

Word Association

- Ever played a word association game?
 - someone says a word, and you are to say the first word that comes into your head, that is somehow associated with that initial word...
 - John White, who wrote "The Fight" came up with this, interesting, list!!
 - thinness, hollow-eyed gauntness, beards, sandals, long robes, stone cells, no sex, no jokes, hair shirts, frequent cold baths, fasting, hours of prayer, wild rocky deserts, getting up at 4am, clean fingernails, stained glass, self-humiliation!!
 - given that he was writing in the late 1970's, some items on the list might sound a bit strange to our ears, but some themes might still appear if we were to do this exercise ourselves...
 - strands of "you can only achieve holiness by painful and rigorous process"
 - but also weird things about sandals and beards, possibly drawn from our image of Jesus? And stained glass... Intellectually we know they have nothing to do with holiness, but still they end up in the picture!
- Refer back to Isaiah sermon on what God is like - thrice holy God!
 - "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do" (1 Peter 1:15)
 - what does it mean to live a holy life?

Already Holy

- Two threads wrapped round each other, like a rope:
 - we are already holy
 - we are to become holy
- First, we are already holy:
 - 2:15 - having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross!
 - 2:17 - the reality is found in Christ...
 - 2:20 - you have died with Christ to the basic principles of this world
 - 3:1 - been raised with Christ...
 - 3:4 - Christ who is your life...
 - 3:12 - God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved...
 - 3:13 - as the Lord forgave you.
 - as well as the whole thrust of 2:16-23!!
- Our acceptability to God is established by the Cross of Jesus:
 - we aren't good enough, never will be, never could be
 - but he makes us holy by giving us his holiness
 - Cross didn't just take away our sin, accepting his sacrifice bestows upon us Christ's righteousness!
 - I'm looking around now at a collection of saints, holy people, in whom God finds no fault!
- That's where the peace of 3:15 comes from - the peace of Christ!
 - we don't need to worry whether we are holy enough!
 - we've been given more than enough holiness by the holy son of God
 - his Holy Spirit has taken up residence in our hearts!
- *But that's not the whole story...*

Become Holy

- We don't just hang up our hats at that point!
 - as if to say "its all done, doesn't matter now what I do!"
 - God has taken us and made us holy for a purpose!
 - we aren't just declared holy, but with actual lives that don't match our status...
 - now the Holy Spirit, resident in our hearts, begins a painstaking process of transforming us to be holy in the way we live, to be useful tools in the hands of a

Holy God

- God is not working with a lump of rock or metal that he can just chip away at:
 - he is working with people, people made in his own image, people he cares about desperately, and not people he would force or overpower
 - so, God invites us to partner him in transforming our living into his likeness
 - and to do that he points out the areas where we need to work at our living!!
- *Dangerous areas and safe ground...*

Dangerous areas (v.5-10)

- **sexual immorality** - sexual activity outside of marriage - a horrendously high proportion of Christian leaders who fail are tripped up by this, something like 70%!
 - **impurity** - probably sexual, given context, wide ranging word; in our context will include pornography, sexualised poor treatment of others around us - the way we look at people
 - **lust** - is our desire for sexual gratification for ourselves, or to please our partner and God?
 - **evil desires and greed** - wide ranging! Anything we don't have and want, any ways of getting what we want that are not right
 - **which is idolatory** - putting something else in God's place, who should be our only desire and true satisfaction - **this is HARD in our consumerist society!!**
 - **anger, rage** - things to rid ourselves of, not give in to, not accept as part of our character, work out ways in which we can more positively respond to people and situations that make us angry, and repent of and apologise for those times when we fail. The humiliation of "sorry, I was wrong to shout at you like that" is not just restorative, its preventative for the next time!
 - **malice** - holding things against people, grudges, memories of past mistreatments or injustices - get rid of them; "but I can't change my memories" - forgive! (eg R T Kendall, Total Forgiveness)
 - **slander** - speaking ill of someone else, speaking of what you assume are their motives, always bringing low someone else's achievements...
 - **filthy language** - more than just swearing; language that degrades people, that speaks as if people are dirt
 - **lie** - oh, so easy... I haven't finished it yet (when I haven't started!)...
- **"Put to death..."**: like clearing out a cupboard, conscious effort, won't just happen on its own!
 - take each thing out, examine it, decide how we are going to tackle it
 - confession - James 5:16 says: **"Therefore confess your sins to each other"** - helps kill the power of sin in our lives, as well as confessing to God
 - plan in advance how you will guard against a certain sin - times you are alone, times you are tired, times you have to take certain, hard action (eg forgiveness, reconciliation)...

Safe Ground (v.12-14)

- Clothe yourselves with:
 - **compassion** -
 - **kindness** -
 - **humility** -
 - **gentleness** -
 - **patience** -
 - **bear with each other and forgive** -
 - **love** -
- **"Clothe yourselves with..."**: again, won't just happen on its own:
 - we throw on some clothes in the morning..., casually
 - the sense here is of something more deliberate, like putting on armour
 - cf the putting on of armour of the guys at the fruit and flower festival!
 - how can I act with compassion, even if that's not yet what I feel?
 - how can I, without being deceptive, keep my good deeds quiet so I'm not doing

them for others?

On keeping other people happy

- Discussion of 2:16-23, on keeping up appearances, trying to be what **other people think of as holy!**
 - a dangerous pressure, a false one
 - because it leads to a false definition of holiness!
 - example - being quiet in worship - we have a tradition of quiet to concentrate on hearing God, on listening, on not being distracted - and we'll make uncomfortable and (without necessarily meaning to) push away anyone who doesn't conform
 - to be a holy person in most Churches of Scotland you have to be quiet in worship
 - but its a mere cultural trapping, a habit of our history
 - in many churches around the world, even here in this city, things are very different!
- In our desire to be holy, let us desire to draw closer to Jesus Christ, the head and cornerstone, and know in him acceptance
 - and not just behave in certain ways to make other people think of us as holy...

Be what you are!

- A car is an incredible invention!
 - put a little colourless liquid in a hole in the side, and half a ton of steel, glass and plastic is able to transport you and your family off on holiday, or round the corner...
 - cars are **designed** to do that task of transporting you from A to B well - that's what they are made for
 - but you still have to drive them!
 - we haven't yet got to the stage of robotic cars that can drive themselves - a car won't get from A to B on its own!
- We are - in Christ - holy, we are what we are made to be:
 - we are empowered by the most potent, most powerful fuel in the universe, the in-dwelling Holy Spirit!
 - but we need to co-operate with the designer and press the brake and the accelerator at the right times!
 - we need to **brake** and "**put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature...**", we need to "**rid ourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from our lips**", and we must **accelerate** and "**clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience**", and we should "**bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another**"
- Be what you are - the holy child of a holy God, always striving to let his holy image shine through!