

## **The Hole in our Holiness**

Be Holy as I am Holy – is an inescapable command from both Testaments.

The genesis of our tradition is heavily influenced by the holiness movement and our churches past and present have made much of the pursuit of holiness as essential for a “good” Christian life. Actually the focus of much of Christianity can be summed up by the words “right belief and right action.” But if we believe this, there is a big hole in our holiness. Even today much energy is spent on cultivating personal piety; following commands, attending, praying, giving, reading Scripture, witnessing, and making sure to do's are done and the do not's are avoided. These things are all good and are right to be pursued, but the area of relationships is a gaping hole in our common understanding of holiness. As a result our holiness often leads to us judging rather than embracing each other. That can't be right! It's like we have excised 1 John 4 and 1 Corinthians 13 from our understanding. We have left invitation, welcome, compassion, forgiveness, mercy, grace, real community, the loving of one another as God loves us, out of our understanding of holiness. When was the last time you heard someone say, “That person is so holy, they love and forgive so much?” Is it possible that we have pursued personal holiness, excluded relational holiness, and find ourselves branded by society as resounding gongs?

As I read Scripture, personal holiness and love for the other must go hand in hand. Actually personal holiness without love is not holiness at all. It is at best an attempt at righteousness with a dose of selfishness. Does that produce self-righteousness? The rich young ruler tried this same approach. He kept all the commands, or so he thought. He had to be told to give up that which kept his focus on self, so that his eyes could be lifted to see the giver of his riches. His focus on riches and self-righteousness had kept him from loving the other, thereby demonstrating that he also lacked a true love for God - the first command. And so he walked away. Is it possible for a holiness focus that includes personal piety but excludes love for the other, to be nothing more than a focus on self without a true love of God?

It's time to embrace whole holiness, love and perfection together, perfect love. Each for the other, church for church, country for country. After all wouldn't being holy as God is holy translate into imitating God, and therefore Christ? What did Paul say? “Follow God's example, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:1-2). That's perfect love.

So, let us pursue being wholly holy, as God is, and do the walk of love, as Christ did, perfectly. Let us become a wholly holy movement, a movement living perfect love.

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