

Holiness

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[0 : 00] Good morning. Turn to the book of Hebrews, chapter 12 of the letter to the Hebrews. The author of Hebrews is summing up his message to Jewish believers, many of whom are wavering in their faith and considering the possibility of returning to the tenets and the ceremonies of Judaism. He tells them in this chapter to lay aside what is weighing them down as they run the race of faith. And part of this laying aside is the laying aside of sin. And he calls it the sin that so closely clings to us, or as the old King James put it, the sin that doth so easily beset us.

The writer then goes on to appeal to the example of the Lord Jesus himself, the founder and perfecter of our faith. Christ is the ultimate example of perseverance, of patient endurance, of straining ahead toward the finish line when all the forces of earth and hell were against him. The term used for founder isn't just naming Jesus as the author of our faith, but the pioneer, the forerunner who ran it and plotted it out before us.

[1 : 42] As we learned in our last lesson, Jesus is the very one who, through the power of the Holy Spirit, enables us to follow his example as we undergo the process of sanctification.

The putting off of the old man of sin and the putting on of the new man of holiness. The difference is that the Son of Man had no body of sin that he had to lay aside in the same way that his people do, but still he was called to faithfully resist temptation and produce a holy righteousness that could be applied to us, his people.

Jesus' example of endurance is then paired with the divine discipline, which is the very reason we encounter various trials in our Christian race.

As children of the Heavenly Father, the trials we encounter are not just random bumps in the road that we encounter, but they're carefully designed and purposed by God to do us good and to produce the fruit of righteousness, which he calls the peaceable fruit of righteousness or of holiness.

in our lives. Well, J.C. Ryle, in his third chapter on holiness, he begins with verse 14 of this chapter.

[3 : 26] Let's look at it. Strive for peace with everyone and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. Throughout this chapter, Ryle paints us a vivid picture of what practical holiness looks like, much like the portrait of the godly man we studied in a previous Sunday school series.

He then explains some reasons why practical holiness is so important to the Christian and then gives some words of application.

So let's begin. He finds in this verse a sober warning for believers. When we apply the categories of logic to this, we would call it a *sine qua non*, a truth that without which something else cannot possibly happen.

And this holiness without which no one will see the Lord is something Christians must strive for. That's what the author of Hebrews is teaching.

In effect, this is the believer's race. It's the godly quality of Christian character, the Christ-likeness, the fruit of the Spirit that sanctification is meant to produce in our lives.

[4 : 58] So Ryle asks us point blank, are we holy? Will we see the Lord? He calls us to examine our souls and to be honest with ourselves.

Are we seeing there the presence of practical holiness and an honest desire to see more? To Ryle and indeed to us, it's a timely question to ask.

It's a question that concerns all kinds of people, whatever their rank or occupation, and like Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in John chapter 3, it's a matter of utmost eternal importance.

What then is practical holiness? What kind of man or woman would God call holy? Ryle begins by pointing out some counterfeits or imposters.

Balaam had great knowledge. Judas, he had a profession of faith. Herod had done many great works.

[6 : 15] Jehu had religious zeal. The rich young ruler had respectability and moral fiber. But none of these men were considered holy.

Ryle approaches his topic very carefully so as not to cloud the waters with misinformation. Number one, practical holiness begins as a mindset.

A mindset. A pattern of thinking that agrees with God. God himself and God alone is holy, holy, holy.

That is, he's holy in an absolute essential way. Therefore, all he does and is, is holy.

All he thinks, determines, and plans is holy. And so is every word that proceeds out of his holy mouth.

[7 : 18] So we find the mind of God in the word of God. Therefore, a holy person will naturally measure the world and everything in it by the standard of the word.

Proverbs 30, verse 5, says, Every word of God is flawless. He is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

So it begins with a mindset that agrees with God. Number two, holy people shun the opposite of what is holy. Loving the good can't be separated from hating and shunning the evil.

Adam and Eve learned what sin was by choosing the evil. But you and I are called to resist what we know to be evil by shunning every known sin.

A holy person finds in himself or herself a hearty desire to do God's will. To follow every known commandment of God.

[8 : 33] This is our desire. His commands forbid certain things and they require other things. You shall do this.

You shall not do that. The holy person not only agrees, but wants to obey these divine commands. The psalmist says, Because I consider your precepts right, I hate every false way.

Psalms 119, 128. Number three, a holy person with a holy mindset and a holy desire will, of course, wish to imitate the most holy role models possible.

First and foremost, the Lord Jesus Christ himself. It's the word of God that vividly shows the glory of Jesus' flawless obedience to the Father and his unblemished and vividly holy character before others.

The heart of the holy ones cry out, Oh, that I might be more like my Savior. Bearing with and forgiving others.

[9 : 59] Unselfish, not pleasing himself. Walking in love, lowly minded and humble. Spending frequent and prolonged times in prayer and intercession.

A faithful witness to the truth. These are all character qualities we see in Christ. His Father's will. His chief meat and drink. Full of love and compassion for sinners. Bold and courageous when confronting sin.

Not looking to the praise of men. Doing God's work. Even when it meant denying his closest relations.

And the list goes on. Christ told his followers, Deny yourself. Take up your cross and follow me. Practical holiness means seeking genuine Christ likeness and nothing less.

[11 : 04] He is our forerunner in this pursuit. For no one in heaven or on earth denied himself more than Jesus did. So we will seek to be like Christ.

Number four. Practical holiness in a person will show itself in qualities that make that person easy and pleasant to be around and to live with.

Things like meekness and patience. Gentleness and kindness. Not insisting on standing on our rights or being first in line.

Bearing with others weaknesses and faults. Ready to overlook and forgive easily. Ready to lend a hand. Listen to troubled people with understanding.

And I would add to Ryle's list, The quality of being ready and willing to affirm others. As we saw in our last Sunday school series.

[12 : 11] Commending those things in other people that God commends. Number five. A holy person in God's eyes is one who's keenly aware of the lusts of his flesh.

The lusts of his flesh. The perils of her bodily appetites. They're watchful and they're sensitive to the carnal inclinations that can easily break loose and cause a person to topple into sinful behavior.

Holy people are ones well acquainted with the virtue of self-denial. Like Paul, they're willing to beat their bodies into subjection.

They insist on taking their own sins seriously. To the point where other people might consider them puritanical. And words like that.

Martin Luther studied law before he became a monk and entered the monastery. He'd spend hours in the confessional. Confessing his sins as a monk.

[13:24] For he was so aware of how his smallest sin offended a holy God by violating his law. But then, even as a believer in justification by faith alone.

He taught that the entire Christian life is to be a life of continual repentance. And receiving the Lord's forgiveness through the blood of our Savior.

Like the first century believers would wash each other's feet. Because of the dusty roads that they walked on. You and I are called to keep our spiritual feet clean.

By a daily cleansing. By the blood of Christ. We're sensitive to our sin. Even as Martin Luther was. Number six. Holiness we often forget. Is just as concerned. Maybe even more concerned. With the duties we perform.

[14:29] Toward others. As with the negatives we avoid. J.C. Ryle. Mentions charity. And brotherly kindness. Also a spirit of mercy.

And benevolence. Practical holiness. Is just that. It's practical. It involves our practice. What we set our hearts.

And our minds. And our bodies. To do. There are many emotions. Impulses. Desires. And thoughts. Within each of us.

That seek. That battle for control. Well Paul teaches us. To be filled. With the spirit. To be controlled. By the spirit of God.

And the Holy Spirit. Always seeks. To fill us. With love. And concern. For the needs of others. For the needs of others. Especially those of fellow believers. Not only are we to abhor.

[15:32] Things like slander. And cheating. And dishonesty. But we're to engage. In positive. Good deeds. That give of our time.

Our talents. Our labor. Our creativity. We can well ask ourselves. How many people. In our lives. Are better off.

Drawn closer to Christ. By the simple works of charity. And mercy. They see from us. Do they see the qualities of love. Displayed in us.

That Paul writes about. In 1 Corinthians 13. Or we read. In Jesus sermon on the mount. Number seven.

When a holy person. Enters into an obligation. Or a agreement. Or a relationship. He or she. Is always careful. To fulfill.

[16:30] All the duties. That come with it. To fulfill them completely. On time. And well. Daniel. Has been given to us.

As an example. Of a diligent workman. Against whom. Nothing could be found. To accuse. Save for the matters. Concerning the law.

Of his God. Daniel 6. 4 to 5. Whatever you do. Colossians 3.

23. Do it hardy. As unto the Lord. Not unto men. Not slothful in business. Romans 12. 11.

Fervent in spirit. Serving the Lord. Those words. Of the apostle Paul. Cover all sorts. Of practical. Relationships. God himself.

[17:24] Entered into. Sacred covenants. With peoples. And individuals. And pledged himself. By a solemn oath. Never to break.

His word. And Jesus taught us. Let your yes. Be yes. And your no. No. Matthew 5. 37.

Number eight. Practical holiness. Goes far deeper. Than scrupulous. Keeping of outward rules. Christ warned his followers. Their righteousness. Must exceed. That of the scrupulous Pharisees. Who tithed. Even their garden herbs.

Our concern for holiness. Must go deeper. Penetrate to the very heart. And soul. If it is to be true. And genuine. Ryle writes.

[18:19] That a holy man. Follows after deeper issues. Such as purity of heart. Fear of God. Humility. And spiritual mindedness.

The heart. Is seen as. In scripture. As the controlling. Inner person. The seat of our thoughts. Desires. Longings. And motivations.

And the Bible tells us. That the heart. Of human beings. Is deceitful. And it's desperately sick. Incapable. Of being fully understood.

So the task. Of one. Who would be. Practically holy. Is certainly. To keep a careful. Watch. On one's own heart. Out of the heart.

Of a person. Jesus said. Come all sorts. Of sinful thoughts. Words. And actions. Which cause defilement. Matthew 15. So one would.

[19 : 18] Who would be perfect. One. Who would perfect. Holiness. Out of love. For Christ. Will seek. To purge. The heart. Of such things. Purity of heart.

Will be a constant goal. Realizing. The heart. Ryle writes. Is like tinder. It can be set on fire. Very easily. They'll.

Feed the. The desire. To live. Before God's face. In a way that. Has a loving dread. Of displeasing him.

Like a father. Before the father's face. They'll view themselves. Like Paul. As the. Chief of sinners. Weak. And in need of help. They'll seek.

To. Make heavenly things. Their chief treasures. And chief joys. Christians. Can.

[20 : 17] Please. God. And they can. Displease. God. By what we choose. To do. And we are called. To respond.

In gratitude. For what God. Has given us. God. So. Seeking. Heavenly things. Regarding them. As our chief treasures.

Number nine. Ryle. Ends. This outline. Of a holy person's. Pursuits. What they. Chase. After. By saying. That he would never.

Wish. To discourage. A believer. A Christian's. Tender. Conscience. Or. Make a righteous. Heart. Sad. By overburdening him.

With. A list of. Requirements. But he does insist. That there's nothing. In that list. That he outlined. That wouldn't describe. A true.

[21 : 12] A true. Christian's. True desire. The regenerated. Heart. Of the believer. Certainly. Longs. After all. Of these.

Qualities. Once he learns. About them. He admits. That every. True. Believer. Is. Dealing. With the. Inner. Enemy. Of remaining. Sin. That would. Day. Should daily. Be. Confessed. And. Put to death. In that. Christian's. Life.

A true. Believer. Wants. More than. Anything. To be. Free. From that. Remaining. Sin. And. And. Thus. Longs. For the day. And. Final. Glorification. Seeing.

Our savior. Face to face. At which point. All of the dross. Will be. Burned away. And all that is left. Will be the. Gold. Of holiness.

[22 : 09] Ryle. Takes another page. To revisit. What we talked about. Last week. The reality. And nature. Of sanctification. In the Christian life. How it's progressive.

And how it's. Fueled by the spirit. And how it's. Comes in stages. At different. Degrees. In various. Christian lives.

But then he adds. As a warning. But after every. Allowance. I cannot see. How any man. Deserves. To be called. Holy. Who willingly.

Allows. Himself. In sins. And is not. Humbled. And ashamed. Because of them. I dare not. Call anyone. Holy. Who makes. A habit. Of neglecting.

Known duties. And willingly. Doing what he knows. God. Has commanded him. Not to do. The apostle.

[23 : 05] John. Teaches us. That we deceive. Ourselves. If we say. We have no sin. First. John. One. Eight. It is. How. We respond. To.

And deal. With our sin. That marks us. As true believers. In Christ. Practical holiness. Is. A necessity. Without it.

No one will see the Lord. It is something. For which. Every Christian. Must strive. Unlike our sanctification. Or our justification. Which is a work of God.

And God alone. Sanctification. Is a ministry. Of the spirit. That we are called. To cooperate with. And strive. Or agonize.

After this thing. Called holiness. Of course. Motivated. Not out of guilt. Or dread. But. By love. And gratitude. Toward God.

[24 : 01] Who first loved us. Christ like character. In heart. And life. That's what we are called. To strive for. But Ryle goes beyond this.

And gives us some reasons. For the importance. Of holiness. And there are some excellent ones. First. He rules out.

The false reason. That many give. That holiness. Is what saves us. God forbid. Ryle writes. That I should ever say so. None of our good works.

Can pay the debt. That we owe. To a thrice holy God. By grace. You are saved. Through faith. And that. Not of yourselves. It is the gift of God.

Not of works. Lest any man should boast. Ephesians 2. 8 and 9. As Saint Augustine. Wrote. Hundreds of years ago. Even our best works.

[24 : 59] Are but. Splendid vices. They're tainted by sin. Even. With our best intentions. And add nothing. To our righteous standing. Before God.

That standing. Was. Earned. And paid for. By the Lord Jesus. Jesus. Himself. Still. The importance. Of striving. For practical holiness.

Is staggering. In its scope. First of all. Because God. Clearly. And plainly. Demands it. Of us. In the scriptures. In the sermon.

On the mount. Christ. Christ. Instructed. That we. Must. Therefore. Be perfect. As your father. In heaven. Is perfect. Matthew. 5. 8. The apostle.

Paul. Wrote. But just. As he. Who called. You. Is holy. So be. Holy. In all. You do. For it. Is written. Be holy. Because. I am.

[25 : 55] Holy. Not. Paul. But. Peter. First. Peter. 1. 15. Holiness. Is not. To be seen. Only. As our. Heavenly. Standing.

But. As our. Earthly. Pursuit. Our. Earthly. Occupation. As well. It's our. Divine. Calling. That we. Must. Obey. Secondly.

Practical. Holiness. Is important. Because. It's one. Glorious. Purpose. For which. Christ. Came. Into the world. Paul. Wrote. To Titus. Christ.

Gave. himself. For us. That he. Might. Redeem. Us. From every. Lawless. Deed. And purify. For himself. His own. Special. People. Zealous.

For good. Works. Titus. 2. 14. Jesus. Humbled. Himself. To the death. Of the criminal. On the cross.

[26 : 52] So that we. Criminals. Might. Trust. In the. Sacrifice. For sins. Guilt. That he. Gave. And then. Renounce. Sin's. Claim.

Upon us. How can we. Continue. In the very. Crimes. The very. Lawless. Deeds. For which. Our holy. Savior.

Paid. With his. Life's. Blood. Thirdly. Striving. For holiness. Is important. Because of what. It proves. About us.

It proves. That we. A. Have true. Saving. Faith. It proves. That. B. We are true. Children. Of God. It proves.

C. That our love. For the Lord. Jesus. Is genuine. And sincere. And D. It also proves. To the world. As people.

[27 : 46] See our good works. And our holy. Lifestyle. That our religion. Is more. Than just. Talk. In this way. The law. And the gospel. Agree.

They are united. James. Teaches. That there is a thing. Known. As dead faith. James 2. 14 to 26. It's by the works. Of Christ. Alone. That Christians. Are justified. In the court. Of heaven. But James. Says. That it's by our own. Works. Of righteousness. Of obedience.

That our professions. Of faith. Are justified. In the eyes. Of people. Jesus. Withered. A deceptive. Fig tree. To its roots.

When it promised him. Refreshment. Of fruit. Out of season. But prove fruitless. In the end. Mark 11. 12 to 14. The fruit.

[28 : 44] Produced. In our lives. By the Holy Spirit. Proves. That the faith. In Christ. We claim. To have. Is a supernatural. Gift from God.

And not. Just a human. Counterfeit. Number four. Speaking of being. Justified. In the eyes. Of people. Practical holiness.

Is important. Because it's the most. Likely way. Of doing good. To people. Around us. There is a visible. Reality.

To true. Holy living. That is unmistakable. And forces sinners. To think. And to ponder. On the other hand.

Much harm. Is done. To the cause. Of Christ's kingdom. By believers. Who talk the talk. Of religion. And yet. Make small efforts.

[29 : 39] To resemble their Lord. In the way. That they. Work. Live. And act. I've observed. Professing believers. On the job. Who cut corners.

In various tasks. Leave early on breaks. And come back late. Grumble. And complain. As loud. And as often. As their unsaved. Coworkers.

Ryle writes. That it grieves him. To have to say this. But such Christians. Should blush. To name the name. Of Jesus. At work. On the other hand.

Growing in holiness. Can mean. Making a notable difference. As we serve the Lord. In our shops. Our schools. And our marketplaces.

So practical holiness. Is one. Commanded by the Lord. It's two. A crucial purpose. For Christ's saving mission. Three.

[30 : 38] It's the only. Way that we know him. One. Only real evidence. Of our genuine faith.

Our love for Jesus. Our sonship. In God's family. And justification. Before our fellow men. And four. It's the greatest way. To do good to others.

And by the way. Five. It's the only way. For us. As Christians. To be truly happy. And at peace. With our own souls. God has wisely.

Ordered it. Says Ryle. That our well-being. And our well-doing. Are linked together. Even if our good works.

Add nothing to our election. Or justification. Our sense of assurance. That we are elect. That we are justified. Is strongly tied.

[31 : 35] To our pursuit. Of a holy life. Love. Now by this. Do we know him. That we keep his commandments. First John 2.

Three. Let us love with actions. And in truth. This is how we set our hearts. At rest. Before his presence. First John 3.

18 and 19. Those who are careless. About being watchful. And prone to backsliding. Often struggle. With their sense.

Of peace and assurance. Taking firm steps. To excel. In our works of obedience. Will certainly please the Lord. And bring a greater sense.

Of peace and assurance. From the Holy Spirit. Who dwells within us. Ryle writes. With compassion. I'm sure we should all be ready. To make allowance.

[32 : 30] For much backsliding. For much occasional deadness. In professing Christians. I know a road may lead. From one point to another. And yet have many a winding.

And turn. And a man may. Be truly holy. And yet be drawn aside. By many an infirmity. But he lovingly bids us.

To keep in mind. That progress. In practical holiness. Is the only way. A Christian may truly know. Assurance. Peace.

And happiness. Speaking of peace. And happiness. Number six. Practicing holiness. Here on earth. Is the only way. To prepare.

For the holy peace. And joy. That we hope to experience. In our heavenly home. Those who care. Little or nothing. About holy things.

[33 : 27] People or behavior. Would certainly find little. Or nothing in heaven. To please them. Ryle writes. Now perhaps you think. The saints of God.

Too strict. And particular. Or serious. You rather avoid them. You have no delight. In their society. Will there will be no other company.

In heaven. Think you. That such a one. Would delight. To meet. David. And Paul. And John. After a life spent.

In doing the very things. They spoke against. That he would rejoice. To meet Jesus. After cleaving. To the sins. For which. Jesus died.

God. So Ryle goes on. And he applies. His lesson. On practical holiness. By preaching. Both to the uncertain. Professed believer.

[34 : 23] And to the Christian. Who stands assured. Of his salvation. As we examine. Our daily lives. Are we truly seeing. The evidence.

Of holiness. He's been describing. And if we do. Are we convinced. That. We are truly. Considering. How important. That holiness is.

Without which. No one will see the Lord. Whatever we may think. Fit to say. He writes. We must be holy. If we would see the Lord.

Where is our Christianity. If we are not. We must not merely. Have a Christian name. And Christian knowledge. We must have. A Christian character.

Also. We must be saints. On earth. If ever. We mean to be saints. In heaven. God has said it. And he will not go back.

[35 : 22] He quotes. The great Puritan. John Owen. Did Christ die. And shall sin. Live. Was he crucified. In the world.

And shall. Our affections. To the world. Be quick. And lively. Oh. Where is the spirit. Of him. Who by the cross. Of Christ.

Was crucified. To the world. And the world. To him. Ryle's final word. Of advice. In this chapter.

Would you be holy. Then abide. In Christ. He is the physician. To whom. You must daily go. If you would. Stay well.

He is the manna. Which you must daily eat. And the rock. Of which you must daily drink. His arm. Is the arm. On which. You must daily lean.

[36 : 19] As you come up. Out of the wilderness. Of this world. You must not only. Be rooted. You must be built up. In Christ.

For without his help. Without his character. No one shall see the Lord. Amen. Let's pray.

Lord you've reminded us. In your word. And through this. Fine author. That. Holiness is important. That. Our practical holiness.

Shows. Both to ourselves. And to the world. That we truly belong to you. And so Lord. May this be our pursuit. And may we see it.

As. Of utmost importance. In our daily lives. For. This is the race. We are called to run. And help us Lord. To. Be an encouragement.

[37 : 20] To one another. To keep running that race. To not. Falter. And give in. To the. Call of the world. The flesh. And the devil.

That would. Sidetrack us. From that pursuit. Lord help us to. Be faithful. Help us to. Be watchful. And.

Eager to. Confess. Our sins. And to. Be cleansed. Day by day. Moment by moment. So that we can be of use to you. And we thank you for it.

In Jesus name. Amen. Amen.