



Called to Holiness

GRACE PRATT
MORRIS-CHAPMAN

Former Mission Partner, Grace Pratt-Morris Chapman, challenges us to think again about God's sweet and tender call to holiness, responding by renouncing all in full surrender to him.

I am writing to God's church ... to you who have been called by God to be his own holy people. He made you holy by means of Christ Jesus, just as he did for all people everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours (1 Corinthians 1:2)

In these times we have been so enamoured with often well-meaning, yet clearly flawed, teachings which suggest that being in the presence of God or knowing God is always some sort of 'soothing, calming, affirming of all that we are, want and desire' experience. In fact, Scripture makes it clear that God is utterly holy. Encountering the Lord Almighty, the king of the universe shakes the very core of who we are. It lays everything bare, challenging and dismantling our assumptions, ideas and desires. It changes our circumstances, completely disarming us, bringing us to our knees, calling us to repentance, total surrender and humble adoration. We see this clearly in some of the encounters in both the Old and New Testaments (Isaiah 6:1-7, Mark 5:1-20, Luke 19:1-10, John 4:1-42, Acts 9: 1-19).

One of the most incomprehensible aspects of the Christian faith is seeing God, this absolutely, infinitely holy one, drawing near to us and becoming one of us, living among us, loving and serving, suffering and willingly dying for us, rising again – all so that we can become like him. It is inexplicable! Being holy means that his love and grace cannot bear to see humanity destroyed by sin. God's love is holy love, this means that it is not passive or permissive, rather it is the kind of love which cannot accept anything that is not in line with who God is - his holiness. Christ Jesus came into the world, died and rose again so that we can be holy too. This is of great importance because without holiness we cannot be in relationship with God.

Wesleyan Methodism holds firmly to the truth that it is God's desire that all without exception come into relationship with him. It is essential that we understand



that God's holiness is dangerous in the sense that it destroys everything in us that is not of God, in other words: it is transformative. The closer or more intimate our relationship with God is, the more we experience the burning cleansing flame of his holiness. Today, many preachers prefer not to mention this often painful, soul cleansing experience which calls for total surrender and submission to the inner work of the Spirit of God, which is an indispensable, non-negotiable aspect of Christian discipleship, but the fact remains that God's holiness refuses to affirm us as we are (sinful); this is not about rejection or condemnation but, in fact, God's holiness makes the way for us to draw near to him, to truly experience his love, forgiveness and grace, and not just that, we become hosts of his very Presence, his holy Presence, and with his indwelling Presence we begin to grow in his likeness, becoming more and more like him (Christian Perfection/Sanctification).

John Wesley's teaching on Christian Perfection speaks of the incomparable richness of a life lived in wholehearted pursuit of holiness; (some of the Christian writers of old speak of this as living with their gaze fixed upon the Lord or living their lives beholding the beauty of the Lord) and point to the outward manifestation of the effect of a Christian's growth in holiness – chiefly seen in the ever-growing love for God and for others. In other words, the natural effect of growing in holiness toward Christian Perfection is that the Christian radiates who God is wherever they are. This has huge implications for the life of the Church as it seeks to fulfil its kingdom purpose. The Church is God's 'set apart ones', a holy people, with a holy assignment. Therefore, the Church cannot be who she is called to be and fulfil her calling without holiness. Those who belong to God are called to holiness and are called to do all that they do in holiness, to be a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.

God's heart holds out to our hearts a sweet and tender call to holiness – a life saturated with his holy Presence, imbued with his love and power. Are we willing and ready to renounce and forsake whatever else this world offers, totally surrendering our whole being, our other affections, dreams and desires, to hold on to him and only him?

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Grace and her husband Daniel Pratt-Morris Chapman are currently living in Northampton where the family has settled after their final appointment as mission partners, and are looking forward in joyful anticipation to what the Lord has for them.