

SURRENDER

Holiness

Acts 13:1-3

September 20, 2006 - Wednesday 6:30PM - Dr. David H. McKinley

[Dr. McKinley, message, SURRENDER: Holiness]

... have you answered today? Do you know? Well, that's at least one. You're trying to answer right now. Right? I mean if you just stop and think about it, every day in life we are bombarded with questions. Little questions, big questions, meaningless questions, consequential questions. And every day in life we all find ourselves trying to deal with answering questions. And the fact of the matter is many time we have a lot more questions than we have answers in life. And ah... we spend a lot of life and a lot time wrestling with questions.

Well, it's been said that there are five consequential questions that everyone needs to answer in life. So I'm just going to add some more questions to the questions you're already dealing with, but these are said to be the five most consequential questions in life. What are they?

First and foremost, the question of origin: Where did I come from? Next there's the question of identity: Who are we? Then there's the question of meaning: Why am I here? And then the question of morality: How should I live? And then finally there's the question of destiny: Where am I going? So where did I come from? Who am I? Why am I here? How should I live? Where am I going?

Now I can tell you tonight that if we were to take those five questions in the form of a survey, take a cameraman and a microphone and go out on the streets... go out into the mall... go over into the neighborhoods, and simply ask people to answer those five questions, we could get some very shocking and surprising answers. Or maybe we could find some very confused and very frustrated people. Because I find in my life that these are the things that many people to one degree or another are wrestling with on a regular basis... on a daily basis in life; not always from the philosophical realm, but many times from the practical realm. The decisions that they're making, the issues that they're battling, the frustrations that they're ah... that they're trying to handle in life, all to one degree or another seem to come back to touch one of these questions.

And in many ways to a large degree the way that you would answer any one of these five questions has to do with what you begin as the centerpiece of life. If the centerpiece is man and the world... that is, this world system...

what this world has to offer, then you're going to have one set of answers. And if the centerpiece of life is God and the spiritual world, then you're going to have another set of answers. And in many ways the world is really divided between people who have a God center and bring that to bear in answering those five questions, and those who have a man- or world-center and try to answer those questions.

A number of years ago Mortimer Adler edited a group of books called the great books of the western world. And in his multi-volume series called The Great Books of the Western World it was noted that Mr. Adler had put the greatest emphasis on a section in those books concerning God. And someone asked him why did you put so much emphasis on the "God" section of The Greatest Books of the Western World? And Mr. Adler simply said, "Because more implications ~~fl~~ flow from our view of God than from any other subject."

I don't know if you saw last week one of the headlines on the USA TODAY newspaper was the headline which said: "How You View God Affects Major Areas of Your Life". And they directed four specific areas of life that were influences based on how we see God and therefore, how we begin to deal with life.

Well, the man that we've been studying on Wednesday night, the Apostle Paul, is a man who had to wrestle with all five of the questions that I've given to you. Who am I? Where did I come from? Why am I here? How am I going to live my life? And where am I going?" And we've been making the journey with him as Paul has been going through a transformation.

Paul started one way in life. He was a man who was driven; he was a man of ambition; he was a man who was compulsive in every way. But he had the wrong center in life and every thing in life was off course. But then we saw how this Paul became a connected man, and that connectedness to God and a life that began to be shaped and developed out his relationship with God began to change the expression of his life and how he would answer these questions.

And tonight I want to add one more dimension to our understanding of the life of Paul and the answer to some of the key questions of life as I begin to step into an arena of life tonight that frankly is an area where there is a lot of uncertainty, there's a lot of speculation, there's a lot of confusion. And yet there is such an importance in the emphasis on this area in the Bible.

We'll start our reading tonight in Acts chapter 13, so I hope you have your Bible. I hope you're ready to open it with me. If you didn't bring a Bible, if you'll reach right there in front of you or just under the pew, there is a pew Bible, the same version that I'm using, the English Standard version and ah... you can pick that up... These are beautiful new Bibles that you can use in worship and I hope that you'll get one and hold it in your hand.

Now last week I took time to note to you that while so many people know about Paul... an experience in his life called the Damascus road, kind of that shining light... that shocking moment experience, sort of a sheezam moment where everything changed in his life, when Paul had an encounter with Christ. But there's another experience in Paul's life most people don't know about. And that is his Arabian Desert experience. How that the Apostle Paul who had this sudden transformation on the Damascus Road, a turn around in life, then went off into the desert for 3 years before he ever really was involved in any other form of ministry. And there he began to develop spiritual disciplines in his life and he talked about that in Galatians 1 and about the experience of becoming a man of God. And of course, that wasn't just the 3 years; it was to be carried on through a lifetime. But I tried to help you to understand something of the spiritual discipline and progress of spiritual growth in the Christian life.

But tonight we see Paul back from the desert. We see Paul as he has finally come back to Jerusalem, the place where he was first known as a persecutor of the church. And now God is working in the church. The church has begun to embrace Paul as... well, as a really odd figure; the man that they hated and now the man that they love. And so Paul is there. And here's what the Bible says. It says [Acts 13:1-3]:

*1) Now the church were at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2) And while they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I've called them." 3) Then after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them, and sent them out.*

Now what I just read to you is sort of a jump into the middle of a book, but it's actually the hinge... the turning point of the whole book. Until you get to this point in the book of Acts, almost everything is focused on the church in Jerusalem and it's been focused on the life and the ministry of Peter. The only real presentation of Saul was that rather negative picture of the man who was the persecutor of the church, but who did have this Damascus road experience; and then we left him quickly to go back to Peter.

But from this point forward... from Acts chapter 13 to the end of the book of Acts, all that we are going to hear about and read about are the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul. All of the focus on the emphasis of what's happening in the church moves from Jerusalem and we begin to read about Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. And it's from this portion of Scripture that we begin to see that this man's life is now being lived in full devotion and full persuasion of the fact that he is a man called of God and who is to be used of God. And so we see a man who is now on the move.

Now this is exactly what God said His plan was for Paul. Because after the Damascus road experience, in Acts chapter 9, beginning in verse 15, God spoke to a man by the name of Ananias, a man who was scared to death to go

connect himself to Paul. Ha, God said, "I want you to go meet this guy Saul. He needs some of your help and encouragement." Ananias said, "Lord, have You heard anything about this guy? He's the guy that everybody's trying to you know, stay out of his sight." Here's what God said to Ananias... He said to him in Acts chapter 9, verse 15, He said [Acts 9:15-16]:

15) *But the Lord said, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine to carry My name before the Gentiles, and kings and the children of Israel. 16) "For I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."*

God said this [clap] man Saul [clap] is a chosen instrument. I have a plan for this man's life. And I'm going to use this man in a great way. And so the very thing that had been said to Ananias back in Acts 9 is now being seen and beginning to unfold in Acts 13 because Paul is now being set apart. And that's really the phrase that I want us to camp on tonight. God said, "Set apart Saul and Barnabus."

Now why is this phrase *set apart* so important? Well, because the phrase *set apart*, though it is not used in the same form in this passage as it may be in others, is really the idea of holiness. It is really the idea of holiness. And when the Bible speaks of being set apart, it means that we're being set apart from one thing and we are being set apart to another thing.

Now specifically here in Acts 13, this is the call of God to two men for ministry. It is not even the same word that is used and is... and is ultimately translated holy in other places in the Bible. But without question if you study the background and the root of the word holiness, time and time again you will understand that from a biblical perspective holiness is this idea of separation.

So I want to talk to you about holiness tonight, because really from this point forward we see Paul a holy man of God. And what God called Paul to be in holiness is something that He is calling us to be as believers today.

So what I want to do is just ask questions, answer questions. We started out talking about questions; let's just do a little Q&A here tonight on the subject of holiness. And of course, the first question is: What in the world is holiness? I would even venture to say that if I were to go up and down the aisles of this church tonight and start asking the question "what is holiness?" I would get all kinds of ideas and definitions of what holiness is, because it's something that we struggle to define. We know it's important, but we struggle to really embrace it and to define it.

Some people would say that holiness means to be ah... in the state of moral purity and that's certainly true. Holiness relates to moral quality and moral purity. Other people would say that it means freedom from sin; that we're not a part of something that is sinful. And that's true as well. Others would say that something that's holy is something that is hallowed or consecrated to God. And that's true. But in the root form as I've already told you in essence the simplest definition of holiness is to be set apart.

You remember what happened to Moses? He'd been off for 40 years on the back side of the desert. And yet, he knew God had called him and there came a moment in his life that was a moment like no other moment, and from this moment Moses was getting ready to go back to Egypt and he was going to go make a difference. You remember what that moment was? Do you remember what that place was where he met God? It was called a... burning bush. Remember the burning bush? And do you remember what happened at the burning bush? Moses came up to the bush; the bush was burning with fire but it wasn't being consumed, and God said to Moses, "Moses..." (do what?) That's right, good, you know! "Moses, take off your shoes because the place you are standing is (what?) holy ground."

Now let me ask you something. If Moses had walked by that bush a day earlier, would he have known that was holy ground? Probably not. There really wasn't anything about that ground to walk by that made him say, "Oh, that's holy ground." And if somebody had walked by that bush a day later, would they have walked by and said, "Oh, there's the holy ground over there."? Not necessarily. I don't really know what the condition of the bush was after that day, but I do know that in all likelihood if somebody had come by, they wouldn't have known that it was holy just by looking at it. And I don't believe for a moment that Moses was... (Hoses!) Moses was standing there [laughter] ...

I've had a long day, too! Okay? Don't... don't think I've just been coasting coming in here. I've had a day like you have and I'm trying to get hoses and Moses put together tonight! Okay? [laughter] Or else Moses is going to get hosed in this service, so I want to take care of him. [laughter]

But Moses is standing there and God says, "Take your shoes off; this is holy ground." Now do you think Moses looked down and thought, "Oh, my gosh, look at that sand! It's totally golden!" Do you think if he'd reached down and picked up that sand and picked up another scoop of sand about 30 feet away, that there would have been any difference in the... in the sand? That one of them was gold, and the other one wasn't? Not necessarily.

What made that ground holy? God said it was holy! God said, "This ground is set apart from that ground, because this ground is a place where I am speaking to you and this is a holy place! It's set apart." Therefore, when we talk about this idea of holiness, it is so important that we understand that holiness in essence has to do with being consecrated or set apart from God. And therefore, holiness is not necessarily an external thing.

A lot of people think of holiness... when you talk about holiness, the first place most people go is to talk about externals: what people do and what they don't do, where they go and where they don't go, what they look like and what they don't look like. And certainly there can be an external expression of true and genuine holiness, but I'm saying that to you to say tonight that when Moses stood there, God had to say to him, "Get out of your shoes; the ground is holy." It wasn't that Moses just said, "Whoa!" It's that Moses said, "Wait a minute, I am having an encounter with God. And I must respond to who God is." So it's not just an external thing.

Nor is holiness just an internal thing. That is, it's not just something on the inside.

It was interesting in my study on holiness... Do you know one of the most common websites that comes up when you plug in the holiness? The Dalai Lama. That's right, the Dalai Lama. Buddhism... all those things that go along with that, because in some peoples' minds holiness is this state that happens internally, this sense of karma, this sense of getting things aligned on the inside where the world doesn't affect me from the outside because I'm all set up on the inside in some sort of a new arrangement with God or the cosmos or whatever it may be.

So therefore, holiness isn't just an external thing, holiness isn't just an internal thing; nor is holiness an ecclesiastical thing. That means it's not just a church thing; it's not just a religious thing. God doesn't want us dividing our world down between the religious and the nonreligious. What is holy and what we would say... sacred and what is secular. Because as believers we do not div... live in a divided world. We are who we are wherever we go and whatever we do!

So therefore holiness is not an external thing, an internal thing, an ecclesiastical thing. Holiness is a relational thing! Now hang on to that for just a moment. It's a relational thing. It has to do with how I am related to God. Now let me just try to give you a simple illustration of that.

Get out of the world of religion and get into the world of relationship and understand that every time a couple gets married what happens in the marriage is that 2 people are set apart from and set apart to each other. Set apart from what they were without each other, and in another life, and set apart to what they must become as one in this new relationship.

You see, when a person gets married what happens is that you begin a process of change. When two people stand at an altar and say I do, that's not enough. There's a process of change whereby you have to get up every morning and say I do, I do, I do, I do, I do. And you have to fight with all your heart not to say I don't. Okay? Because marriage is constantly moving us into the process of change. And when two people get married they enter into a new and vital relationship that begins to change old habits, old patterns; time and priorities realign; social arrangements have to be adjusted. Because life is now to be viewed as it is together, set apart from my single life and set apart to my partner. It's a relational thing.

And so for us as believers what holiness is, is coming into a progressive discovery of what it means to live my life in relationship to God, His plan and His purpose for me. That's what it is. It's me living my life in conjunction with what it means to be a part of His plan and His purpose for me. And everything in my life is being adjusted, being changed, being shaped, being fitted for Christ and for His purpose. That's [tap] what [tap] was [tap] happening in Paul's life. Everything was changing because Paul was being set apart. So what does it mean to be holy? To be holy is to

be in a relationship with God where everything in my life is being shaped to His holy purpose.

How do I know that this is what was happening in Paul's life? Well, listen to this passage of Scripture from the book of Timothy [2 Timothy 1:8-11]:

*8) Therefore (Paul said) do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor me, His prisoner, but share in the sufferings of the Gospel by the power of God, 9) who saved us and called us to a (what?) a holy calling, not because of our works but because of His own purpose and grace which He gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, 10) and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. 11) For which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle and a teacher.*

Paul said, I am learning what it is to live out my ho... holy calling and it all has to do with this relationship that I have with God.

So question number one, what is holiness? It's a relational thing. It's what happens truly and genuinely in my life when I get connected [tap] in right relationship with God.

But secondly, you have to ask the question: Why does holiness matter? Why does it matter? Why is this an issue? Why do we talk about this?

Well, certainly one of the reasons we do is it's a word that's used 600 times in the Bible. Six hundred times we read the word *holy*. And there's a reason for that, because above and beyond everything else that is used to describe the character and nature of God, God is described as being holy.

You know in the book of Isaiah chapter 6 that there was a moment when the prophet went into the temple of the Lord, the year that King Uzziah died and he saw the Lord high and lifted up. And the angels were declaring around the throne and what were they saying? "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty." Because God is separate, God is set apart, God is not like us in brokenness, limitation, sin and stain. He's not like us in any fashion, time, space, limited. God is infinite. God is pure. God is the ultimate reality.

And therefore, because of who God is, holiness matters. It's a character thing for God. And God, therefore, as a part of His character changes who we are when we come into relationship with Him. Once I become a believer, I can't live according to the old standard of life because I am linked to a new character and therefore to a new level of life in holiness with God. God is holy.

What does the Bible say about Him? Say it with me three times. "Holy, holy, holy." And so therefore, why does holiness matter? Because it matters to God. It's a character issue for Him. And God is desiring that I would begin to understand what it is to live my life holy and alive in Him.

Third question: who's called to be holy? Who is called to be holy? Well here we have this situation in the church where a group of people were together. They were leaders, they were ministering, they were praying, and God called some people out. In fact the Bible says here... the word is used... it says that they were worshipping and fasting and they were ministering to one another.

And the word ministering literally is that they were performing priestly services as though it were... it was... it was a very dynamic spiritual setting. And God said, Set apart 2 men, Saul and Barnabus. There are 5 or 6 men there in the room that were known to be leaders but 2 of them God said, set apart. And, yes, there was a uniqueness to the way that God set them apart.

But holiness is not something that is called or expected of simply those who are called to minister. Holiness is the calling of every believer. And what God desires is for us to discover and to begin, therefore, to pursue holiness in life.

Listen to Peter... 1 Peter 1, chapter 15 [verse 15]: [1 Peter 1:15]:

*15) but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all of your conduct.*

God wants us to begin to live life and to express life as a result of connection to His character, and to change life in such a way that we become a holy people. That is, we become people who reflect who God is and what God is like in this world.

Now Paul really wanted believers to understand this idea of holiness, of living a set-apart life. And yet, Paul knew that he struggled just like you and I struggle with, on the one hand, knowing intellectually that God is a holy God and that I want to live in a way that would be proper to Him. But I on the other hand, am a sinful person and I am constantly dealing with this downward pull in me that tends to pull me away from what God's called me to be or the standard that He's established for me. So I struggle with that. I struggle with how to bring all that together in life.

And Paul made it very simple. He used an illustration. He said, In reality everybody in life is a slave to someone or something. Whose slave are you? Because that's the one choice you can make. You can choose whose slave you will be in life. And he framed that in the book of Romans chapter 6, beginning in verse 16. I want to read this passage to you. Paul said:

*16) Don't you realize that whatever you choose to obey becomes your master. You can choose sin which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God and receive His approval. 17) Thank God once you were slaves to sin but now you have obeyed with all your heart the new teaching God has given you. 18) Now you are free from sin, your old master, and you have become slaves to a new master, righteousness. 19) ~~Speak this way, using the illustration...~~ He said, I speak this way, using the illustration of slaves and masters because it's*



*easy to understand. Before you let yourselves be slaves to impurity and lawlessness. But now you must choose to be slaves of righteousness so that you will become whole.*

The real issue in holiness in life is simply this issue: If I'm called to be holy, the way that I am going to be holy is through obeying Christ. Choosing to be His slave and not to be the slave of my own sin and my own self.

In that same passage a few verses later Paul says in verse 22:

*But now you are free from the power of sin, and have become slaves of God, and now you do those things that lead to holiness, and result in eternal life.*

That's what we are called to do. You are called to be holy. And for that reason the most common New Testament biblical reference to what you are and what I am as a believer in Christ is that we are called in the Bible saints. That is your role... that's your designation.

I am speaking to the saints at Prestonwood tonight! And what I'm trying to do is to stir you up and to encourage you and to help you to embrace the fact that God has called you to a life of holiness, and God, in relationship that you have with Him now, wants you to see yourself as a saint in the Lord Jesus Christ! And therefore, what you do, where you go, all that you are is about being holy to the Lord, being set apart to the Lord.

So that brings me down to sort of a final question here tonight. And you're thinking, Okay... trying to get this! Trying to get it all down! Trying to be set apart! What... How... how am I supposed to do this? And that really is the question. How in this world can I be holy?

I mean, the idea of a holy God, I can get that. God is holy; He's distant, He's separate, He's pure, He's perfect. But I struggle with living in a world where everything around me is a lure, a temptation. I battle to try to be the man... the woman God wants me to be. I battle with my attitudes. I battle with my... I just battle with everything in life! How [tap] in this world [tap] am I going to be holy? And you're telling me God's called me to be holy, but how am I going to do that?

Well, let me just wrap this up tonight by giving you just several things that are steps in life toward a holy life... because they all matter. If this issue matters to God, it's got to matter to me, it's got to matter to you! And so therefore, what I want to try to do tonight is to understand how I can be holy.

And may I point one more subtle thing out to you before I give you these steps toward holiness in life? In this passage of Scripture, the Bible says, "Set apart Saul and Barnabus for me." And the Bible says, "They prayed for them and they sent them out." I love that! This whole idea of being set apart was that they would be set apart and sent out. It wasn't

that they'd be set apart and brought in and cloistered and hidden and put away, and live separate from everyone and everything else, scared to death that somebody was going not let them be the holy people they were called to be. It's just the opposite.

This was the last thing that happened before God sent them out to the world to be missionaries for Christ. And so when Paul went out, Paul went out as a holy servant of God. And this whole church thing is not about us getting together and finding a way to huddle and huddle and huddle and get deeper and fuller and more and more separated from the world. But just as Jesus said, He said [John 17:15]:

*"Father, I pray not that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them in the world."*

And it's all about something that's to be lived in my life as I go out in the world to be the man... to be the woman that God wants me to be; to live a life of holiness to God.

How in this world can I be holy? Okay, first and foremost, obvious answer... Receive God's Son. You have to receive Jesus Christ. It's so important that I stand here tonight and say to you that holiness is not the way to God! You don't try to get holy so you can get to God. Holiness is not the way to Christ; Christ is the way to holiness. And the way that you become holy and that I become holy first and foremost is when we enter into the right relationship with God made possible through His Son Jesus Christ!

I love what 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 30 has to say about this subject. It talks about the work of Christ and what Jesus came to do for us. And in 1 Corinthians 1:30 the Bible says:

*He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification (literally our holiness) and our redemption.*

We are made holy in Jesus Christ! You can't do something to make yourself holy in the purest sense of the word because the way that you are set apart from the world and for God is that you recognized that you can't bridge the gap between yourself and God, and therefore, you come to God, you call out to Him in faith and in repentance, and you receive Jesus Christ. And when you receive Him, you receive the gift of eternal life, and you are made holy... set apart in Christ. You are marked out of this world and you are marked into heaven. Receive God's Son.

Second answer is: you do have to recognize your responsibility. Now it's all in Christ and all of Christ but there is a responsibility for you and for me. You say, "Well, isn't that a contradiction? Well, let me ask you this: Is the Scripture in contradiction? Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 14... the writer of the book of Hebrews makes a very specific statement and this is it:

*Strive for peace with everyone and pursue holiness without which no one will see the Lord.*

In other words, I can't come to God on my own holiness. I have to be made holy in Christ, but the Bible does tell me I am to pursue holiness. That there's a part that I have in this... that there's a function and a role that I engage in in this.

It's the same idea that Paul framed over in Philippians when he said [Philippians 2:12]:

*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

Now you can't work up salvation, but you can work it out. It's a work that God is doing in you. It's a work of cooperation, it's a work of response, it's a work of change that God is bringing in you.

In many way when I say, recognize your responsibility, ah... it's almost like the same partnership between the believer and God that the farmers have with God. Every farmer knows that if God doesn't give you water and sun and the right conditions, you can't grow anything. Doesn't matter how good you can plow and plant. There's a certain factor in farming that's God dependent. And you got to have the increase. You got to have the life to come from God. But on the other hand as you know by looking at many of our fields here around Texas, if you don't ever plow and plant, you're not ever going to grow anything either, right? I mean somebody got to get out there and work the ground. They've gotta till it up, they gotta plant!

And that's exactly the picture in the Bible of the church. That we plant and we do what we can, but God has to give the increase. And that's exactly what has to happen in the life of the individual believer. I have to understand that God wants to work holiness in and through my life. But a part of that is Him beginning to work in me. And one of the things that I love here in 1 Corinthians... or excuse me, in Acts 13 is that there was a work going on in the church and it was evidenced by them praying and fasting.

They weren't holy because they were praying and fasting, but they were praying and fasting because they were pursuing holiness in their lives. Praying and fasting. Why are prayer and fasting important in the Christian life? Because it is a way by which I give attention to God. And if I am to be holy, it means that I quit giving my attention to everything else that I might begin to increase my attentiveness to God. It's a part of something that we are challenging in our church in these days is the idea of really letting God get our attention as a family and as individual believers in these things.

With all of our Bible Fellowship classes in worship last Sunday we distributed a group of guides like this: Prayer and Fasting Guides. And we're certainly not coming around asking how many of you are fasting and how much are you fasting and are you praying and how much are you praying.

But what we are challenging you to do is to pursue holiness in the fear of God, to give your attention to God, to seek to hear from God, to ask God to work in your life, your heart, your home. And in order to do that, we really have to strip away... step away from some things that we may give attention to some things in life.

Richard Foster who has written some wonderful books on spiritual disciplines has said this: "In a culture where landscape is dotted with shrines to golden arches and an assortment of pizza temples, fasting seems to be out of step with our time." Ha, he's exactly right. And it's something that's hard for us to understand and hard for us to embrace. But a part of the pursuit of holiness is the determination to give my attentiveness to God. And these are activities and expressions that demonstrate that.

So number 1, receive God's Son, number 2, recognize your responsibility, number 3, release your grip. Holiness is a process in life of receiving and releasing.

I want to remind you that this was a great church, the church at Antioch. It was a blessed church. In fact, the Bible tells us in another place that the believers were first called Christians at Antioch. It's where they began to call them little Christ people, Christ followers, Christians. It was a great church! And it had great leadership. It had Barnabus and Simeon, Lucius and Menaen, and Saul. But God said, "You know what, I'm not going to keep them all here." He said, "I'm going to send some of them out. I want you to set apart Barnabus and Saul and I want you to send them out for the work that I've called them to do."

And a part of holiness in my life and in your life and our church is learning what it means to release our grip on things; that the will of God and the work of God can be done through our lives; that we continue to let God set us apart. And we will quit being set apart when we start determining that we're just going to hold on and shelter in and not let go. And that's why the constant challenge to the church of God and to every individual believer is that if I am to pursue holiness and I am to be holy unto the Lord, then I've got to continually be willing to let God set some things apart in my life for His glory. Release your grip.

Number 4, rely on God's Spirit... rely on God's Spirit. Let God work through the Holy Spirit in your life. I love the fact that as you read First... ah... Acts chapter 13... I keep wanting to go to 1 Corinthians, but it's Acts 13, that over and over we see that what happened here was the work of the Spirit. And it is the Holy Spirit who makes us holy. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers holiness in our lives. And the secret to holy living is being filled [tap] with the Holy [tap] Spirit [tap].

And finally, respond to God's call. I've already said that God didn't shut them in; He sent them out. And when we begin to live, being willing to respond to the call of God, moving out... Not just moving in and trying to hunker down. But moving out, we begin to determine what it is to be set

apart for the calling of God in our lives and we begin to experience God in our lives.

There's been a lot of emphasis in teaching on the subject of experiencing God and it's wonderful; it can be very good teaching. But I want to remind you that there's a very simple principle we must never forget. Jesus said in the last words that He spoke to His disciples in the Great Commission these words [Matthew 28:19-20]:

*“Go into all the world, preach My Gospel to all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit 16) “teach them to observe all things I’ve commanded you; and lo, I’m with you always, to the end of the age.”*

You want to know how to experience God in life? Obey what God told you to do. If you obey God and go where God tells you to go, then you'll experience God along the way. It happens in motion; it happens in mission. And a part of being God's holy people in this day in this generation in this place is being willing to let God move and work and send us out for His purpose.

Now maybe tonight you're saying, My goodness, I'm just not a holy person. Ha, I'm the least likely person to be called holy! I'm just a regular guy... just a regular gal.

You know what? So was Paul. When I read about him, I read about the Apostle Paul and I'm amazed at who this man is and what he became. But it happened because he began to be a man who pursued holiness in his life.

And God is calling us to holiness. And I just don't want any of us to miss the significance of that call, or obedience to that call because we make it something lofty... we make it something distant... we make it something unintelligible, when really what it is, is just moving closer and closer in relationship with a God who by His grace is able to set us apart from this world and set us apart to His purpose to let us live [inaudible].

I saw a little video ah... this week that I thought just reminded me of how God uses unlikely people. And I want to just close the message tonight by letting you have just a moment to watch this little video. And then I want us to take a few minutes and pray together tonight. We've got some time to spend in prayer and I want us to do that.

But I want you to direct your attention to the screens tonight and just be reminded that God uses unlikely people to accomplish His holy purposes. Let's watch.

VIDEO: [background music throughout]

*Think God can't use you? Think He only uses perfectly qualified people? Take a closer look.*

*Moses was not a great speaker. Jonah ran from God. Jacob was a liar. Noah got drunk. Rahab was a prostitute. David had an affair. Jeremiah was depressed... a lot. Solomon was rich in wisdom but poor in lifestyle. John the Baptist was just plain poor. Timothy was too young. Abraham was too old. Lazarus was dead. Sarah was barren. Naomi was a widow. Gideon and Thomas both doubted. And so did Sarah. Peter lacked self-control. James and John were self-righteous. Paul had a short fuse. Well, so did Peter and Moses. Actually, lots of people did.*

*God's army isn't perfect; it never has been. It's the march of the unqualified. Get in line. [music ends]*

[Dr. McKinley]

"March of the unqualified." Maybe that's who we are and what we feel like tonight, but I want you to respond to that last phrase. I want us to get in line and get our hearts in line, and say, "God, let us be a people who are now, as Your holy people, accomplishing Your holy purpose in this world, in this community today.

And so I think one of the great things we can do tonight is just to spend some time together in prayer. Prayer is so important in helping us to give our attention to God. And sometimes we're encouraged not just when we pray individually but when we pray with others.

And so I'm going to ask in just a moment that we stand together and that we just turn and cluster into some smaller groups here tonight. They can be 2, they can be 6. I would ask they're not 20 but you know, smaller groups.

And let me just say this. I don't want anybody put on the spot. If you don't want to pray in a group, you don't have to do that. And I certainly don't want anybody calling on anybody to pray. [background music begins] If you just prefer to pray privately you can do that. But I'm telling you there's great blessing to praying together. And I believe tonight that it would be good for us to spend some time in prayer, getting in line with God.

Maybe we can just pray for one another. Maybe you would just go around in your little group and quickly say, "Pray for me that I will ... ah... live a holy life ah... in some specific area." Or "Pray for me that I will live for the purpose God has for me." Whatever it may be. I don't know what God's speaking in your heart tonight. But I just want us to pray and pray for one another. And in doing this, let it be a ministry of encouragement and a ministry of blessing.

Maybe you feel just so unqualified tonight here. You just need God's grace and mercy in your life. Let some people pray for you. And ah... together we want to meet needs. So let's stand together and let's just turn together and cluster in some small groups and ah... again, I don't want to put anybody on the spot but I just want to ask you to turn, I want to ask you to pray,

and we'll take just a few moments here to call upon the Lord together, seek the Lord together and let Him work in our lives together tonight.

[pause as music continues]

Maybe you just want to pray for our church, pray for our pastor, pray for these new days of new beginning, beyond all limits.

[long pause]

*And Lord, I thank You for Your people tonight, for the spirit that is in this place, for the love and the care that is being shared and ministered in these moments together. Lord, we do want...*