

**Hebrews 3: 1 and 2; “Partakers of the Heavenly Calling”, Sermon #12 in the series –
“Holding Fast our Confession”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
On May 6th, 2012, in the Morning Worship Service.**

The purpose for which a person is saved from their sins through Jesus Christ our Lord is so that they will become a holy person. Are you a holy person? If you are a holy person it will mean that you are a spiritually-minded person, separated to all of God’s holy purposes in your life. But it will mean more. It will mean that you will be progressively seeking to become more holy in your life, as you learn God’s commandments and as you seek to be faithful in living them out. This is what we want to look at this morning as we come to partake of the Lord’s Supper. Just what does it mean for you, the Christian to be holy? It means, 1st of all, that you have been made a partaker of a the heavenly calling. It means 2^{ndly} – That you have, you are, and you will continue to consider Jesus who was faithful as the Apostle to your soul. And 3^{rdly} – It means that you will continue to consider Jesus who is faithful as a High Priest over all His house. I trust that this sermon will be very helpful for those who perhaps have not carefully considered what the Lord is calling them to in regard to their growing in respect to their salvation.

1st of all – What does it mean to be holy? It means that you have been made a partaker of the heavenly calling. (Verse 1)

“Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling...” To be a partaker of something means that you have come to receive and to actually enjoy the blessings or benefits of something that has been offered to you; in this case, the blessings and benefits of having Christ as your Savior and Lord. You have been called to this if you have received the Christ of the gospel which you have perhaps read of in the Bible, or heard preached here in this place. Jesus says in Matthew Chapter 20: 16 and Matthew 22: 14, - “For many are called, but few are chosen.” This saying means that many people are called through the preaching of the word of God, but few are actually chosen unto eternal and everlasting life. Those who are chosen unto eternal and everlasting life are those who have become partakers of the heavenly calling; they have been effectually called by the Spirit and the grace of Jesus Christ. That is, it is not enough that you come and hear and listen to the gospel and the word of God which is preached; you must have God the Father draw you to Christ and the Holy Spirit cause you to be born again to a living hope according to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. God has called you through the gospel and you not only heard the outward words of the preacher, but you heard the inward voice (as it were) speaking to your heart and saying to you; believe these precious truths of what Christ has done for sinners; you are a sinner and you need to be saved and to have your sins forgiven you; you need to change and become holy. Salvation is a work of God in the soul of man. John Chapter 1, verse 12 says, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right (the power, the $\epsilon\lambda\theta\upsilon\sigma\iota\alpha$) to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.”

Turn with me over to 2 Peter Chapter 1 and verse 2, and you will see this power at work in the heavenly calling. “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” How do you become a partaker of the divine nature? Through faith in the promises of God, concerning what He will do for you through Jesus Christ our Lord. His power was already at work effectually bringing you to the place where you would see your need of Christ. And when you believed in the word of the gospel preached to you, you received the Holy Spirit. And even before you knew that you wanted to receive Him, the Holy Spirit was at work. Turn over to John Chapter 3, verse 3. Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus very plainly about what it will take for him to come to know God. “Jesus answered and said to him,

‘Most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ “Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old?’ “Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” “Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.’ “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” “Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes.” “So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” “Nicodemus answered and said to Him, ‘How can these things be?’ “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?’ “Most assuredly, I say to you, ‘We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness.’ “If I have told you of earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?” You see that when you have been born again, you begin to perceive and understand spiritual and heavenly things. Nicodemus could only understand natural and earthly things and that is why he said, ‘How can a man be born when he is old?’ “How can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Let me ask you plainly this morning if you know about heavenly things such as the New Birth; being born from above? If you do not, you will not be able to understand the heavenly calling which a person trusting in Jesus is called to. Is this grace that you have received in this heavenly calling leading you on to holiness?

Why do Christians love to read their Bibles? Why do Christians love to pray? Why are they not caught up in worldly sinful things any longer since they became a Christian? It is because they now have begun to understand the spiritual realities of grace at work in their heart and mind. These realities lead to the pursuit of holiness. When you exercise faith in His promises you escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. You are united with Christ in His death and burial and resurrection. This is why you now want to be baptized. You now want to please God by obeying His commandments. The first real act of obedience in relation to your pleasing God is that you now see that you want to identify with Christ publicly in the waters of Baptism. You want to show forth what Christ has done for you in His dying for your sins. You write your testimony and give it to the pastor, and people read of your real experience of conversion. You want to be baptized and join the church because it is God’s plan for all Christians. This is the initial pursuit of holiness. Listen to Colossians 3: 1 – “If then you were raised with Christ seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.” “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.” “For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” After you have been baptized and joined the church, you realize that this is only the beginning of living your life unto God. You begin to be able to think about how you can, by the Spirit put to death the sinful thoughts and deeds of the flesh. You have been called with a heavenly calling. You have been made a partaker of the divine nature. You are called a holy one of God, one of His saints, because of what Jesus Christ your Lord has done for you in His righteous life, and His sacrificial death. God has effectually called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light. You come to see that church attendance is very important. You want to grow spiritually. You want to love and serve others. You want to see Christ’s church added to, and His kingdom come in your family and in the city that you live in. You long for and you pray for greater usefulness to Christ to Himself because of what He has done to redeem your soul from destruction. You once lived in the City of Destruction, this present world, and you thought only of your citizenship here. But now, your citizenship is in heaven and so you long to do what you can for Christ in the church of which you now are a member. Are you a member of the church here? If you have attended for some time and are still not a member, why are you lingering outside? Christ has saved you and placed you spiritually into His body; why can you not comply with His commands that you publicly identify with, and work toward, greater holiness in the context of the local church. It must only be because you desire something still of your own independence, something of your own ease and pleasure. But beware. The world and its lusts are passing away, but he who does the will of God abides forever. This is

something that you must come to terms with if you are going to partake of the Lord's Supper today. Listen to Philippians Chapter 3, verse 17 – “Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.” “For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.” “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.” As you come to the Lord's table in just a few minutes, will you not remember this truth and ask yourself – “Am I spiritually minded?” “Or am I setting my mind of earthly things?” “Do I see my citizenship as being in heaven?” “Am I eagerly waiting for the Savior?” “Am I waiting for that glorious day when I shall die and go to heaven, or am I quite earth bound?” “Am I waiting the Day of Christ's return, that Day of which no man knows the hour or the day?” “Am I looking forward to that blessed Day when Christ shall raise me from the dead and transform my lowly body that it might be conformed to His glorious body?” These are very pertinent questions to ask, for many are enemies of the cross of Christ. But I trust that as you have heard the words of the text that you will respond to His call in obedience to His word to pursue peace with all men and that holiness without which no person shall see the Lord. (Hebrews 12: 14) If you are pursuing holiness, it means that you have become partakers of a heavenly calling.

2ndly – To be holy means that you have, you are, and you will continue to consider Jesus who was faithful as the Apostle of God to your soul.

“Therefore holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus who was faithful to Him who appointed Him.” When the Apostle Paul says these words, he is taking them back to the last chapter and verse 18. “For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.” When you are being tempted, remember Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of your confession. Indeed in everything that you do remember Jesus. We are to remember Him as our Apostle and as our High Priest. We are to consider Him carefully and diligently. That is what the word “consider” in the Greek means. Consider Christ Jesus first of all as the Apostle of your confession. “Apostle” means one who is sent. He is an ambassador or messenger. As a messenger He perfectly represents God to us. John Owen says, “Jesus was the one “sent of God upon His great errand unto the children of men.” He says, “None, then, was fit to be this great apostle but He, for He only could fully represent the Father unto us.” “Any creature else undertaking this work would, or might, have led us into false notions and apprehensions of God.” “And the great wisdom of faith consists in teaching us to learn the Father, His nature and will, His holiness and grace, in the person of the Son incarnate, as His apostle and ambassador unto us; for beholding His glory, ‘The glory of the only-begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth,’ we behold the glory of His Father also.” “So He and the Father are one.” He especially represents the Father's love for fallen sinners who know that they need a Savior and Advocate with the Father. This He declared to men in His telling them that they must believe in Him or die in their sins. (John 8: 24) But if you will turn over to Isaiah Chapter 61: 1, you will see what He would do when He was sent. “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord....” “He has sent Me,” say Jesus in verse 2b, “to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that He may be glorified.”

Now there are a number of aspects of holiness which are spoken of in this text. It is a great part of holiness that you should be continually rejoicing in God your Savior, that He has sent the Lord Jesus Christ. To you who were poor, spiritually speaking; those of you who knew that you do

not have the ability to keep God's commandments and to please Him in many areas of obedience, He sent Jesus in order that through His preaching and teaching of the way of life, that you would be saved and placed upon the Highway of Holiness. Even though Jesus was rich in His glory in heaven, for your sakes God sent Him into this world in order that He might become poor, that through His poverty you might become rich. These are good tidings and they should be believed in by the worst and vilest sinners amongst us today. And surely as we draw near to the Lord's Table these good tidings should be gloried in by all who are Christians here today. Because, God sent Christ to "heal the brokenhearted". Now you who are sad today, you who are mourning over all the sins of your heart that you see in yourself, and all the sins of omission and commission in your life, even since you became a Christian; this is the best of news for you. Blessed are you that mourn, for you shall be comforted. Blessed are you when you have these seasons of mourning in repentance over your sins, for this is why God sent Jesus; it was in order to heal your broken heart. It is to give you beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that you might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that He might be glorified. Whatever sins have bound you in the past, you shall be freed from them now by calling upon the name of Jesus. Jesus was sent to proclaim liberty to the captives of sin and Satan. The Lord Jesus shall open your prison and your spirit shall go free if you have been planted together with Christ.

And 3rdly - It means that you will continue to consider Jesus who is faithful as a High Priest over all His house.

"Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house." We are to consider the Lord Jesus Christ our High Priest. He was faithful to Him who appointed Him to this good work. He was faithful in all of His house. We, my brethren, as a church are an individual part of this great house. The Lord Jesus has been faithful in His life to keep all the holy commandments of God on our behalf. He has been faithful unto death, to endure the sufferings of the punishment which was rightly due to us. God the Father has attested to His faithfulness and He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand to be our great High Priest. Since He was faithful over every aspect of "His house" in terms of His sufferings, will He not be a merciful and faithful High Priest to you in particular? Listen to Hebrews 4: 14 - "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession." "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Do you have weaknesses in terms of your obedience to Christ? Then let Christ strengthen you, dear believer, through this means of grace, in partaking of the body and blood of our Lord, which are represented by these elements. See and know today the strength of Christ's interceding for you at the Father's right hand. See Him as your Advocate with the Father. If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And see how Christ's intercession for you, will indeed lead you on to greater holiness your walk with Him. And let us remember as we partake of these elements, the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 10: 16 - "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" "For we though many are one break and one body; for we all partake of that one bread." If Jesus has been faithful over His house, let us by His grace seek to be faithful in this our house of discipleship. 2 Timothy 2: 20 - "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor." "Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work." Let us pray as we come to partake of these elements that we will cleanse ourselves from all pollution of flesh and spirit and perfect holiness in the fear of God.