

Being Holy

I have always thought that being holy and being righteous were the same thing. I'm not sure how I got such a wrong idea, but recently, while translating Romans, I realised that they are quite different.

Righteousness is about right behaviour. It's about doing good. It's about not sinning.

Righteousness is about our actions.

(And for Christians, God gives us righteousness as a gift because we couldn't possibly earn it for ourselves.)

But being holy is about our use. Things are holy if they have been dedicated to God for his use. In the old testament this basically meant that something, or someone, had been dedicated for exclusive use in the temple of God.

Holiness is about our use. About who we are supposed to serve with our actions.

Technically we can be holy without being righteous. We can be reserved for use by God but not always acting in ways that serve him well.

The opposite of holy is profane. Not a word we really use these days. Sometimes we say "common". Things for every day use, not things that are for holy use.

So what? What does this mean for us?

We are supposed to be holy. You know that right... there are many references to that in the Bible. We are supposed to be dedicated for exclusive use by God. We are supposed to be set aside for him.

In fact, we are... God makes us holy by his Spirit. But our problem is that even though we have been set apart for God's exclusive use, we still spend so much of our time being used for common purposes. Profane purposes.

How different would it be if we could see ourselves as holy. Being conscious all the time that we are reserved for God's use. How would it be if we really were able to grab hold of that and only do things where we are serving God.

Think about the reaction there would have been if someone had used the holy bowls from the tabernacle for their morning porridge. They would have been stoned for desecrating God's holy things.

Think about how you use yourself.