire Israelite community and tell them: Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.

-Leviticus 19:1-2 CSB

When I was in High School, I went on a retreat to a resort in the mountains of Tennessee. My parents had instructed me not to go whitewater rafting because I can't swim. Nonetheless, I went anyway and became the recipient of a stern discussion with both my parents upon my return. Grace was shown, but the gravity of that choice I had made was made quite clear to me. In the name of love and concern for my safety, they had set a clear boundary; a boundary I did not recognize and discerned was unnecessary. While I was safe, by GOD's providence, I wrote a metaphorical check that I could not cash. A similar disposition is often shared by people in regard to obedience to GOD. Many millennials, myself included, have been inundated with messaging stating that obeying GOD is an oppressive measure applied by people as a means of manipulation, control, and belittlement. After all, we are "under grace not law." Discussions of holiness and obedience are often mean-spirited and heavy-handed; thereby being received as "Legalism" or the new term, "Purity Culture."

I believe the Word of GOD does speak to the subject of holiness in Christians; but, contrary to many opinions, obedience is not presented by Scripture as a form of legalistic self-validation. But rather, it is the existence of boundaries that GOD Himself has placed for our good. In this piece, my purpose is not to browbeat anyone into a sort of moralistic endeavor, but to present an invitation into the character and heart of Christ, that we may bear the family resemblance as His adopted children (John 1:12-13; Ephesians 1:5).

What does the Bible mean by the "Holy?"

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As holy, God's people are both set apart from the world and set apart to love God and serve others.

-Pocket Dictionary of the Reformed Tradition

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This word has been used by many to strong-arm others into behaving a certain way, regardless of whether or not that ideal is rooted in Scripture (The "purity ring movement" comes to mind). Many in the Millennial generation have had negative experiences with the concept of holiness and thus have somewhat of an aversion to discussing it. Despite this, we must acknowledge that the LORD said to Moses to instruct the Israelites to "...*Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.*" In Hebrew, the word translated as "holy" is "Qadosh," which is a plural adjective, it is applied to a group of people, and means "set apart," or "consecrated." From there, Moses begins laying out a list of what could be seen as moral prescriptions, some of which seem to be things any logical person would vouch for, while other things seem rather harsh to people in the Twenty-first century. As he continues through this list, the phrase is repeated, "*I am the LORD your God.*" The grounds for this "consecration" is that He is

their GOD. The Israelites had a special relationship with the LORD. By the Cross, we outsiders have been brought near and now receive that same relationship (Ephesians 2:13). During His Earthly Ministry, Jesus Christ tackled many questions and misconceptions concerning the Law of Moses. He presented that list of “moral prescriptions” within two categories:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind (Deuteronomy 6:5), This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: **Love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18),** All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.” (Matthew 22:27-40).

Likewise, Christ also asserts that the Law had bearing on a man’s inward being. The Law was not to be solely understood as rules to follow externally, but as something pointing to a person’s internal disposition:

“Do you still lack understanding?” he asked. “Don’t you realize that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is eliminated? But what comes out of the mouth comes from the heart, and this defiles a person. For from the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false testimonies, slander. These are the things that defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile a person.” (Matthew 15:16-20).

“**Turn not from the true God to false ones, from the God who will make you holy and happy, to those that will deceive you, and make you for ever miserable.**
-Matthew Henry

Returning therefore to our initial question of holiness, the holiness that GOD desires in His people is an internal disposition that works its way to the outside; a way of thinking about things that informs our actions. In that sense, perhaps morality is not the proper term, but rather, ethics; a conceptualization of human character. Much like Leviticus 19, Deuteronomy 4 consists of a call from GOD to obedience and holiness. But unlike Leviticus, Deuteronomy points its audience to the past; to Israel’s past dealings with GOD and with sin, and uses those examples to inform their decisions in the present.

“Now, Israel, listen to the statutes and ordinances I am teaching you to follow, so that you may live, enter, and take possession of the land the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. You must not add anything to what I command you or take anything away from it, so that you may keep the commands of the LORD your God I am giving you.” (Deuteronomy 4:1-2).

The Israelites present at the time that what is written in Leviticus happened were not allowed to enter into the Promised Land because of their disobedience. Their disregard for those boundaries prevented them from entering the land that GOD had promised them. Now, Moses is exhorting this new generation of Israelites to learn from those mistakes; and to take the statutes of GOD but as something that gives life.

“Your eyes have seen what the LORD did at Baal-peor, for the LORD your God destroyed every one of you who followed Baal of Peor. But you who have remained faithful to the LORD your God are all alive today. Look, I have taught you statutes and ordinances as the LORD my God has commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to possess.” (Deuteronomy 4:3-5).

You who have remained faithful to the LORD your God are all alive today. Obedience to GOD is shown as something that gives life. By being joined to Him, we are invited to walk with Him in this new life.

“I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, 20 love the LORD your God, obey him, and remain faithful to him. For he is your life, and he will prolong your days as you live in the land the LORD swore to give to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” (Deuteronomy 30:19–20).

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**It seems to me a blessed privilege for us to be permitted to love one so great as GOD. It is a command, but we regard it rather as a loving, tender invitation to the highest bliss.
-Charles Spurgeon**

This holiness may look different from what was presented to many of us, but this is the picture that is painted by GOD. Through the Cross and the Empty Tomb, we are adopted into the Family of GOD; and sanctification is simply the process by which we bear the family resemblance.

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“Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of GOD, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to GOD; this is your true worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of GOD.” (Romans 12:1-2).

In light of the plenteous mercies of GOD, let us join ourselves to the LORD. Let us be made anew in His image; not for the sake of adhering to a

series of moral prescriptions by which we may maintain an outward appearance, but so that we may be holy as He is holy. Let us pursue peace and holiness, for without it no one shall see GOD. (Hebrews 12:14). We have remained on this mountain long enough (Deuteronomy 1:6), let us resume our journey towards Christlikeness that is rooted in loving our GOD and our neighbor.

The logo for 'Bread of The Word Podcast' features the words 'BREAD' and 'WORD' in a large, stylized, red serif font with a blue outline. The words are stacked vertically. Between 'BREAD' and 'WORD', the words 'OF THE' are written in a smaller, black, sans-serif font. Below 'WORD', the word 'PODCAST' is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

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-Deuteronomy 4:3–4 CSB

He humbled you by letting you go hungry; then he gave you manna to eat, which you and your ancestors had not known, so that you might learn that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

-Deuteronomy 8:3 CSB