



HEBRON

Wednesday, January 22, 2020

Dr. Landon Dowden

## HOLINESS/SANCTIFICATION

### Lesson #2

#### Review from Last Week:

- Holiness is:
  - A position
  - A process
  - A partnership
    - Between us and God
      - Bridges: No one can attain any degree of holiness without God working in his life, but just as surely no one will attain it without effort on his own part.
    - Between us and our faith family
- God intended our pursuit of holiness to be:
  - In His power – not our own
  - With His people – not alone

#### Our holiness was one of God's purposes in our redemption (Ephesians 1:4)

- Holiness is God producing His character in us and through us.
- We need holiness so that we can dwell with and delight in God rather than being destroyed by Him.

#### Three Truths about Holiness (J. I. Packer):

1. Holiness, like prayer (which is indeed part of it), is something which, though Christians have an instinct for it through their new birth, as we shall see, they have to learn in and through experience.
2. The process of learning to be holy, like the process of learning to pray, may properly be thought of as a school – God's own school, in which the curriculum, the teaching staff, the rules, the discipline, the occasional prizes, and the fellow pupils with whom one studies, plays, debates, and fraternizes, are all there under God's sovereign providence.
3. In God's school of holiness our Lord Jesus Christ (the Father's Son and the Christian's Savior) is with us, and we with him, in a controlling relationship of master and servant, leader and follower, teacher and student.
  - a. How are the different rates of progress to be explained? Fundamentally, the factor that makes the difference is neither one's intelligence quotient, nor the number of books one has read nor the conferences, camps, and seminars one has attended, but the quality of the fellowship with Christ that one maintains through life's vicissitudes.

**Question as we begin this week: If God's will is our sanctification (1 Thessalonians. 4:3), why does it seem that a passionate pursuit of holiness is often lacking in our faith families?**



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- How often was holiness discussed in your home growing up? How often was it a request in your family prayer time?
- In what ways, was holiness emphasized in the faith family where you grew up?

**DeYoung:** The hole in our holiness is that we don't really care much about it. Passionate exhortation to pursue gospel-driven holiness is barely heard in most of our churches....I'm talking about the failure of Christians, especially younger generations and especially those most disdainful of "religion" and "legalism," to take seriously one of the great aims of our redemption and one of the required evidences for eternal life – our holiness.

**DeYoung:** My fear is that as we rightly celebrate, and in some quarters rediscover, all that Christ has saved us *from*, we are giving little thought and making little effort concerning all that Christ has save us *to*. Shouldn't those most passionate about the gospel and God's glory also be those most dedicated to the pursuit of godliness? I worry that there is an enthusiasm gap and no one seems to mind.

**Packer:**

- We do not hear about holiness in preaching and books.
- We do not insist upon holiness in our leaders.
- We do not touch upon the need for personal holiness in our evangelism.

### 3 diagnostic questions (DeYoung):

1. Is our obedience known to all? (Romans 16:19)
  - a. Is obedience what your church is known for? IS it what other Christians think of when they look at your life? Is it even what you would want to be known for? "Creativity" or "relevance" or "world-changer" might sound better than boring old obedience.
  - b. Puritan spirituality was about growing in holiness. It was about Christians becoming visible saints. That's why they defined theology as "the doctrine of living to God" (William Ames) or "the science of living blessedly forever" (William Perkins). Their passion and prayer was for holiness. Can we honestly say our lives and our churches are marked by the same pursuit?
2. Is our Heaven a Holy Place? (Revelation 21)
  - a. The new Jerusalem is holy – the bride has been purified.
  - b. In some popular conceptions of the afterlife, God's love gets reduced to unconditional affirmation. But in truth, God's love is always a holy love and his heaven is an entirely holy place. (Revelation 21:7-8)
  - c. No matter what you profess, if you show disregard for Christ by giving yourself over to sin – impenitently and habitually – then Heaven is not your home.
  - d. Many Christians have never been taught that sorcerers and murderers and idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood will be left outside the gates of heaven



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(Revelation 22:15). So they do not have the guts (or the compassion) to say that the unrepentantly sexually immoral will not be welcomed either, which is exactly what Revelation 21-22 teaches.

- e. Ryle – Heaven is a holy place. The Lord of heaven is a holy God. The angels are holy creatures. The inhabitants are holy saints. Holiness is written on everything in heaven. And nothing unholy can enter into this heaven (Revelation 21:27; Hebrews 12:14).
  - f. Spurgeon – Sooner could a fish live upon a tree than the wicked in Paradise.
3. Are we Great Commission Christians?
- a. The word “observe” means more than “take notice of.” It means “obey.” We aren’t asking the nation to look at Jesus’ commands like an interesting Rembrandt. We are teaching the nations to follow His commands. The Great Commission is about holiness. God wants the world to know Jesus, believe in Jesus, *and* obey Jesus. We don’t take the Great Commission seriously if we don’t help each other grow in obedience.
  - b. And yet, how many of us usually think of holiness when we think of mission work? How easy it is to be content with leading people to make decisions for Christ instead of focusing on making disciples of Christ.
  - c. It is only by trusting in him and being forgiven by his substitutionary sacrifice that we are even capable of walking in his ways. You can’t make good fruit grow from bad trees.
  - d. Jesus expects obedience from his disciples. Passing on the imperatives of Christ is at the heart of the Great Commission.

**Why does the pursuit of holiness not occupy its proper place in our hearts? Why is a concern for holiness not obvious in our lives like it’s obvious in the pages of Scripture? (DeYoung’s attempts to answer these questions):**

- It was too common in the past to equate holiness with abstaining from a few taboo practices such as drinking, smoking, and dancing. Godliness meant you avoided the no-no list.
- There is a fear that a passion for holiness makes you some kind of weird holdover from a bygone era. As soon as you share your concern about swearing or about avoiding certain movies or about modesty or sexual purity or self-control or just plain godliness, people look at you like you have moralistic dab of cream cheese on your face from the 1950s.
  - Believers get nervous that their friends will call them legalistic, prudish, narrow-minded, old fashioned, holier-than-thou – or worst of all, a fundamentalist.
- Our churches have many unregenerate persons in them.
  - One reason God’s holy people do not pursue holiness is that they have not yet been born again by the Holy Spirit.
  - Tozer – Plain horse sense ought to tell us that anything that makes no change in the man who professes it makes no difference to God either, and it is an easily observable fact that for



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countless numbers of persons the change from no-faith to faith makes no actual difference in their life.

- Some Christians have willingly embraced Christian freedom but without an equal pursuit of Christian virtue. (They push the boundaries with language, entertainment, alcohol, and fashion.)
- Among more liberal Christians, the pursuit of holiness can be suspect because labeling any behavior as “ungodly” feels judgmental and intolerant.
  - If we are to be “without spot or blemish” (Ephesians 5:27), we need to discern what sort of attitudes, actions, and habits are pure and what sort are impure.
- Among conservative Christians there is sometimes the mistaken notion that if we are truly gospel-centered we won’t talk about rules or imperatives or moral exertion.
  - We are so eager not to confuse indicatives (what God has done) and imperatives (what we should do) that we get leery of letting biblical commands lead uncomfortably to conviction of sin.
  - We’re scared of words like diligence, effort, and duty.
  - Pastors don’t know how to preach the good news in their sermons and still strongly exhort church goers to cleanse themselves from every defilement of body and spirit (2 Corinthians 7:1).
  - We know legalism (salvation by law keeping) and antinomianism (salvation without the need for law keeping) are both wrong, but antinomianism feels like a much safer danger.
- Then there’s the reality that holiness is plain hard work, and we’re often lazy.
  - We like our sins, and dying to them is painful. Almost everything is easier than growing in godliness. So we try and fail, try and fail, and then give up.
  - It’s one thing to graduate college ready to change the world. It’s another to be resolute in praying that God would change you.
- Finally, many Christians have simply given up on sanctification.
  - Some believers doubt holiness is even possible. And it’s not just because the process is difficult. It’s because we imagine God to be difficult. If our best deeds are nothing but filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6), why bother?
  - We see the pursuit of holiness as something just bound to make us feel guilty. We are loved because of the imputed righteousness of Christ, but personal obedience that pleases God is simply not possible.

### **Bridges – Pursuit of holiness**

- Christians are not pursuing holiness as we ought.
- With regard to holiness, we greatly enjoy talking about the provision of God but we do not as readily talk about our own responsibility.



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- How often do you talk about having received the Holy Spirit?
- How often do you think on the indwelling of the Spirit?
- Which dominates your thoughts – what you’ve been saved from or what you’ve been saved to? Both should be in our minds.
- Why we don’t:
  - We are simply reluctant to face up to our responsibility.
  - We do not understand the proper distinction between God’s provision and our own responsibility for holiness.
- Walking in obedience to God’s Word and living a life of holiness is not only expected but the “promised birthright” of every Christian.
  - Sin shall not be our master.
  - How often do we consider the implications of our union with Christ?
  - How often do we consider our union with Christ?
  - This is what Paul is doing in Romans 6 and Galatians 2.
- Holiness = separation to God, and the conduct befitting those so separated
  - Live in conformity to the Word and in contrast to the sinful ways of the world
  - Put off and put on – Ephesians. 4:22, 24
- Two great questions:
  - If holiness, then, is so basic to the Christian life, why do we not experience it more in daily living?
  - Why does the Church of Jesus Christ so often seem to be more conformed to the world around it than to God?
- His answers:
  - Our attitude toward sin is more self-centered than God-centered.
    - We are more concerned about our own “victory” over sin than we are about the fact that our sins grieve the heart of God. We cannot tolerate failure in our struggle with sin chiefly because we are success-oriented, not because we know it is offensive to God.
    - God wants us to walk in obedience – not victory. Obedience is oriented toward God; victory is oriented toward self.
    - Victory is a byproduct of obedience.
  - We have misunderstood “living by faith” to mean that no effort at holiness is required on our part.
    - We must face the fact that we have a personal responsibility for our walk of holiness.
  - We do not take sin seriously.
    - We have mentally categorized sins into that which is unacceptable and that which may be tolerated a bit.
    - We cannot categorize sin if we are to live a life of holiness.



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**DeYoung:**

- According to the Bible, holiness, for every single Christian, should be right at the top of that list.
- We need more Christians on our campuses, in our cities, in our churches, and in our seminaries who will say with Paul, “Look carefully then how you walk” (Eph. 5:15).
- When was the last time we took a verse like, “Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.” (Eph. 5:4) and even began to try to apply this to our conversation, our movies, our YouTube clips, our television and commercial intake?
- What does it mean that there must not be even a hint of immorality among the saints (Eph. 5:3)? It must mean something.
- I would be surprised if there were not at least a few hints of immorality in our texts and tweets and inside jokes. And what about our clothes, our music, our flirting, and the way we talk about people who aren’t in the room? If the war on poverty is worth fighting, how much more the war on your own sin?
- There is a gap between our love for the gospel and our love for godliness. This must change. It’s not pietism legalism, or fundamentalism to take holiness seriously. It’s the way of all those who have been called to a holy calling by a holy God.

**Considering 1 Peter 1:13-21**

- **Passage in a Sentence:** As we set our hope fully on the grace God gives us in Christ, we are to reflect His character in all of our conduct because through the gospel call we have become God’s children.
- I. **FOR ALL TRUE BELIEVERS, THERE IS A “THEREFORE” OF THE GOSPEL IN OUR LIVES.**
    - a. Our actions are not an attempt to gain God’s attention they are an acknowledgement we already have God’s affection.
    - b. Our actions are not in hopes of being adopted but because we have already been adopted.
    - c. In our lives, the gospel call brings Godly change!
  - II. **THEREFORE, WE ARE BEING CALLED TO:**
    - a. Keep preparing our minds for action.
    - b. Keep being sober minded.
    - c. Keep setting our hope fully on the grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
  - III. **WE ARE BEING CALLED TO DO THESE THINGS BECAUSE:**
    - a. God is holy.
      - i. We should never let our access to God be to the detriment of our awe for God.



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- ii. What does it mean for God to be holy?
  - 1. His Purity
  - 2. His Passion
  - 3. His Presence
  - 4. His Provision
- b. God expects us to be holy at all times and in all ways.
  - i. As His children, we are to reveal His character in all of our conduct.
  - ii. Though holiness in all our conduct may not be achieved, it should be our aim.
    - 1. "The true Christian hates sin, flees from it, fights against it, considers it his greatest plague, resents the burden of its presence, mourns when he falls under its influence, and longs to be completely delivered from it." J.C. Ryle
    - 2. To be holy as God is holy includes a full and pervading holiness that reaches to every aspect of our personalities. It involves not only avoiding outward sin but also maintaining an instinctive delight in God and his holiness as an undercurrent of heart and mind throughout the day.
  - iii. We are not to conform to the world because we are children who have been called.
- c. At great cost to Himself, God provides all the holiness we need.
  - i. Our change comes at His cost.
  - ii. Our change comes only through Christ.
    - 1. Christ was our precious, priceless, and perfect sacrifice.
    - 2. Christ was foreknown before the foundation of the world.
    - 3. Christ was revealed and raised which results in our faith and hope in God.
  - iii. We've been ransomed from our forefather's futility by our Heavenly Father's faithfulness.
    - 1. His ransom is our rescue.
  - iv. God does not just expect our holiness – He empowers it.

**Bridges: In the deceitfulness of our hearts, we sometimes play with temptation by entertaining the thought that we can always confess and later ask forgiveness. Such thinking is exceedingly dangerous.**

- **Is there any area of our lives in which we are not reflecting God's character?**
- **Is there any area of our lives in which we are not setting an example (i.e. to do what I've done would just be to follow me and not to follow Christ)?**