

**Youth Week 2007**  
**Saturday Evening Lesson**

**Holiness—Christ Reigning Within**

*(Note: We suggest that the following lesson be taught around a bonfire or fireplace with a fire going, if at all possible. Some of the exercises are dependant upon that type of environment and will need to be adapted if you are unable to arrange this.)*

<b>Students Should Learn:</b> 1. Christ desires to crucify our self-centered lives so that they can be transformed into Christ-centered lives. 2. When we accept Christ into our lives, He actually lives within us, living out His holiness in and through us.	<b>What You'll Need:</b> Paper A Gold ring A pot with water in it A fire
<b>Scripture Focus:</b> Galatians 2:20	

**LESSON BACKGROUND**

The number one resolution that people make at the beginning of each year is related to weight loss. People have a hard time eating healthy and exercising. The old adage is true - you are what you eat. For most of us, we are free to eat anything we want. But that often gets us in trouble. A meal of chocolate cake and ice cream on a regular basis will soon make an impact on our waistline. Sometimes we forget that freedom to eat whatever we want doesn't mean that we should eat whatever we want. In fact, I am only free to eat what I want until I want to do something significant with my body. I've heard it said that you can do whatever you want, until you want to do something significant. What I put inside my body will have an effect on what my body looks like on the outside. And I'm reminded at this point that while some people are afraid of heights, I am afraid of widths.

So many people try to reach a point in their life where they can "do whatever they want." But that's not real freedom. Real freedom comes when we realize that we were not created to do whatever we want, but rather, to do what God wants. The truth is, our freedom is found in the pursuit of Christ, not in the pursuit of our own self-centered ambitions. Before we accept Christ, we are actually in bondage to whatever whims and emotions our bodies and selfish desires bring to us. But we don't have to live that way.

In Galatians 2:20, we are reminded that God's purpose in our salvation is to one end: that in some divinely mysterious way Christ may live inside us, living out His holy life in us. God calls us to identify with the death of Christ through the death of our own selfishness and rebellion. As members of Adam's fallen race we are born "curved in on ourselves," as Martin Luther said. We have a serious curvature of the heart. It is this sinful ego that God crucifies in the believer: the idolatrous self that dethrones God in its pride and rebellion. All of us, without exception, are

members of Adam's fallen race, who because he turned away from God's best, he threw humanity into a tailspin of sin. Sin is our disobedience to God's desires for our lives.

Paul wrote the letter to the Church in Galatia because there were some teachers there that were insisting that one must first embrace Judaism before one could become a Christian. They were telling new converts that people came into relationship with God by strict observance of the Law. Paul rebutted their claims by showing that a relationship with God came through a personal relationship and commitment to Jesus Christ. In this passage, Paul is showing that we are free from the Law if we follow the path of Christ. Christ was crucified under the Law and shows that He is Lord over the Law through his death and resurrection. When I allow my "self" to be crucified (to identify with) with Christ, then I share in Christ's overcoming of the Law. I am no longer bound by strict observance but free to be all that God desires for me to be and to become.

It is in this passage that we get a grasp of the freedom that comes by dying to self and letting Christ live in and through us. We will continue to live in our bodies and experience the pressures, temptations, and ideals that accompany being human. But we don't have to be directed by those things. For those who still struggle, thinking that the Christian life is nothing but a bunch of "do nots," this verse speaks to the freedom that one can have from sin. That is true freedom. Freedom isn't found in doing whatever I want, but in doing what Christ wants in and through me.

But there's more - when we invite the abiding presence of Christ into our lives, we not only experience the forgiveness of our sins, but we encounter a power that breaks the power of sin in our lives. We no longer have to live in bondage to sinful and selfish desires. We are free.

The Old Testament guilt offering suggest a helpful illustration of God's justifying work in our lives. An Israelite who had become conscious of guilt and was seeking forgiveness was to select as a guilt offering a ram without blemish from his flock and bring it to the priest. Associating himself with the victim, he must place his hand upon its head as a sign of a unity he wished to affirm and effect, while at the same time confessing the sins that had brought about the sacrificial act. As the blood flowed from the throat of the ram, the sinner "died" in and with the sacrificial offering. The Israelite was powerfully reminded of sin's effect and impact upon the world - that it would ultimately lead to death. As he watched the blood pour out of the sacrifice, he realized anew that he was unsuccessful in fulfilling all of the requirements of the Law. He needed God's forgiveness and grace. He needed to be free.

Then came Christ! It is through Jesus that we experience the freedom to live according to God's best. Christ was the ultimate sacrifice for humanity's sinfulness. When we reflect on Christ's death on the cross, we realize it because of our own sinfulness that He died. It was because of our selfishness and rebellion that Christ chose to peacefully endure the suffering and shame in our place. He showed that a world bent on it's own desires would ultimately destroy itself. He proposed a different kind of Kingdom and lived out that Kingdom before the eyes of the Jewish community. They were so intent on fulfilling the Law that they missed the very One for whom the Law found it's meaning. Christ showed that there was a better way to live, free from sin's stranglehold on our lives and in communion with the Father.

When Christ died and was raised to life again, He unleashed His Spirit upon all of humanity who would receive Him. It was in that moment that people discovered the holy life is a moment-by-moment relationship that is maintained as one submits to the disciplines of the Spirit of Christ who abides within the believer. I no longer have to be a slave to sin. When I am tempted to choose against God's best, I don't have to follow that desire. I can become all that God desires for me to be because Christ lives in me and I have learned to be dependant upon His leading.

In the end, the way of the Cross is the way of personal fulfillment, not in the sense of becoming self-fulfilled, but in becoming Christ-fulfilled. God's purpose in crucifying my pretentious self is simply that Christ may abide in me and live out His life of holy, loving servitude in my everyday life. I am holy because the living Christ is living out His holiness within me.

(adapted from article Holiness: Christ Reigning Within by William M. Greathouse in the book, Holiness 101, Beacon Hill Press)

## **THE LESSON**

### **H-O-L-I-N-E-S-S**

Before the group meets, get as many blank pieces of paper as necessary for each person that attends and write one of the letters in the word 'holiness' across the paper. Also, create a list of words that can be formed out of the letters in word 'holiness.' For example, the words shine, shin, lie, sin, she, hole, sis, less, his, silo, hiss, and lone all were formed from the letters in the word 'holiness.' As students arrive, have them tape one of the letters to their front. Explain that you are going to shout out words that are made using the letters in HOLINESS. If you have one of the letters in that word, you must find the other letters and line up accordingly so the word can be read left to right. Once you've run out of words or feel like it's time to move on to the next thing, have students gather around the campfire.

Say something like, In this we've taped the letters of the word 'holiness' to our outsides and reformed the word in as many ways as we can think up. And this week, we've spent a lot of time talking about holiness. But unlike the game we just played where holiness is on our outside and we just reshape it in whatever way we want to, holiness must become an internal thing that reshapes us. Holiness is more than something that we can just put on or take off. It is a condition of our heart that is developed from the inside out. We've talked about what it means to be Christ-like. Tonight we're going to take it a step deeper and consider what it means to have Christ living within us.

### **Fire**

Prior to this section, you will need to have some paper, a pot of water, and a gold ring to use for illustrative purposes. Hopefully, you have a nice size fire going throughout this portion of the lesson. If you don't, then you may want to bring some matches or a butane lighter and a metal container in which to burn some paper.

Hold the paper up and say something like, **Tonight we are gathering around a fire for a reason. Fire has a couple of unique qualities that will help us better grasp the idea of what**

**it means to be holy. In my hand, I have some paper. Most of you already know that paper is no match for fire. Fire wins every time.** (Throw the paper in the fire at this time.)

Continue by saying, **When paper hits the fire, it is consumed. Fire has the ability to consume certain things and turn them into nothing but smoke and ash.**

Read Galatians 2:20

Say, **In a real sense, this is Paul's manifesto on what it means to live a holy life. First, Paul says that he has been crucified with Christ. In order to live the holy life, like Paul, we must be willing to die to our self-centeredness, so that we can become Christ-centered.**

Question:

- **What scares you about death?**
- **What do you think happens when a person dies?**
- **When Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ," does he mean that he was actually crucified, just like Jesus?**
- **Crucifixion is related to death. In what ways does Paul identify with the death of Christ?**
- **If Paul doesn't actually die, then what happens to him?**
- **In what ways can we identify and participate in the death of Christ?**
- **How is throwing paper in the fire like being crucified with Christ?**

Say, **It is interesting that the same fire that is used to destroy paper, is also used to remove impurities in precious metals. In fact, when the fire is turned up even hotter, all of the impurities in a metal, such as gold (hold up a ring) can be taken out. In many places, fire is used to boil water in order to sterilize it. Paul acknowledges that his identity with Christ has removed the impurities in his life, and allowed Christ to live within him. Paul goes on to talk about the life he lives in the body. When we die to our self-centered ways, we don't leave our bodies, nor do we hide out as hermits. We are still susceptible to all of the temptations and sufferings that come with being human. But Paul has discovered a way to not be ruled by these temptations or natural urges that are a part of humanity.**

Ask for a couple of volunteers to come forward. Explain that you'd like to make them some offers. Tell them to answer honestly. You are simply interested in seeing if they will accept the offers or not. You will ask them a question that starts with "Will you..." and they must respond with either, "I will..." or "I will not..." and then act accordingly.

- **Will you take this dollar? (Hold out a dollar)**
- **Will you shake my hand?**
- **Will you give me a hug?**
- **Will you walk around the fire?**
- **Will you walk through the fire? (Don't actually let them do this!)**

Explain to the group that the significance of this exercise is in showing that before we ever respond to a situation with physical action, we respond to it in our hearts. At some point, we make decisions in our hearts and minds whether or not we will or won't do something. The

important thing to remember is that we will always face the questions of temptation - will I do this or that? But how will you respond? The Spirit gives us the strength and the desire to turn away from temptation and to choose to live according to God's best for our lives.

### **Symbols**

Hold up your ring again and say something like, **We use symbols like this ring to signify the purity that we desire in relationships, especially the marriage relationship. Tonight, I invite you to form a circle around this fire. Within this ring of people God desires to purify our lives so that we can become all that He desires us to be, so that we can live in pure, intimate relationship with Him and with each other. But we agree with Paul, who states that Christ lives in me. God's Son, through the power of the Holy Spirit abides within our hearts.**

Questions:

- **What are some of the struggles that mess up a marriage relationship?**
- **Are any of those similar to the struggles that we face in our relationship with Christ?**
- **What keeps us from relinquishing all of ourselves to God's cleansing so that we might be fully His?**

Invite your students to find a twig or a branch and rejoin the circle. Instruct them to consider the twig as representative of their lives. Ask the group: **Are you willing to let the self-centered parts of you be burned up in the fire of God's cleansing so that you may live a Christ-centered life? If so, then toss your twigs into the fire.**

### **Closing**

Close in prayer reminding your students that when their lives are "in Christ", not only are they part of God's incredible story, but Christ continues to tell the story in and through their life.