

A Refresher on Holiness #3 and #4

A Refresher on Holiness

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Preached on: Tuesday, March 15, 2016

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Tonight we're going to conclude the series that we started a couple of weeks ago titled "A Refresher on Holiness," and we're trying to cultivate several different strands of thought to give us a sense of what motivates a godly mind and holy affections, to bring together several different strands of biblical thought to give us a sense that would motivate us to seek God, to walk with him in a holy way and to turn away from sin and in some ways it's very foundational to the whole nature of Christian living. We've done two messages and on this that covered seven points and I'm not going to review those here tonight. If you're interested in those, you can pick up the CDs on the way out or if you're watching over the live stream, download them at our website, truthcommunitychurch.org, and you can find all of them there. We're just going to kind of treat this as a standalone message, in other words.

What is it that would motivate you as a Christian to godly living? Well, you should consider God's punishment against sin. God's punishment against sin. This is the eighth point in the series, the first point for tonight. But we just want to keep in mind the way that God views sin and measure his hatred of sin by the punishment that it invokes and Scripture teaches us in no uncertain terms that God punishes unrepentant sinners in hell forever. That's the fate of everyone who does not turn to Christ for salvation and if you look at Revelation 21:8, we can just tie a verse on this. As we've said throughout the series, there are multiple passages that you could look to for each of these points. We're just kind of illustrating it with a sense and with the anticipation that you would supplement it with your own thinking and your own knowledge of Scripture and say, "Well, that connects me to a couple of other thoughts as well," and let it go that way. We're just trying to stimulate your thinking and not being exhaustive in what we say here in these brief moments together.

Revelation 21:8, we see God's punishment for sin for all time when the Apostle John says that, "for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars," sooner or later that catches all of us in its grasp, doesn't it? "Their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." So you ask the question, "Well, how does that motivate me to holiness as a Christian?" Well, it gives you a measure of the way that your God views sin

and the eternal punishment that sin brings shows his holy hatred of everything that is evil, everything that is opposed to his will, everything that falls short of the glory of God, and out of a love for God, out of a fear for his holiness, out of a reverence for the way that he views sin, you say, "I want to be as far away from that as I possibly can be." It's almost like a negative magnet and the different pole of the magnet pushing you away in the opposite direction toward holiness because you want nothing to do with sin. You should ask yourself, "How can I indulge, how can I participate, how can I welcome that which brings God's wrath to bear on sinners?" and you realize that it's utterly unthinkable. There is no room for it. And you see, part of this, part of this is simply developing a godly mind, developing and cultivating a whole mindset, a whole world view that just makes the entire concept of sin utterly unthinkable to you; that sinful thinking, sinful affections, sinful words, sinful actions would all just be so foreign to your mind that you would separate yourself from it as they do when they put burn victims into isolation in order to protect them from infection. Your mind is just so conditioned against it that whenever temptation rears its head, whenever you find yourself drifting into sin, you say, "I've got to get out of here. This is unthinkable. This is the kind of thing that brings eternal judgment from God. How could I want anything to do with that?"

Another way that you can think about that is that even as believers, Scripture says that we face God's discipline for sin. Look at Hebrews 12 with me as we continue to look at some selected Scriptures. Hebrews 12:7 says, "It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons." Continuing on in verse 9, he says, "Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?" So he's drawing a parallel between God's discipline of believers to the way earthly fathers discipline their biological sons. Verse 10, those earthly fathers, "they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness." Verse 11, "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness." Here's the way that you should think about the sin that is in you, about the way that God disciplines his children and over the course of their lifetime, you and I both, you and I all individually and collectively, we have corruption within us that needs to be purged from us and God disciplines us through the conviction of his word, through providential difficulties that cast us upon him. We all have corruption that he purges in order to purify us and to over time make our lives conform more to the image of Christ; that our character would be a more consistent reflection of the character of Christ himself. That's the goal of your salvation.

Well, here's the thing: if we have that corruption and he purges it anyway and that discipline is painful and difficult, you go through trials and it has a sanctifying influence upon you and you know what that's like, you feel the weight of it, well, here's the way you should think about it: why, knowing the pain of discipline, those of you who are young people and you felt the pain of parental discipline in a physical sense as some of my children smile back at me with memories that come to their own mind, if you felt the

pain of discipline, why in your own self-interest, why would you invite greater discipline from God by tolerating known sin in your life? Why would you do that? That doesn't even make sense. It isn't worth the pain and so we respect God's holiness, we fear the way that he punishes sin, we recognize even if we've been delivered from eternal judgment, we still respect and revere God enough to say, "That's how he views sin? Oh, keep me away from it." Then closer to home, you say, "Do you know what? If I pursue this path of sin, if I tolerate these bitter, angry attitudes in my heart and I cherish them or other manner of sin in my life, I know that inevitably I'm going to feel the discipline of God and it's going to hurt. Why would I do that? Let me just get out of this. Let me just repent now and get back to the walk with Christ that I should have been following all along." That will motivate you toward holiness. That will stimulate your affections toward that which is righteous in a negative way. You say, "I don't want that."

Now, that's a negative side of it. For the remaining three tonight, we're going to focus on that which is a positive enticement to holiness; that which would draw you even more toward holy affections, not out of a fear of punishment and discipline, but out of the sense of what is coming and what lies ahead in your Christian life and what God has done and what he has provided. Oh, it's just so rich, beloved. And as I said last week or the week before, probably said it both times, I tend to repeat myself; one of the difficulties of old-age, you just start to repeat yourself and you don't even realize it. But what we said was that any one of these 11 items that we have discussed in this series, any one of them would be sufficient to motivate your heart toward holiness, reverence, devotion, love for Christ, and turning away from sin. Any one would be sufficient in and of itself and independent grounds for holiness is each point 1 through 11. When you start to combine them all together, you start to see the cumulative impact. There is a cumulative force. The cumulative weight and desires and power of these things move you in the direction of holiness and, you see, beloved, that's what you want as a Christian. That is absolutely what you want. You want something to come along and take your sad, sinful self and lift it up and by the force of truth on your heart, carry you toward godliness and away from sin. I know that's what you want. You wouldn't be here tonight if that's not what you desired in your heart. So everything that we're saying in this series is simply an affirmation and force in the direction that you already want to go. That's the wonderful thing about these things. They are completely consistent with the regenerate heart, the new nature that God instilled in you at your salvation. So God just comes along and waters the plant and throws fertilizer on it so that that new nature would grow and flourish in you. Well, these last three things are going to do additional things to point you in that direction.

Number 9 for this series, number 2 for tonight; we've got a dual track going on here. Number 9: you want to consider the promise of Christ's return and reward. The promise of Christ's return and reward. You remember, don't you, beloved, that the Christian life is far more than the 70 years that you spend here on this earth? You realize that the purpose of it all far transcends? That there is an eternal destination? There is an appointment with Christ that you are moving toward that will dwarf and overshadow everything that happens to you on earth whether good or bad. The ultimate outcome of being with Christ and being before him is far beyond anything that this earthly life has to offer you and

what God is doing in your life, imperceptibly, maybe you forget more often than you remember, but God is preparing you and moving you toward an ultimate appointment face-to-face with Christ. That is the outcome of the salvation that you presently enjoy. Well, you want to remember that. You want to be mindful of that as you go through these things and remember as you're living life that in light of the return of Christ, you want to put aside the lusts of the world, you want to put aside the sin which so easily entangles you and remember that you will one day very soon, sooner than you might expect, be face-to-face with Christ and what do you want at that point? What's going to matter to you then? How do you want to enter into the presence of Christ?

Look at 2 Corinthians 5:10, back to the left if you're still in Hebrews in your Bible. 2 Corinthians 5:10, between 1 Corinthians and Galatians in your Bible. 2 Corinthians 5:10, and actually we'll start at verse 6 because the night is young and we have many good things to say as a result of this passage. 2 Corinthians 5, beginning in verse 6, Paul is contemplating death and he's contemplating being absent from his body and present with the Lord and he says in verse 6, "Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord," while we are living in this flesh we're not in the immediate presence of Christ, verse 7, "we walk by faith, not by sight," he says, "we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord." The worst thing that can happen to you in life is your physical death and in a spiritual sense, that will be the best thing that happens to you because it ushers you into the presence of Christ and so the lowest point in your earthly life becomes the entrance into that which you were created for in the first place. Paul says, "We prefer that. We prefer to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord." In Philippians he said something similar as well. In Philippians 3, he talks about his citizenship being in heaven and looking forward to attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

What does he say in verse 9? "Therefore," he says, "we also have as our ambition," here it is, this is what we've been talking about throughout this whole series, isn't it? What is your ambition? What do you desire? What motivates you in your Christian life? We're just talking about shaping our hearts after godly affections is really all we're saying here. What does Paul say? Verse 9, what's your ambition, Apostle Paul, you who are ahead of us in the spiritual life? Tell us what your ambition is. He says, "Whether we are at home or absent, we want to be pleasing to Him." In verse 10, he brings an eschatological focus, an eschatological reason, eschatology, the last things, to bear upon those ambitions. In verse 10 he says, "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." He says, "Do you know what motivates me? Do you know what informs my ambition as I go through this life and I wait to be absent from the body and at home with the Lord? What motivates me," Paul says, "is that I'm going to appear before the judgment seat of Christ. I realize that I am moving toward an appointment with him where I will stand and give an account for my Christian life." And he says, "Oh, I want that day to go well." He says, "Oh, I want to be pleasing to him. Oh," he says, "I want the Lord to reward me for a Christian life well lived at that time." And as we've said many times from this pulpit and we'll say it many times again, what you do is you kind of look

into the future, into an undefined temporal sense, an undefined point in time but a certain point in time, you look into the future and say, "I am going to one day soon be in the presence of Christ." And you take that moment, as it were, you reach into the future and you grab that moment in your thinking and in your affections and you pull it into the present and you say, "This now defines everything that I think, everything that I say, everything that I do is shaped by that one certain moment that is coming when I'm in the presence of Christ and, oh, do I want that moment to go well. I'll shape my life around that entire coming moment." And all of a sudden there is a force in your heart that defines everything that you think, say and do. It is the glasses through which you see everything else. It's the prism that everything else is funneled through, your coming time in the presence of Christ when you give an account.

Now, let me ask you: don't you want that time to go well? Honestly, you really have to think through this and you young people on my right, I'm so glad you're here because you have the chance to define life from the beginning and from the very start, really, as you're moving into it. Don't you want that moment to go well? Do you realize that Christ is going to evaluate your life as a believer and dispense eternal reward according to what he finds? And don't you want that to go well? Do you realize that nothing earthly compares in preeminent importance to that specific time? I think about that almost every day. I can't get my mind away from that thought of being in Christ's presence and giving an account and, you know, one of the beautiful things about being a Christian is that we know that he's not going to bring up our sins at that time and re-litigate our sins in life there. Why do we know that? It's because he shed his blood at the cross in time past to wash those things away. He's not going to bring our sins out before us and castigate us for our sin again. This is a time of reward for believers where he is going to honor us and reward us for our faithfulness in a way that somehow is going to influence the way that we enjoy and perceive and receive eternal bliss forever and ever more. I don't know how all of the calculations and the mathematical elements of that work out, but our sins have been completely forgiven in Christ, removed from us as far as the east is from the west, so what's going to be left is this reward given to us for faithfulness.

Well, what you should want in your heart, what I want for you, what God is calling you to, is to say, "Oh, aim all of your life, as it were, bank everything on life for that one moment before Christ to maximize that because the eternal ramifications for the good of your soul and your eternal bliss will be multiplied as you do. Now, why wouldn't you want that?" Why wouldn't you set aside earthly ambition and lusts and sins and just desire the things that God calls you to in his word knowing that he intends your eternal blessing as a result of these few short years here on earth and give yourself over completely to Christ now. Do you know what? You might as well just say it right here, right now. Some of you maybe listening over the live stream, maybe some of you to my left or to my right, some of you haven't even given yourself over to Christ like this and you're playing games. You're going through religious motions without really giving yourself in a heart unqualified, unconditional way giving yourself to Christ and receiving him as the Lord and Savior and Master of your being. The promise of his reward is so great that you would be a fool not to come to him and so I invite you one more time, I gladly invite you again to Christ because this is the supreme matter in life.

Isn't it amazing? Here we are sitting together 80, 100 of us in a little place on the east side of Cincinnati, a city that's 25 in US population, and here we are talking about the things that are most important for all of eternity. While other people are pursuing election results tonight, we've got the most important thing forever right in front of our thinking. What a grace God has given us. The promise of Christ's return and reward motivates you to godliness.

Now, with that in mind, turn over to 1 John 3. Let's see it again in another passage. 1 John 3, and this ties it together even more tightly, if that's even possible. What are you now as a Christian? Chapter 3, verse 2 of 1 John, what are you now as a Christian? John states it plainly, he says, "Beloved, now we are children of God." We belong to the family of God. We have God as our Father and Christ as our brother and the Spirit of God dwelling within us. We are in his family because he adopted us there. He looks to the future and he says, "it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is." Monosyllabic words, single syllable words defining the future that lies ahead for you in Christ. Do you know what the outcome of your Christian life is going to be? Do you know what you're moving inexorably toward? You're moving toward a glorified being, a glorified state, and you are going to see Christ face-to-face. You're going to stand before the Son of God and see him. You are going to look into the face of the one who was crucified for your sins and you are going to be there in a moment of exquisite love and acceptance because that's what Christ purchased. He died to make you his own, to make you one of his people. And that's what we're moving toward as Christians, being in front of him face-to-face and seeing him in unveiled glory.

Well, that's pretty magnificent. We're going to look into the face of the uncreated God. We're going to look into the face of the one who walked on this earth and shed his blood for our souls. Somehow we're going to look into the face of unmitigated, undiminished deity and undiminished, unmitigated love for God is love. Then we are going to have a sense, then we will have a fuller idea than we could possibly have in this earthly tent in which we dwell. Then we are going to have a sense, we're going to have an expanded exponentially greater understanding of what it means that he died for us; that he loved us; that he gave himself for us when we see him face-to-face. And all of the mist of the veil between earth and eternity is going to be gone; the mist of the veil between our remaining sin, it's all going to be gone and we're going to have a purity of vision and an expansion of knowledge and understanding that transcends anything that we could ask or think here right now. That's what we're moving toward. That's the holy purpose for which we were saved.

Well, look at verse 3, 1 John 3:3, he says, "everyone who has this hope fixed on Him," in other words you have this hope, you have this certain expectation that you're going to see him just as he is, what do you do in the meantime? Just what we've been saying, you look at the future, you see what's coming and you bring it back into the present and you say, "he purifies himself, just as He is pure." In other words, if you know that that's the outcome of your existence to see Christ face-to-face, then you calculate back and you

say, "Okay, well, then I'm going to spend this time in life purifying myself, pursuing the sanctification that he called me to." We pursue holiness now in order to partake in an advanced way the greater holiness that we'll enjoy then. The promise of Christ's return and reward motivates you toward holiness and seeing him face-to-face.

You know, just in passing, realizing I'm talking to some of you going through some hard discouraging times right now, when you're mindful of the outcome of your Christian life, that become so much sweeter to you. Your time of discouragement is actually a time to make the anticipation of seeing Christ all the sweeter to your affections because you realize there's nothing in this world that's worth loving anyway ultimately compared to being with Christ, and if you're going through a time of discouragement, let the hope that it's all going to be turned around and in the glorious presence of Christ, give you that which brings hope and holiness and a desire to persevere through it and let the future sweeten the hard times that you're going through right now. That's the way that it works. We love Christ and we love our future more than anything that we have in this present life. And if life is difficult now, then all the easier it is to detach yourself from your love for this world, to wean yourself of affection for the things of now because the greater affection is what lies ahead where there is a hope reserved for you in heaven that will not fade away, 2 Peter 1. I love being a Christian, don't you? Isn't it just like wonderful to have all of these things belonging to us, given to us freely out of the grace and love of a merciful Savior? This is worth living for. Nothing else is but this, this is worth living for.

Let's go on to the next point, the third point for tonight, the 10th point for the series: the pardon of God. The pardon of God and this is a sweet one. Those of you that are Christians, to one degree or another, maybe you came to Christ early in life and you didn't have a full experience of sin that brings you pain as you remember it now like some of us do that were saved in our adult years, but one way or another, to be a Christian means that you understand that by God's sovereign grace and sovereign prerogative, he has saved you out of sin, pardoned all of your sin; he has completely forgiven you and removed your sins from you as far as the east is from the west. Scripture says that he has buried your sins in the bottom of the sea illustrating a sense that they are gone, buried, forgotten, never to be raised by God against you ever again. That's wonderful to have that which was formerly a weight on your conscience, a terror to your soul as you anticipated the judgment of God, to realize that God has excised that, forgiven that, removed it from you and taken it away so that he would never bring it up against you again, instead has declared you righteous; said that, "You are acquitted before my bar of justice. Indeed, I count you as righteous as my own Son." So complete and full is the pardon. Well, don't you think that would motivate you to holiness as well? Just out of sheer gratitude, sheer wonder? "Oh, it is so good to have my sins forgiven."

Look at Isaiah 55, beginning in verse 6. Isaiah 55:6, Scripture says, "Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon." To realize that to come to Christ is to come, in a sense, to infinite compassion. If your sins were too many to be counted, they were more than the hairs on your head and God has forgiven

you, then you've got a pardon that goes beyond mathematical calculation and that there is an undeserved compassion that God has had upon your soul and you start to realize and that starts to sink in that when Christ bore your sin in his body on the cross, 1 Peter 3:18, that what he was doing was he was sealing you in the grace and goodness of God for all of eternity; that he had wiped away your sins forever and ever more, amen. And it starts to dawn on you that one of the points of that, one of the applications of that, one of the benefits of that, beloved, is this: is that you do not have to spend your life wallowing around in past regrets, you do not have to dwell in cringing fear about what your future failures may be, God has given you a complete pardon of all of your sins forever and ever more. 1 John 1:7 says, "the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses you from all sin," not some, all. There is not a sin that a Christian has committed past, present or future, that God will hold against them. Why? Because Christ took it all upon himself at the cross on our behalf. That's how complete his intercession was for you.

God has been full of compassion to you. He has abundantly pardoned you when you turned to him. All of the immorality, all of the chemical stuff that you did in the past, all of the bitter thoughts and the rancid things that you did toward others, all of the indifference that you showed to God and to his holiness, the way you neglected his word and neglected prayer and cursed the name of Christ in your unsaved days. What am I doing? I am reciting my own biography. And you glance at that and say, "God pardoned it all. He wiped it all away. I stand clean and forgiven, righteous, declared righteous in the presence of a holy God, so full has his pardon been." Well, what does that do to you now, today in the realm of living the Christian life? What kind of force does that bring to bear upon your spiritual affections? Just what else can it do? You say, "Do you know what? I want to live a godly life." It's not even complicated, is it? It's not even difficult. You don't need a PhD in theology to understand this. God has forgiven all of your sins, you're really grateful for that, you love the freedom of a clear conscience and being delivered from the fear of the punishment of God and you're so joyful for that, what does that do except motivate you toward holiness? To make you want to desire to live for Christ and to turn away from sin and that which displeases him? To motivate you to spend time in his presence, in his word, in prayer, and just honoring him and worshiping him, not because you're asking for something earthly, you're just mindful of the fact that, "Oh God, you've been so good to me. All I can do is fall before you and worship you and thank you for the abundant grace, the amazing grace that you have shown in my life." And your heart is overwhelmed with it and consumed so that there is not room for a simultaneous love and pursuit and cherishing of sin. You're so taken by the pardon of God that it drives out ungodly affections from your heart. The pardon of God moves you toward holiness.

Well, there's one last one that we'll look at here in this series. Tonight we've seen how the punishment against sin, the promise of Christ's reward, the pardon of God, all of those things motivate you toward holiness. It's hard to compare these one to another; they are all infinitely good and all infinitely found in his word. The final one for tonight for the series, what motivates you toward holiness: the power of the Holy Spirit. The power of the Holy Spirit. You could say the presence of the Holy Spirit since he indwells you. In all of these things as we've brought these things to bear on our thinking and with the

expectation that God would use them to shape and deepen and sanctify our hearts, sanctify us in the truth because his word is truth, in all of these things, you remember the Holy Spirit and you remember this: you are not alone in your pursuit of holiness. You're not alone. You are not left to your own power, you're not left to your own devices, you're not left to the energy of your own efforts in this pursuit of holiness. This is incredible. The Holy Spirit, the third person of the most blessed Trinity dwells within you to energize and to prompt your obedience and to lift you beyond your natural ability and help you to attain things in your pursuit of holiness that you could never do on your own. Why? Because there's a supernatural force, a supernatural godly energy at work in your heart to bring you beyond what your natural affections could ever achieve on their own.

There are three aspects of this that I want to consider with you tonight. What does the Holy Spirit do? Well, first of all, he gives you understanding in the word of God. He gives you understanding in the word of God. Look over at 1 John, just after the book of Hebrews and 1 & 2 Peter. 1 John 2:27, John the apostle, we studied this some three or four years ago, 1 John 2:27 says, "As for you," speaking to believers in contrast to the deceivers that were present in verse 26; you had the deceivers in verse 26 and now the believers in verse 27. He says, "As for you," those that John considered his little children that he referred to as brethren, those that he called beloved and children throughout the letter. He says, "As for you," you true Christians, here's what I want you to remember. It's a pastoral point that he makes. He says, "the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him." What's he saying? He's saying the Holy Spirit dwells within you and teaches you and communicates the truth of God to you in a supernatural way. He enlightens your understanding and he helps you understand the teaching of God in a way that goes beyond what your human intellect would allow. Psalm 119 speaks of the fact that the man who is devoted to the word of God has more understanding than the aged because his word is his meditation.

So God blesses his children with the indwelling Spirit and one aspect of the ministry of the Holy Spirit to us is to teach us and instruct us and to guide us into the truth. You have the power of the Holy Spirit at work in you to energize and prompt your obedience. You are able to understand truth in a way that unbelieving seminary professors at liberal seminaries can't get. You have more understanding as a simple believer in Christ than the most educated man in religious studies does that does not have the Spirit dwelling within him. It's supernatural. It's it beyond human ability. And you know what this is like, don't you? You've all known people through time, perhaps older saints now that have gone on before us to the Lord, and you realize that there was a depth to the things that they said. You say, "Wow, that's really insightful." You say, "Well, he didn't even go to seminary." Well, no. Of course the Holy Spirit developed him and instructed him and enlightened him and illuminated his understanding. Do you know that that's there for you too? The Holy Spirit is graciously empowering and expanding your understanding as well as you give yourself to his word.

What else does the Spirit do? Secondly, he produces the attitudes of a godly life. Look at Galatians 5. We'll go to a familiar text. Galatians 5:22. What we're looking at is the power of the Spirit at work in your heart motivating you toward holiness. How is it that we know that we can succeed in our pursuit of holiness? The Holy Spirit indwells us and what does he produce in us? Galatians 5:22, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." When you walk in obedience to God's word, when you are submissive to Christ, when you are yielded to the Spirit, this is what he produces in you and it's a single multifaceted fruit. These things come out of your heart because the power of the Spirit is at work in you.

Finally we can say this, is that the Spirit expands your power. The Spirit is at work promoting your sanctification in a way that goes beyond what your individual effort does. Look at Philippians 2, go to the right from Galatians across Ephesians into the book of Philippians and we will end here, Philippians 2. The thing here is to walk out tonight with a sense of the grandeur of Christian salvation, a sense of the awesome destination that is ours when we see Christ face-to-face and to realize that in the interim, God himself in the person of the Holy Spirit is moving and empowering and directing us in the same direction. We're not alone in our pursuit of holiness.

Philippians 2:12, "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Philippians 2:12. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. There is a responsibility on you to pursue this. As a Christian, you cannot be indifferent to your own sanctification and say, "Ah, I'll take it or leave it." No, you're not passive in the process. It's not a matter of what they used to say, let go and let God, and the thing that you most need to do is just abandon all self-effort. That's not true. You are commanded by God to exert your spiritual effort in the pursuit of your sanctification. You are meant to try to work it out and with an attitude of fear and trembling. So you take advantage of the word, you take advantage of prayer, you gather together with God's people, you think through principles like what we've covered in this series, you direct your mind in that direction and when all of that is said and done, verse 13, you realize that you're not alone in the pursuit. Verse 13, Philippians 2, "for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."

As you make this pursuit of holiness, you realize that there is an unseen, hidden, as it were, current of power, there is an ongoing force from the very personal hand of God at work sanctifying you and directing you in this direction. I often think when we used to go to the beach when we lived out at that other place wherever that was, I never can remember, when you were in the ocean you had to be careful because there were undercurrents that were carrying you. There was a force of the stream of water that you could not see that was moving you in a particular direction. Well, in a wholly sanctified way, there is the unseen presence of the Holy Spirit at work in your life as a believer that is moving you in the direction of holiness. God is at work in you, it says, to will and to work for his good pleasure. God fully intends to work out his purpose in your salvation and he doesn't leave the whole thing up to you; he is so committed to it that he carries it

out in the person of the indwelling Spirit and moves you in that direction. You say, "Well, maybe I'll just stray and walk away." Well, you can expect the discipline of God in your life if you start to stray. God has more than sufficient power, wisdom and understanding to discipline you to keep you in the narrow path if you stubbornly turn away from it.

That's on the warning side. On the encouragement side, those of you who feel the weight of your failures and say, "Oh, I want to be godly but I fall short so much and I get so frustrated and worn out in it all," well, you step back and come to the sweetness of God's word here, brother or sister in Christ: God is at work in you. You can take it on the authority of his own word, he is at work in you to accomplish what he desires and while you may feel the weight of your failures, you can look right here to God's word and realize that he is intending to accomplish the fullness of his purpose to will and to work for his good pleasure. He is at work in you even though it seems like you may be failing along the way. The presence of the Spirit, the power of the Spirit, is at work. God has given you the Holy Spirit to help you become the godly person that you aspire after. He hasn't left you alone. Christ said, "I won't leave you as an orphan." So the Spirit cultivates your understanding, stimulates righteous desires and over time brings all of these things to your mind as you walk with Christ.

Beloved, do you know what the outcome of your salvation is going to be? Do you know what's happening as you walk with Christ in this period in your life? The presence of the Spirit of God in you means for certain that God will accomplish far more in you than you could do on your own. He will lift you beyond your sinful disposition and equip you and empower you to walk with Christ and produce a final result that is far beyond what you could have done on your own. The presence of the Spirit gives you confidence as you go forward.

So what can we say? We take all of these things together and you and I collectively as believers in Christ, as we soon will close in prayer here this evening, we contemplate these things, we realize the holiness of God that motivates us to a reverence toward him, a love toward him, that desires to please and serve him, we recognize the pardon of God that creates a profound gratitude in our hearts that moves us in the direction of holiness, and we recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit and we have a sense of confidence. Confidence and gratitude and reverence and fear and love all coming together, multiple streams forming a river of devotion to glorify the God of your salvation. Of course the challenges are great. Of course life is difficult. You know, as we're going to see on Sunday from Ephesians 6, it's not just earthly circumstances, there are supernatural forces arrayed against us to make this difficult but we can stand firm with a confidence knowing that God has equipped us for the battle. We remember what God has done and we are steadfast with the sense that the one thing that we want to do is to glorify the one who will most certainly bring us to heaven. Is that the desire you're going to walk out with tonight?

Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, the challenge is great and our failures are many but how good and gracious have you been to us in Christ. Thank you for the full, complete pardon of sin that we enjoy in our Savior. Father, we bless your name for the power of the Holy Spirit who indwells us and enables us to fulfill that to which you have called us. With these things in mind, our God, we ask you to help us run with endurance the race that is set before us which you have providentially brought into our lives, which you have saved us for. Indeed, we have the lives as believers that you have appointed for us and you have uniquely equipped each one of us to glorify you in the life that you have given us. Father, I pray for these brothers and sisters in Christ in this room and watching over the live stream. God, would you help us appropriate these things we have considered? Would you sanctify our desires and make us conformed to your image? May our heart ever be motivated by these things, all of which point us in the single direction of a holy life, a consecrated life, a sanctified life set apart for Christ in all of our thoughts, motives, words and actions. Father, let us give ourselves completely to the one who gave himself completely for us on the cross of Calvary. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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