

Pastor Scott L. Harris
Grace Bible Church, NY
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The Pursuit of Holiness, Pt. 1
Selected Scriptures

Introduction

Yesterday was the twentieth anniversary of the attack by Islamic terrorists on the United States. It is an event that has been especially burned into the memories of those of us who were at the time living in proximity to New York City or the Pentagon because there were those among us that were there. Many of us knew someone that died in the attack. My cousin's son-in-law was last seen helping someone in a wheel chair work their way down the stairs in one of the Towers before it collapsed. Many went to funerals of those who either died in the attack or died as a result of disease from exposure to the toxins in the dust created. This has been especially true among those who are first responders. It is why there are so many 9/11 memorials at our local fire houses.

Then there are those for whom it was a news event or something studied in history, yet something made very real by a friend or relative who was involved in the various aspects of the War on Terror that resulted from it. Some politicians claim the war is now over because our troops have been pulled from Afghanistan. They remain blind to the fact that this is and remains a religious war just as it was prior to 9/11, and terrorism will remain part of it. Now that the Muslim Taliban thugs have defeated our politicians, (they did not defeat our military), we can expect an increase in Islamic terrorism. Why? The false religion of Islam strives to bring the world into subjection to it. Where it cannot exercise despotic rule, it will use terrorism to incapacitate and immobilize their enemies through fear. But please understand that other false religions and philosophies including atheistic Communism also strive to control the world. All of these evils are simply aspects of Satan's efforts to thwart the will of the true God and remove or at least diminish praise and worship of Him.

Satan and his demonic hoard are also very active in our own nation. 9/9 is going to stick in my mind as much as 9/11 as our want-to-be Führer, Mr. Biden, announced the development of new sweeping Federal IMP "vaccine" requirements that is going to affect a lot more than the two or three in our own congregation that lost their jobs this week due to NY State mandates. Neither the carrot nor media generated fear worked well enough to satisfy the Covid Nazis, so now the stick of federal power will be wielded. I have mentioned both the foolishness and evil of these mandates in the past, and I mention it again now only to let you know that I have put more copies of my pastoral letter on the back table for those of you who may try to get a religious exemption from the requirements of your employer. It is also on the link on our web site which also gives examples of how to write your letter. My letter is only for support of your own letter so that you can reference all of it or portions of it as expressions of your own belief. I also encourage you to get involved or organize your own class action law suits against these mandates - whether you are refusing the EUA interventional medical product ("vaccine") or have already received it. This is not and has not been about health and safety. It is about raw government power to enforce its will against your conscience outside the bounds of our Constitution and the rights that extend to us from God as humans.

That leads me directly to the subject for the sermon this morning. The battle with forces of evil including government oppression is nothing new in this world. Mankind has fought evil since Adam & Eve were in the Garden of Eden, and government oppression began as soon as some men used fear and power to force other men to do what they wanted. As I have pointed out in the last several sermons, the purpose of God's creation does not change because man pursues evil.

In the first sermon I pointed out that all of creation exists to give praise and glory to God, the Creator. In the second sermon I pointed out that man was specifically created to do this in particular ways beginning with being made in the image of God so that man would reflect the attributes of personhood - rational thought, emotion and volition - and the characteristics of God's communicable attributes. Man is also designed to glorify God as he fulfills the dominion mandate God gave to him as his regent over the earth and its creatures.

In the third and fourth sermons I pointed out the specific ways that God will glorify Himself by the display of particular attributes in dealing with unrepentant sinners and the redeemed. Paul specifically states in Romans 9:22 that God demonstrates His wrath and makes His power known as He endures with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction. I used Pharaoh as a specific example of this. Within God's patience endurance are also displayed attributes of kindness within His long-suffering and holy righteous justice within His wrath. Paul contrasts the vessels of wrath in the next verse with the riches of His glory that are made known upon vessels of mercy which He had prepared beforehand. God displays attributes such as love, mercy, forgiveness, lavish grace and faithfulness to vessels of mercy. I also pointed out in the fourth sermon several specific reasons stated in Scripture that God redeemed man. These included being a gift from the Father to the Son (John 6:37-40), to be to the praise of the glory of His grace (Ephesians 1:5-8), to be conformed to the image of His son (Romans 8:29-30), to do good works and bear fruit (John 15:16; Ephesians 2:10), and to be holy and blameless before Him (Ephesians 1:4). I want to concentrate on this last purpose this morning in explaining what it means and your part in developing these characteristics in your life.

Holiness

Over the years I have preached many messages that explained holiness or included calls to holy living since that is a normal part of the Christian life. February 23, 2020 I preached a sermon entitled, "*Holy & Blameless: Positional and Practical.*" In 2003 I preached a 16 part series on living in practical holiness in our society without falling into the trap of becoming legalistic like the Pharisees. Followers of Jesus Christ are called to be both holy and free from the yoke of slavery that comes when the principles and precepts of God's commands are replaced by the rules and traditions of men - and keep in mind that such slavery encompasses both legalism and licentiousness. I will not be preaching another long series on this subject, but I do want to give you at least an overview of what it means to pursue holiness and leave you with some resources to help you in your own pursuit of it.

Holiness Defined

Holiness is the over arching attribute of God that applies to all of His other communicable attributes. His love, mercy, grace, kindness, goodness, patience, and faithfulness are all holy. His righteousness, justice, jealousy, anger, wrath and judgment are also all holy. Everything about God is holy. This emphasis is seen in the vision of the prophet in Isaiah 6 as he describes the Seraphim calling out to God seated on His throne, "*Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD (YAHWEH) of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.*" The apostle John had a similar vision in Revelation 4 in which he also describes the Seraphim calling out day and night, "*Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.*"

The word for holy, ἅγιος / hagios in Greek, קָדוֹשׁ / qadosh in Hebrew, has a root idea of being separate, set apart. God is something other than anything in Creation for He is the Creator. Holiness expresses the idea of God's perfections of attributes that set Him apart from everything He has made. Any created thing that is holy is holy because it is set apart to God. Holiness is always related to that object's relationship to God. We use the related words, sanctify (verb form - ἁγιάζω / hagiadzō) and sanctification (ἁγιασμός / hagianismos) to describe something that is made holy because it is set apart to God whether it is a plot of ground, a tent, a building, utensils used in worship, etc. A place set aside for the worship of God is a sanctuary - a holy place.

People become holy when they are set apart to God at salvation. They are passed out of death into life (John 5:24) for there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). Even the physical body of a Christian is set apart for God becoming "*a temple of the Holy Spirit*" for the believer is not His own but has been bought with the price of Jesus sacrificial death (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Peter 1:18-19). The same word for holy (ἅγιος / hagios) is translated as "saint" or "holy one" in the Scriptures when applied to a Christian. If you have placed your faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, then you are a saint because you have been set apart to Him. We refer to that as positional righteousness because your standing before God has been made holy.

Humans are also described as holy as they reflect God's holy attributes, or to state it a different way, humans become holy as they become more godly in character. We call this sanctification. It begins at salvation and increases as you grow in Christ. Paul describes this in 1 Corinthians 6:9–11, ⁹ *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,* ¹⁰ *nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.* ¹¹ *Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”* As you become more holy, you also become more blameless. There is less and less legitimate accusations that can be made against you about breaking God's commands. Sanctification culminates in perfection and complete blamelessness at glorification when your body is transformed at Christ's return for “*we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is*” (1 John 3:2).

Webster's 1828 Dictionary gives a good description of man being holy as a reflection of God. “*Holy: 1. Properly, whole, entire or perfect, in moral sense. Hence, pure in heart, temper or dispositions; free from sin and sinful affections. Applied to the Supreme Being, holy signifies perfectly pure, immaculate and complete in moral character; and man is more or less holy, as his heart is more or less sanctified, or purified from evil dispositions. We call a man holy, when his heart is conformed in some degree to the image of God, and his life is regulated by the divine precepts. Hence, holy is nearly synonymous with good, pious godly. Be ye holy; for I am holy. 1 Peter i.*”

Holiness is Essential

Before I get into some of the practical aspects of pursuing holiness in your life, I want stress two reasons that holiness is essential and not optional for the Christian. First, as I have stressed very strongly throughout this series, God will accomplish His purpose in your life. Those whom God chose before the foundation of the world will become holy and blameless before Him (Ephesians 1:4). That is both a comfort and a warning to Christians. It is a comfort because Paul's confidence expressed in Philippians 1:6 is true - “*He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*” The greater your cooperation with God in producing holiness in your life, the easier it will be and the greater the blessings you will receive from Him. It is a warning because Hebrews 12:4-11 is also true. God disciplines those He loves so that we may share His holiness. The more resistant you are to God producing holiness in you, the more difficult it will be and the more of His chastening you will experience. Or to put it more simply, life it better for an obedient child of God than for one that is resistant. But either way, God will conform you into the image of His Son (Romans 8:29).

Second, holiness is essential for the Christian because it is a fundamental purpose for your life. 1 Peter 1:15-16 is direct on this pointing out the command - ¹⁵ *but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;* ¹⁶ *because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”* It is a purpose of your redemption in Christ Jesus as I pointed out last week from Titus 2:11-14; 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8 and Ephesians 5:25-27 with Colossians 1:22 succinctly summarizing, “*yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.*” 2 Corinthians 7:1 connects the promises of God and holiness - “*Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*” 2 Peter 3:10-14 ties the pursuit of holiness to the future of this world - “¹² *Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness*” - and the future of believers - “¹³ *But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.* ¹⁴ *Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless.*”

As I pointed out in previous sermons, the greater your understanding and commitment to fulfilling your God given purposes in life, the more you will know God's peace regardless of any circumstance you will face in this life, and the better you will be able to resist both the temptations of our adversary and the pressures of the world to conform you to itself. The fear of man will become less and less controlling until it is without influence,

and your ability to stand firm against the manipulations of others will increase. Pleasing God, not others or self, becomes the quest of life. The pursuit of holiness enables you to not just survive, but to live and to thrive no matter what the circumstances may be. Why? You have reasons to live in a particular way that no human or demonic power can take away.

We are already experiencing oppression in our nation that we have not known in our lifetimes, and from my viewpoint, the mass delusions alone of so many people accepting and advocating as good what God declares as evil is enough to demonstrate it is demonically influenced and empowered. And yes, that does include the mandates to be injected with Emergency Use Authorized (EUA) interventional medical products (IMP) - the Covid “vaccines.” The crust of crud on this cesspool of evil is that some employers and those with federal contracts will not be allowing exemptions for those who have already had the disease or for objections of religion or conscience. How should we respond? The same way godly believers have throughout history and do now in other lands which are much more oppressive. We resist evil and pursue holiness which are flip sides of the same coin for both are expressions of walking with the Spirit of God. If you walk by the Spirit you will neither carry out the deeds of the flesh (Galatians 5:16) nor yield to the schemes of the devil (Ephesians 6:10-18). You can neither yield to the evil in the oppression even if the personal costs are high nor can you let that oppression provoke an unholy response. That is the balance. Certainly difficult to keep, yet the goal for which to strive. The godly man will despise both the reprobate and evil (Psalm 15:4; 36:4) and yet love and pray for his enemy and persecutors (Matthew 6:44) and overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21).

You are to keep your God given purposes in view and strive to fulfill them knowing that in doing so you will receive the same kind of commendations we saw in our study of 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Those believers lived in a Satanically controlled society and were persecuted and afflicted by the pagans for turning from idols to serve the living and true God, yet they continued onward as imitators of the missionaries and the Lord to become examples to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia in their work of faith, labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 1).

As I stated earlier, there is nothing new about followers of God having to battle evil in this world including what is done by those whose minds are blinded by the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4). As our nation continues its departure from its Christian heritage and society descends deeper into the darkness of evil, those who strive to live in holiness will shine ever brighter as they lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light to walk as children of light (Romans 13:12; Ephesians 5:8). How brightly is your light shining now? How bright do you want it to shine?

Holiness is not an option for Christians. It is an essential pursuit in both obedience to God’s commands and as a fundamental purpose of our existence as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. There should be in every professing Christian an inner drive to become like Jesus, and striving to be more like Jesus will result in greater holiness.

Obstacles & Blocks to Holiness

Christians should pursue holiness, so why is that not true of so many people that profess to be Christians. What are some of the blocks to the pursuit of holiness? Here are a few.

1) False profession of faith. There are many Scriptures that state directly or allude to those who claim to be Christians but are not in fact followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some know they are not Christians but make the claim anyway in order to deceive others. That would include some false teachers who are wolves dressed in sheep’s clothes (Matthew 7:15), those who would like to exploit Christians (1 Peter 2:3), and those that want the acceptance of Christians. The latter being more common in societies that are dominated by Christianity.

Many are self deceived. Jesus gives a strong warning in Matthew 7:22-23 about those who may do all sorts of things in Jesus name, yet He will declare to them, “*I never knew you, Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.*” These are people that diligently follow a religious system believing it is following Jesus and gaining salvation for themselves. The Pharisees are an historical example of this while cults such as Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons are obvious examples in the present time, but this is also a major problem in the

mainline denominations and within evangelical Christianity.

Many others are just ignorant. They know very little about what God has actually said and assume things to be true that are not. This is common among those that grew up in Church and assume because of that they are Christians. Many of these will walk away from church as they learn what the Scriptures teach about God, Christ and the Christian life and they reject it.

These are the reasons Paul warns in 2 Corinthians 13:5, “*Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?*” It is why Paul’s letter to the Galatians gave such strong warnings about following a false gospel or adding to the true gospel which would pervert it. It is why John makes so many distinctions between truth and error in knowing and following Christ in 1 John. If you are not set apart to God - not a true Christian - then you cannot be holy.

2) Ignorance & Immaturity. Most of the epistles establish doctrine, make corrections to wrong doctrine, and exhort the readers to be more mature in their walk with Christ. Using 1 Corinthians as an example, it is almost hard to believe that Paul had taught there for a year and a half. They were proud, had split into factions and practiced all sorts of things that should have been easily recognized as sin. 1 Corinthians proves that you should never be surprised how ignorant and immature professing Christians can be. Paul pointed out in 1 Cor. 3:1-3 that he could still not speak to them as spiritual men who could handle solid food. Instead, he had to speak to them as infants in Christ giving them milk for they were still fleshly. But then, there are also always new people hearing about Jesus and making a profession of faith that must then learn the basics of walking with Christ who have legitimate reasons to be ignorant and immature. That is why the Great Commission includes “*teaching them to obey all that I commanded you*” to those that respond to the gospel message and are baptized. It can take some time to learn the truth and turn away from the former way of life you had been taught was correct and then begin to live in holiness. You have to lay aside the old self and put on the new self (Ephesians 4:17-32; Colossians 3:1-17). It also takes some time to learn about and then trust the precious and magnificent promises of God that enable us to become partakers of the divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world by lust (2 Peter 1:4). Ignorance and immaturity are an obstacle to holiness.

3) Laziness & Selfishness. Humans are naturally bent toward selfishness and therefore being lazy towards anything that is not in self interest. True salvation will reverse this as loving God becomes more important than loving self and seeking the good of others even at the cost of self sacrifice in imitation of Jesus becomes a way of life. Tragically, too many professing Christians remain selfish and lazy.

Some of this is due to a major flaw that is often part of evangelism efforts in which a man centered gospel is presented as salvation from Hell which is then quickly followed by giving an assurance of salvation to those that respond. The result is either a false profession of faith or minimal interest in pursuing holiness because they are content with the fire insurance policy they have been given. Verses such as Hebrews 12:14 which commands believers to “*pursue . . . sanctification without which no one will see the Lord*” are not even on their radar. The true gospel is reconciliation with God through salvation from sin unto righteousness. Those with a wrong understanding of the purpose of salvation will yield to natural selfishness and be lazy about walking in righteousness.

Another problem that contributes to this is the idea of “*let go and let God*” resulting in being passive in the Christian life. The Scriptures are full of exhortations such as strive, labor and work in living out the Christian life. Strive against sin (Heb. 12:4), work out your salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12), and imitate Paul’s example of labor in life and ministry (Phil. 3:17; Col. 1:29).

In 2 Peter 1:2-4 the apostle states that by His divine power, God “*has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.*” This includes His precious and magnificent promises I mentioned a few minutes ago. In verses 5-8 Peter points out the steps that the believer also needs to make in reaching maturity as a Christian. ⁵ “*Now for*

this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, ⁶ and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, ⁷ and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Trying to live the Christian life in a passive manner is a block to the pursuit of holiness. The Christian life is to be an active striving to live in godliness.

4. Wrong view of Sin. The final obstacles to holy living I want to mention this morning are wrong views of sin. This involves not recognizing what is sinful, not recognizing the seriousness of sin, giving excuses for your personal sins, and failure to follow God’s directions concerning sin.

Sin means to “miss the mark” and is any failure to live according to God’s commands and will. People, both individuals and groups, usually come up with their own list of what is or is not sinful instead of being diligent to discover what God has actually said about the issue. Sometimes this will be setting a stricter standard under the idea that it would give greater protection. An example of this that is common among conservative evangelicals is making drinking any alcoholic beverage a sin for everyone instead leaving it were God does at getting drunk by it (Eph. 5:18). Sometimes it is setting a standard much more loosely than God does such as the many excuses commonly accepted for lying even among Christians when God’s standard is simple - Colossians 3:9, “*Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practice.*” Almost always it is so that people can think of themselves as better people - more holy in religious circles - than what is actually true. People who virtue signal according to political correctness are either as evil as their politically correct position is, or they are cowards who refuse to stand for truth. And in the final analysis, it does no good to put on a good show for either yourself or other people because God knows your heart and will judge accordingly (Jeremiah 17:10). Living by the standards of man is a block to the pursuit of holiness because holiness requires living according to God’s standards instead of man’s.

When sin is not taken seriously, there is a lack of motivation to fight against it in the quest for holiness. Perhaps the most common excuse for sin will be some variation of “I am only human,” or “everyone does it.” The seriousness of the violation of God’s commands is not diminished because everyone else does it, for indeed, there are none righteous and everyone does sin and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:10; 23), but the wages of that sin is death (Romans 6:23). That is extremely serious which is why Jesus had to become a man, live a sinless life, then die as the substitute payment for that sin in order to redeem man with His resurrection from the dead proving all of His claims and promises are true. All sin, whether it is one of commission (doing something you should not have done) or omission (failure to do what you should have done), something involving action or only thought, is serious. You become a transgressor of the law when you fail to keep any of God’s commands.

As pointed out earlier, some do not take sin seriously because they have their fire insurance policy. They reason that since they are forgiven and not going to hell, then sin is no longer much of an issue for them. That can go back to an issue of salvation itself. 1 John 3:8 states that the one that practices sin is of the devil and that the Son of God appeared to destroy the works of the devil, so if such works continue in someone who claims to be a Christian, are they in fact a Christian? If you are not saved from sin, then you are not saved from Hell either.

However, this could also be an issue of failure to recognize that sin is a transgression against and a personal offense to God. The same God that loved sinners enough to have Jesus Christ pay the redemption price with His own life so that forgiveness could be offered. God first loved us and our love is only a response to His (1 John 4:19). If there is no love for God, there is a very serious problem. If the love is immature, then it needs to mature rapidly. No sane person would treat their husband or wife in that manner - “I got my spouse, so it does not matter much how I treat them.” It matters very much how you treat them because you love them. If you love God, you will take sin seriously because you want to please Him, not offend Him. Lack of love of God is a block to the pursuit of holiness.

People tend to ignore or find excuses for their own sins while often easily pointing out the sins of others.

Romans 2 exposes the hypocrisy of the moral unrighteous who do this. Ignoring and excusing your own sin does not bring about reconciliation with God whom you have offended, but pride and self delusion drives people to find ways to think of themselves better than they are in reality. That is a block to the pursuit of holiness.

Dealing with sin in any other way than according to God's commands is also a block to holiness as we have now seen with those that do not take their sin seriously enough. There are also those that take sin seriously, but do so without dealing with it God's way. They instead find ways that either redefine it or purposely ignore it to avoid being overwhelmed by it. This is also an obstacle to the pursuit of holiness. This is a common issue among those that tend toward legalism because otherwise their list of rules would get to be too big.

How does God want you to deal with sin? It begins with Salvation and recognizing your own sinfulness and offense to your Holy Creator. He wants you to repent from your sin and place your faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ to receive His promised forgiveness to all who will do so. He reckons your faith to be righteousness and adopts you into His family. John 1:12–13,¹² *“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”* He also sends the Holy Spirit to indwell you to both guide and empower you to live in righteousness.

This continues after salvation as explained in 1 John 1:9, *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* That is the balance. Sin is to be taken seriously, but neither are you to fear it so much that it incapacitates you. We confess our sins which means to agree with God about them and also trusting that He will keep His own promises to forgive and cleanse. There should be remorse and sadness over sin because you have offended and hurt someone you love, but it should never result in despondency because you already know His love will not change and He will forgive. That was the manner in which David confessed His sins in Psalm 51 trusting God to answer His prayers.

To use a human example, I love my wife and she loves me. Neither of us want to ever offend or hurt the other, though we both know we will do so either ignorantly, out of carelessness or even selfishness. Our love for each other motivates us to be careful and strive to great expressions of that love even in the daily activities of life. We do not live in fear of failure because we know that the love the other person has for us means we will be able to work it out. When there is failure, then there is sorrow, remorse and confession with asking forgiveness, and because there is love, we forgive each other. We desire to do this as soon as possible because an offense hinders the relationship and we want the relationship to be close, not distant. All of those things should be normal in marriage or in any friendship. Where confession and forgiveness do not take place, there will be a rift in the relationship that can lead to a breakage in it.

Your love for God should motivate you to flee from sin and confess it to Him that you may be forgiven and have the relationship restored to its proper closeness and depth. Where this lacks, there will be a blockage to the pursuit of holiness for you would be living in a manner going the opposite direction and becoming more distant from God instead of drawing closer to Him.

Conclusions

I did not get as far as I had intended, so I will pick it up from here next week and look at motivations for pursuing holiness. Before I close, I do want to recommend two books to you on this subject. The first is the book and study guide for *Pursuit of Holiness* by Jerry Bridges. Work your way through it, and if possible, discuss it with others who can encourage you and hold you accountable to put its principles into practice. Another excellent book on this subject is J.C. Ryle's, *Holiness*. It was written about 120 years ago in England, so the language might be unfamiliar, but it is well worth the effort to read. Do all you can to remove the obstacles and pursue holiness.

Sermon Notes - September 12, 2021
THE PURSUIT OF HOLINESS, PART 1 - Selected Scriptures

Introduction

9/11

A continuing war of Satan vs. God

Demonic activity in the U.S.

God's _____ does not change because man pursues evil

Creation exists to _____ God including man made in God's image and reflecting His attributes

God glorifies Himself in display of His attributes upon vessels of _____

God glorifies Himself in display of His attributes upon vessels of _____

Holiness

Holiness Defined

Holiness applies to _____ of God's attributes

Holy (ἅγιος / hagios & קָדוֹשׁ / qadosh) have a root meaning in being _____, set apart

God is set apart from Creation because He is something other than creation & _____ in all His attributes

Any created thing that is holy is holy because it is _____ to God

People become holy when they are set apart to God (salvation) - they become a "_____"

People become holy as they reflect God's holy attributes - they are "_____ " (1 Cor. 6:9-11)

As you become more holy, you also become more _____

Holiness is Essential

God will accomplish His will in you which for the elect includes becoming _____ and blameless (Eph. 1:4)

The greater your cooperation with God's work in your life, the _____ it will be and the greater the blessings

The more resistant you are to God's work in your life, the more _____ it will be including more chastening

Holiness is a fundamental _____ for the life of a Christian - 1 Peter 1:15-16 - It is a purpose of redemption

Pursuit of your God given purposes in life brings God's _____ & enables you to resist temptation & pressure

The pursuit of _____ enables you to live and thrive no matter what the circumstances may be

We respond to increasing oppression as Christians always have - resist _____ and pursue holiness

Striving to live according to God's purposes will result in _____ - just like the Thessalonians

Facing oppression by those who are evil is _____ - how bright will your light shine in a dark world?

Blocks to Holiness

1) False profession of faith

The Deceivers - Matthew 7:15; 2 Peter 2:3

The Self-deceived - Matthew 7:22-23

The Ignorant

2 Corinthians 13:5 - test / examine yourselves! Galatians & 1 John

2) Ignorance & Immaturity - 1 Corinthians

Immature Believers - _____ (1 Corinthians 3:1-3)

Ignorant Converts - teach them

3) Laziness & Selfishness

_____ centered evangelism offering fire insurance resulting in false profession or minimal interest

_____ - "let go and let God" - but Christians are to strive, labor and work in living out Christianity

4. Wrong view of Sin

Setting a human standard of sin whether more strict or loose _____ holiness because it is not godly

_____ for sin removes motivation to fight against it and diminishes the seriousness of what Jesus did

Sin is a transgression against and a personal _____ to God - lack of love for God is a block to holiness

Romans 2 - pride & self-delusion drives people to think of themselves _____ than they are

Dealing with sin in any other way than according to God's commands _____ the pursuit of holiness

Salvation requires _____ from sin and faith in the person & work of Jesus to forgive your sin

Normal Christian life includes _____ and trusting God to forgive & cleanse (1 John 1:9) Psalm 51

Love for God should motivate you to _____ from sin and confess it to Him when you do

Recommended Books

The Pursuit of Holiness, Book & Study Guide, Jerry Bridges, NavPress, 1978

Holiness: It's Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots, J.C. Ryle, Hendrickson Publishers

KIDS KORNER – Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help.

Young Children – draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. Older Children – count how many times the words "holy" or "holiness" are mentioned. Talk to your parents about what holiness is, why it is important and what blocks it

THINK ABOUT IT – Questions to consider in understanding the sermon and its application. In what ways do you see demonic forces at work around the world? Within the United States? When did man's fight against evil start? What is God's purpose for Creation? For man? How does God glorify Himself in "vessels of wrath"? In "vessels of mercy"? Define "holy." Why is holiness the over arching attribute of God? How do created things become holy? How do people become holy? What is the relationship between holiness and sanctification? Give two reasons why is holiness essential for a Christian? How should Christians respond to oppression by evil? What are some of the reasons someone might make a false profession of faith? How would those block holiness? Why are some reasons a Christian might remain immature for many years? What should be done about it? What is the relationship between the Great Commission and the pursuit of holiness? How does a man-centered gospel contribute to selfishness and spiritual laziness? Why is the idea of "let go and let God" detrimental to the pursuit of holiness? What responsibilities does the Christian bear in the pursuit of holiness? What are some of the reasons is man so prone to substitute his own standards for God's standards of righteousness? Give some examples of substitute standards you are aware of? What are some reasons a professing Christian might be complacent about sin? How does sin show a lack of love for God? How does God want non-Christians to deal with sin? Christians? How does love for God motivate you to flee from sin and to confess it when it does happen?