

Text: Heb. 13:24

Title: "Holiness in Hebrews"

Time: 10/30/2016 am

Place: NBBC

Intro - This afternoon we plan to gather with sister churches at the Beth Eden Baptist Church in Fitchburg, MA, for a singspiration to celebrate Reformation Day together. 499 years ago tomorrow, Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses calling for reform in the Roman Catholic Church, which sparked the beginning of the most significant revival Western Christianity has ever experienced.

Many of our neighbors, of course, will not be celebrating Reformation Day tomorrow. They will be celebrating Halloween. I was asked this past week by a brother whether I celebrate Halloween. I used to, but I no longer do. As our culture has become more and more pagan, I think that it has been harder and harder to maintain a godly testimony while celebrating Halloween.

The Roman Catholic Church does not think much of Reformation Day either. They have two other holidays this week, All Saint's Day on November 1 and All Soul's Day on November 2. The first of these is a Catholic Holy Day of Obligation, which means that every Roman Catholic is required to attend a mass on that day. Catholic dogma teaches that the saints celebrated on Nov. 1 are people who have died and reached heaven, whereas the souls celebrated on Nov. 2 are people who have died and not yet reached heaven, those who are yet suffering in the fires of purgatory. To be celebrated as having reached heaven, a saint must have been canonized as a saint by the Roman Catholic Church.

Well, our text this morning mentions saints in a biblical sense. The Hebrew churches were made up of leaders and saints, none of whom had yet died, and none of whom needed any canonizing from the Roman Catholic Church, which did not yet exist in Italy. There were living saints in the church at Rome as well.

The term *saint* comes from the adjective meaning *holy*. It turns out that holiness is a very important theme in the book of Hebrews. I counted 27 usages of related nouns, verbs, and adjectives translated with the words like *holy*, *sanctify*, *sanctuary*, or *saint*. So I want us to consider the importance of holiness to our lives as saints this morning from this emphasis of the Book of Hebrews. 3 categories are important to this truth in the book: (1) God is a holy God; (2) heaven is a holy place; and (3) saints are holy people.

I. God is a holy God (12:10).

Ill: We have been studying the nature of God in Sunday school together, and we have discovered that God's nature can be described in terms of a number of qualities we call *attributes* or *perfections* that make our God who He is. He has perfections of greatness, like eternity, immutability, and omnipotence. And He has perfections of goodness, like holiness and love. The perfections of His greatness are called *non-communicable*, because these cannot be shared with us. The perfections of His goodness, however, are things He desires to share with us. We call those His *communicable* attributes. And we have noted that holiness is the primary attribute of God's goodness.

God's love is always holy love. His holiness is not always loving holiness, however. There are some things God hates rather than loves, in His holiness, but there is nothing in re-

lation to which He is ever anything less than holy in His love. So it is very important to the Lord that we share in His holiness, and Hebrews tell us that the work of each member of the Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, involves a work of holiness because our God is a holy God.

A. Because God is a holy God, the Holy Spirit's work of revelation and illumination are critical to our knowing Him. God's Spirit is called *Holy* with the same root word used here (12:10) to speak of God's holiness. Our ability as sinners to know a holy God requires a work that the Holy Spirit accomplishes in our hearts in two important ways emphasized by Hebrews.

1. The Holy Spirit revealed holy God's truth to man (2:4, 3:7, 4:7, 9:8, 10:15-17). If sinners are to know a holy God, He must reveal Himself to them. The Bible is that revelation, and it is the production of God's Holy Spirit. Its words are His words, so they are holy words. So reading our Bibles is the key to knowing our holy God because the words in them are the holy words of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:15).

2. The Holy Spirit illumines the heart and mind of the individual to understand God's Holy Word (6:4-6). That passage not only describes this work of the Spirit of God, to enlighten the mind and to authenticate God's revelation, but also it speaks of the dire consequences of failing to respond to this work of God's Spirit. When He causes us to see, we must not close our eyes.

Ill: It is one thing to have something to see, and quite another to be able to see it. We have all had some beautiful God-given color all around us this fall season, blind people included, but blind people cannot see it. Nor can we see it at night time or if we close our eyes during the day. It is

there, but it goes unseen without opened eyes and light from the sun.

Appl: It is one thing to have the Bible's truth in our laps this morning or on the table beside our chairs during the week, and quite another to be able to read it faithfully with understanding so as to come to know a holy God in spite of our sinfulness. This the Spirit of God must do, and when He does, we must respond by believing what He says and obeying what He commands. Have we been able to see God's truth that way from our Bibles this week? This is very important in the life of a saint, whom the Lord would have share His holiness. We need the holy words of the Holy Spirit.

B. Because God is a holy God, the sacrifice of His holy Son was necessary to our forgiveness before Him (2:10-11, 9:13-14, 10:9-10, 10:14, 13:12).

1. 2:10-11. Jesus is the *sanctifier* of the sinner, Himself *sanctified* for this purpose and made perfect in that purpose through His suffering for our sins. He suffered for us as the Sanctified One, and He is not ashamed to call us, the sanctified ones, brothers.

2. 9:13-14. The *sanctifying* blood of Jesus washes our conscience clean from dead works so that we can work for the living God. Our conscience is freed from the kind of work thought to be necessary to earn salvation so that we can do the kind of work that only the recipients of salvation as a free gift can do. We are here worshipping this morning not endeavoring to be saved, but because we are responding thankfully to the fact that we have been saved by the blood that has made us holy.

3. 10:9-10, 14. The *sanctifying* blood of Jesus perfects the sinner forever. We need not worry about needing yet another sacrifice. It is ok if we do not go to the Roman Catholic mass on Tuesday to sacrifice Christ again for our sins.

4. 13:12-13. Jesus suffered outside the gate *to sanctify* us. As those whom He sanctifies, we must go to Him and bear His reproach. Mainstream apostate Judaism crucified our Savior, and mainstream apostate Christianity is no friend to those whom He has sanctified outside the gate.

C. Because God is a holy God, the holy Father disciplines us as His own children to make us like Him (12:10). This discipline can be severe if we do not response submissively to it (10:26-31). We need to worship God in reverence and fear, for He is a consuming fire (12:28-29).

Transition: God is a holy God. We need the Holy Spirit's revelation and illumination to know Him; we need the sanctifying blood of the Son to be forgiven by Him; and we need the Father's discipline in our lives to become like Him.

II. Heaven is a holy place (8:2).

III: When the basement of the parsonage flooded due to a subterranean pipe leak, we were blessed to get some brand-new carpeting downstairs. When that happened, my wife asked that we take off our shoes when entering the downstairs so that we not soil the carpet. Our basement had become a place with new carpeting, that my wife desired to keep nice.

Appl: Heaven is a *sanctuary*, a place of holiness, which the Lord pitched and not man (8:2). It was represented imperfectly in the Old Testament by the holy place and the holy of holies of the tabernacle of Israel (9:1-3). Today, in the

New Testament era, it is represented imperfectly by the assembly times of the local church where we draw near (10:19-25). But the most important thing about the truth that heaven is a holy place, is the fact that the only way we can enter that place is through following Christ who went there first as our Great High Priest, tearing through the veil (9:11-12, 9:24-28). Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." His work of atonement is the only way into heaven, for heaven is a holy place.

III. Saints are holy people (3:1).

Ill: It will be time to coach basketball again soon, and so I have pulled off the shelf a special whiteboard that a team gave to me some years ago. It has the basketball court on it, and so it is helpful to draw up plans and plays for a basketball team. It has my name printed on it as "Coach Kevin Hobi." It is special and set apart for a specific use. I'll not use it for scraping ice off my windshield. Setting something apart this way for a specific use is the root idea of sainthood and holiness.

Appl: To be holy or a saint means to be set apart by the Holy God for a specific use that He has in mind. Our verse tells us that we are set apart as *holy* brethren. It then tells us that our calling is heavenly, not earthly. So being holy is very important to our calling and usefulness to the Lord. We must be holy brethren to fulfill our heavenly calling. These things go together. Hebrews mentions three specific things about the heavenly calling of the holy brethren.

A. Saints minister in work and love to other saints (6:10). We need to take care of one another, not just ourselves. God will remember every kindness we show in this regard. It

takes sacrifice and the power of God's Spirit granting us victory over our flesh, but it is our calling, and He who called us will equip and help us.

B. Saints pursue peace and sanctification (12:14). That command *pursue* is a present active imperative, meaning that this is a constant pursuit of ours. We want peace with all men and holiness. But here again, holiness is more important, for without that no man shall see the Lord. Are we endeavoring to make our lives more like Christ and more useful to Christ's purposes and will? Is it our pursuit?

C. Saints are found in various localities, and they must be greeted and encouraged (13:24). There were saints in Palestine, and the saints in Italy cared for them. We should care for saints in other localities, like Fitchburg, MA, for instance. We should greet and encourage fellow saints. I have been the recipient of many encouraging greetings for weeks now from this congregation. I praise the Lord for that. But I am sure that you need that encouragement too. We need to do what you have done for me for one another.

Conclusion: One thing the Roman Catholic church understands correctly about saints is that the world is in desperate need of them. How tragic it is to understand the need, but then misunderstand the solution. How much more tragic to understand both the need and the solution, and then to do nothing about it. You and I are saints, holy people in an unholy world. We can be the 20 righteous that Sodom needed to survive. We can awake unto righteousness and sin not, for some have not the knowledge of God. May we fear the holy God, as those on their way to the holy place, living the lives of a holy people, that others too might come to understand what it means to be a saint.

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*