



THE REASON
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BECOMING WHO I ALREADY AM

THE SECRET TO LIVING A LIFE OF HOLINESS

BY KARY OBERBRUNNER

Have you ever been addicted to something? I don't care if it's a substance, a relationship, a habit or a hobby. Part of being human is the tendency to be mastered by something or someone.

I know sin is not a popular term these days, but come on, let's take off the mask. If holiness is where we want to go, then we need to be real with where we are. I don't know about you, but I struggle with sin. There was a time in my life when I did not have the power to say "no" to sin. It felt like sin my was in me when I got up, when I ate food, when I went to school and when I went to bed. Sin literally embodied me. It surrounded me. It overtook me. So what changed? How did I get the power to say "no" to sin? How did I become holy? Although I'm not sinless by any means, I sincerely believe that now I sin less. So what's the secret to holiness? It's really quite simple.

The secret to holiness is to become who you already are. The problem is most of us are only living in one dimension. Now before you think I am one of those weird sci-fi guys, hear me out. Many of us are only living in light of our condition. Sadly, we fail to live in light of our position. Our condition is how we are. In other words, condition is the way we behave, act and think. Our position is who we are. In other words, position is our standing, privilege and status because of Christ. Most of us live our lives 99 percent of the time in light of how we are, in light of our condition.

I'll illustrate this. My guess is that at this very moment, just like me, you're probably sitting somewhere. If you were to ask

me where I'm sitting, I'd say in a chair. If you asked me where again, I'd say in Columbus. If you asked me where again, I'd say in Ohio. We could go on and on with this illustration, so that I'd say in the United States, in North America, etc. These statements are only half true. My answers all reflect an emphasis on my condition. I failed to answer in light of my position.

Ephesians 2:6 says, "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus." So if I answer the question (Where am I sitting?) in light of my position, then I must answer "in heavenly realms in Christ Jesus." You see, I am only partly here on earth. Conditionally I'm seated here on earth, but if I'm a Christian, then positionally I'm actually seated in heaven as well.

The tendency is for us to think of positional truths just in terms of semantics that really have nothing to do with our holiness. I disagree. I believe they have everything to do with our personal holiness. I would venture to say that the reason why so many of us are not experiencing a vibrant life of holiness is because we don't even know our position, much less live from our position.

Take, for example, our thought process after we sin. People who live in light of their condition say some of the following things after sinning: "Man, I'm such a loser. I'll never get this straight. I'm just my sin. It oozes out of me. I'm so stupid and powerless."

On the other hand, take, for example, people who live in light of their position. Such people might say the following things

after they sin: “The way I acted wasn’t the real me. My response wasn’t reflective of being a child of God. I am free from this sin. I don’t have to submit to it.”

You can see the vast contrast between the two responses. One person focuses on his behavior. The other person focuses on his position in Christ. There are really two different dimensions. Look at how the Scriptures contrast these two:

CONDITION:

- How I Am (Romans 7:19-21)
- Old Man (Galatians 5:24; Romans 6:6)
- Temporal (2 Corinthians 4:18)
- Seen (2 Corinthians 4:18)
- Physical (Romans 7:18)
- False Self (Romans 7:17)
- Outer Man (2 Corinthians 4:16)

POSITION:

- Who I Am (Ephesians 1:4, 18)
- New Man (Romans 6:4, 22)
- Eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18)
- Unseen (2 Corinthians 4:18)
- Spiritual (1 Corinthians 1:2)
- True Self (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- Inner Man (2 Corinthians 4:16)

Paul spends the first three chapters of Ephesians telling the believers in Ephesus who they are. He spends the next three chapters telling them how to be. If they fail to know who they are, then there’s no way they can live up to who they should be.

Let me tell you a true story. The sixth grade was one of my best years of school. What made it the best was my teacher, Miss Bristol. Miss Bristol was unique, to say the least. She read us books like *The Tower of Geburah* while we sat on carpet squares. She had a jar called “warm fuzzies” filled with candy and treats. If she “caught you being good,” then you were able to pick out some treasures from the warm fuzzy jar. I liked her, and she liked me.

One day she didn’t show up for class. In fact, it turned out that she was sick for the entire week. We had a substitute teacher. During this week my behavior slowly began to slip. In reality, I was a punk. I wrote notes, talked in class and showed little respect. I even managed to sneak a roll of toilet paper into class. As the substitute teacher turned to write on the chalkboard, I stood up and threw the roll across the room to my friend. It sailed through the air, leaving a perfect trail of paper. To my horror, the substitute teacher turned back around and observed the toilet paper beginning its descent. As a result, my name was written down along with a report concerning my behavior.

I feared Miss Bristol’s return. What would she say about my disrespectful behavior? What would she suggest as a suitable punishment?

When she returned, she called me out into the hallway. What she said cut deeper than anything I imagined. She simply said, “Kary, you are one of my right-hand men. I look up to you.”

That was it. I was waiting for much more. Instead of focusing on my condition (how I was), she focused on my position (who I was). This strategy was very effective. I apologized and finished out the year living from my position. In fact, I’d argue that after our little talk, my behavior was even better.

Paul did a similar thing to the church of Corinth. If you know anything about this church, you know it’s one of the most sinful churches in the entire New Testament. The Corinthians fought over who baptized who (1 Corinthians 1:11-12). They bragged about a man in their church who was sleeping with his mother-in-law (1 Corinthians 5:1-2). Their communion service was so fleshly that some got drunk (1 Corinthians 11:20-21, 28-30).

So how did Paul address this church? Did he write “to the scum at Corinth”? Did he address them as “the depraved sinners of Corinth”? No. Instead he wrote “to the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy” (1 Corinthians 1:2). Paul called them SAINTS! In the Greek this means “holy ones.” In other words, Paul addresses them for who they are and not how they are. Later he does talk about their condition and how they need to act, but he starts out by reminding them of their position and who they are.

If only we could follow this model. Like I said, so often we live from only one dimension. We look at how bad we are and how much we struggle. If we could just let our position sink in, then I’m convinced holiness would be much more attainable.

Of course, our problem will always be that we let these truths go in one ear and out the other. Our tendency is to think of this article as a nice philosophical conversation.

One of my favorite movies, *Les Misérables*, illustrates the power of positional truths. The movie opens up with a hooded man knocking on the doors of a church. The man is Jean Valjean. He served 19 years in a prison for stealing. Now that he has been released, he has no place to go. A priest answers the door. Valjean shows him his prison papers, and with much shame he identifies himself as a convict. Valjean is living his life in light of his condition.

The priest welcomes him in and invites him to stay in his house. He doesn’t care about his condition. That night Valjean steals from the priest, assaults him and runs away with his silver. Valjean is captured and brought before the priest. The holy man has every right to send him right back into prison again. Instead, he looks him straight in the eye and says, “Jean Valjean, my brother, you no longer belong to evil. I bought your soul. I’ve ransomed you from fear and hatred.”

This is the story of you and me. We’ve knocked on the door of heaven. We were wretched convicts guilty of sin. By the blood of Christ we were welcomed in. Yet, we continually sin against our Father. He has every right to throw us back into our prison. Instead of dealing with us according to our condition, He addresses us in light of our position. He calls us holy. He calls us sons and daughters.

Living life from our position ... this is the secret to a life of holiness. The secret is becoming who we already are.^d

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