

HOLINESS and SINFULNESS - a Complex Issue

In some ways, "holiness" is a rather complex topic. We read that our obligation is to **"Be holy, because I [God] am holy."** (1 Peter 1:16, see also v. 15) We are reminded of our greatest obligations in the words of Jesus, **"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength,"** and **"Love your neighbor as yourself."** (Mark 12:30, 31a)

Yet elsewhere we read the words of one far wiser than we, who reminds us:

There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.
(Ecclesiastes 7:20)

We read that God himself said that Job was "blameless and upright" (Job 1:8, 2:3); yet at the end of the book we read that there was still sin in Job's life for which he needed to "repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6).

Perhaps these few verses illustrate the complexity of the topic.

We need to be careful, however, that we don't mistakenly reach the conclusion that these (and all the other verses on the topic) somehow "contradict" each other. In reality, they "complement" each other - each presenting an aspect of the glorious truth, but looking at it from different perspectives.

As we examine the Scriptures and meditate on them, some of these issues will become clearer. For example, the solution in Job's case might be found in the contrast between "hidden" and "willful" sins, as mentioned in Psalm 19:12-13. But ultimately, we must bow down and worship our wonderful and awesome God, whose wisdom far exceeds anything we will ever comprehend.

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable his judgments,
and his paths beyond tracing out! (Romans 11:33)

Perhaps, as we meditate on the Word, we may develop a very clear understanding of the issues. Perhaps we might not be gifted with such abilities. In either case, let us strive to be holy, for as the Word says, **"without holiness no one will see the Lord"** (Hebrews 12:14b).

Let us encourage each other in this matter. But most of all, let us remember that our very ability to do this - to pursue holiness - comes from God. Ultimately, he is the one to whom all credit is due.

To God be the Glory!