

A Hunger for Holiness - How

REVIEW: We are in week six of our series on holiness. Over the last five weeks we have looked at our problem with holiness - when push comes to shove, are we really known for obeying all of God's Word; do we believe that heaven is a holy place; is holiness a part of our evangelism? We also looked at both our need for holiness, and that it is why we were redeemed - to be holy, and holiness is necessary for our redemption. We then started to zero in on the target by looking at what holiness is not, and what it is. We have looked at the motivation for holiness - the commands of Scripture. And last week we looked at the idea that holiness really is possible. Too often Christians can fake themselves out thinking that we are sinners in constant need of grace so the idea of really being holy is more of a target than a reality. That is just not true.

INTRO: This morning I want to start by talking to you about sports. Particularly, interviews you see by sports figures either before or after a game. Before a game you'll get the genius sportscasters that ask these well thought out questions like, "Coach, what is your strategy for the big game today?" The coach responds with something like, "Well, if we play our game, and minimize mistakes we should be good. We are just looking to take things one game at a time. The season is won game by game, not season by season."

First of all, what does that mean? I understand what he is saying, but its as if these statements have become so overused that they are just white noise anymore. And the brilliant sportscasters! Do you really think the coach is going to lay out his actual strategy on national TV? Of course all you will get is overused sound bytes! The only thing better is asking the guy that caught the winning interception in the Super Bowl (which I am still bitter about - I might need counseling folks) "What was going through your mind when you made the interception?" How about, "CATCH THE BALL!" Do we really think he will say, "At that moment I was reciting the sonnets of Shakespeare?"

TRAN: The point of this is we as believers are not much better when it comes to living the Christian life. What we say is true, its just become so overused that it has lost its meaning. "Let go and let God." Not bad advice, but HOW? What does that mean and how do I actually do it? Here are a few others I found online: "I feel/don't feel led to"; "It must have been the Lord's will" (in reference to something that fails; "hedge of protection"; "walk with the Lord."

Are any of these things wrong to say? No! Some are even straight from the Bible. But I think we would do well to understand the driving forces behind these phrases - kind of the how of the Christian life. So today I want to go over 3-4 hows on living the Christian life - what is the source of our strength and power?

A Hunger for Holiness - How

- I. Our hunger for holiness should be powered by the Holy Spirit
 - A. Turn to I Peter 1:2 “who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.”
 1. This verse is interesting because when it says that “through the sanctifying work of the Spirit...” this may be the only time that I am aware of where the word so obviously has a dual meaning
 2. When we were sprinkled by Jesus blood, we were set us apart in Christ- that is (definitive sanctification) -
 3. But, the Holy Spirit is at work in us so that we can be obedient to Jesus (progressive sanctification)
 4. So, to put this in plain language:
 - a) Through the Holy Spirit, God gave us a new position of being holy
 - b) And through the same Spirit God has given us new power to live up to the position He gave us of being holy
 - B. That still does not answer the big question: How does the Spirit work in us to make us holy?
 1. Ephesians 3:16 “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,”
 - a) The Spirit is at work in you, strengthening you
 - b) Don’t just hear those words and think, “Yep. That’s great.”
 - c) Realize something:
 - (1) This is the same Spirit that was present at Creation
 - (2) This is the same Spirit that was able to save a wretch like you
 - (3) He is the same Spirit that moved on the day of Pentecost causing people to speak in tongues and 3000 people to be saved in one moment
 - d) This Spirit is the Spirit at work in you to help you resist sin that couldn’t resist before
 - e) This Spirit is the Spirit that empowers and enables you to do good works that were planned in advanced for you to do
 2. There are thoughts and even whole movements out there that actually are wrong
 - a) People that say “I just can’t change” or “I don’t have enough faith” - that is not humility, that is dishonoring the Holy Spirit
 - b) Then there is a movement of people that say, “I was (or they were) born this way”
 - (1) If you claim to be a Christian, and this is your attitude...

A Hunger for Holiness - How

- (2) You are dishonoring the Holy Spirit
- (3) He is there to strengthen you
- c) This is why theology is SO important
 - (1) Too many Christians do not understand who the Holy Spirit is
 - (2) Or what He does - and because of that they lead lives that are defeated before they ever get going
- d) So the Spirit is the power at work within us
- 3. But the Spirit is also light - He shines into dark places of our hearts and convicts us of sin
 - a) Turn to John 16:7-11
 - b) The Holy Spirit acts as a lamp in our hearts
 - (1) In fact, I find it interesting that people seem to get nervous by prayers that are addressed to the Holy Spirit - that includes me, not what I am used to
 - (2) But the fact is that the Holy Spirit is still a member of the Trinity
 - (3) AND, I think it would really be a wise thing for us to address the Holy Spirit in prayer, asking Him to show us the sins in our hearts that we need to be aware of - and those sins we too often gloss over
 - c) The Spirit also illuminates Scripture so we can understand
 - (1) He reveals to us what is true
 - (2) Not just what is false or sinful
- 4. With part of that lamp - the Holy Spirit shines that light on Christ
 - (1) He spotlights Jesus so that we can see Jesus' glory all the more
 - (2) John 16:14
 - b) Turn to 2 Corinthians 3:18
 - (1) If you remember the story in Exodus 33-34, Moses spent time in the presence of God's glory, and when he came off the mountain, the Israelites asked him to cover his face because it was radiant
 - (2) According to 2 Cor. we too will be transformed, when by the Spirit, we behold God's glory in the face of Christ.
- C. So to summarize, how does the Spirit work in us to make us holy?
 - 1. He reveals sin
 - 2. He reveals truth
 - 3. He reveals glory
- II. Our hunger for holiness comes from the gospel
 - A. An emphasis on the gospel is becoming a very strong thing in America lately
 - 1. And that is not a bad thing
 - 2. In fact, that is a very good thing

A Hunger for Holiness - How

- a) That holiness and good works flow from the gospel is true
 - b) But the question again is, how does holiness flow from the gospel?
- B. One of the more obvious ways is that gospel encourages godliness out of a sense of gratitude
1. Go to Romans 12:1 “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”
 - a) The “therefore” is there for a reason
 - b) And it is chapters 1-11
 - (1) Paul just described God’s mercies
 - (2) The fact that we were sinners that could not be saved by anything, including the law (remember he was writing to the Jews)
 - (3) Then Paul get’s to chapter 12 - Therefore...
 - c) In light of the justification, and adoption into God’s family, predestination, reconciliation in Christ, glorification...in light of all of that, here is what you are to do:
 - (1) Offer yourselves as living sacrifices
 - (2) “this is your true and proper worship”
 - d) John Stott puts it this way, “It is not by accident that in Greek one and the same noun (charis) does duty for both “grace” and “gratitude”
 2. That does not mean that we think of gratitude as if we have a debt we have to pay
 - a) God gave us mercy and we have to return the favor - quid pro quo
 - b) Obey till we die because God showed us mercy - even if we hate it or only do it from duty
 3. It is impossible to repay God back for anything
 - a) When we understand that, and the enormity of what Christ has done for us, we are going to be excited to obey
 - b) In fact, Jesus equates love with obedience
 - (1) Jesus is not interested in your forced servitude
 - (2) He does not want begrudging obedience
 - (a) I can’t believe God did this nice things for me!
 - (b) Now I have to serve Him for the rest of my life! Thanks a lot God! Why couldn’t you just leave me alone!
 - (3) God desires a heart that is overwhelmed in love
 - (a) And when your heart is overwhelmed in love, obeying becomes far easier
 4. I do want you to think about what it takes to have this attitude of gratitude

A Hunger for Holiness - How

- a) It takes a sense of humility
 - b) It takes laying down our pride and realizing that God did something amazing for us that we could never do ourselves
 - (1) That's the part of the gospel I think is most offensive to most people
 - (2) "You mean I can't be good enough to get into heaven!!!"
 - (a) "Well, just you watch and see, mister!"
 - (b) "I'm a good person, I do good things, of course God will take me on His squad."
 - (3) The gospel puts everyone on the same playing field
 - (4) The gospel removes any sense of pride
 - (a) "There are none righteous, not even one."
 - (b) "All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory."
 - (c) "It is by grace you were saved through faith, and THIS IS NOT FROM YOURSELVES - IT IS A GIFT OF GOD, NOT BY WORKS, SO NO ONE CAN BOAST."
 - (d) How many different ways does the Bible have to say it - you can't earn your way to heaven
 - c) The gospel builds humility into the Christian life
- C. The second way in which the gospel aids in our pursuit of holiness, the gospel tells us the truth about ourselves
- 1. I'm going to read this paragraph to you from one of the books I used to prepare these messages: *The Hole in Our Holiness* by Kevin DeYoung (p.84)
 - 2. So, we have the gospel telling us the truth about ourselves in two ways
 - a) It tells us that we are sinners, incapable of saving ourselves
 - (1) Which leaves us with only one solution: trust, rely, even throw ourselves completely on the mercy and grace of God
 - b) But the gospel also tells us
 - (1) When we trust in God's grace and mercy, Jesus death on the cross for our sins, we are adopted into His family
 - (2) We are children of the King
 - (3) We are dead to sin
 - (4) We are heirs awaiting an inheritance
 - (5) We are seated with Christ in heavenly places
 - (6) We have been changed to the core of who we were, into holy saints for the glory of God
 - 3. It can be so easy to convince ourselves that we can never change, or that God is always mad at us because we messed up AGAIN
 - a) But stop listening to yourself!

A Hunger for Holiness - How

- b) Preach the gospel to yourself all over again
 - c) Re-read and glory in the fact that God has made you new
 - (1) 2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old is GONE and the new has come.”
 - d) Read again the fact that “There is therefore, now no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus.” (Rom. 8:1)
 - e) Remember that the same power that raised Christ from the dead is at work in you (Eph)
 - f) Remember that there is NOTHING that can separate you from the love of God, in Christ Jesus our Lord
 - (1) And I love how Paul list off several things that seem like they could separate us
 - (2) But then he ends that verse with, “nothing else in all of creation”
 - g) This is what the gospel tells us about ourselves
 - (1) It is the dual nature of the gospel that we are sinners in need of a Savior
 - (2) But once we have accepted the Savior’s offer - we are the holy ones He wants us to be
 - (3) And that should motivate us to act like it
- III. The third thing to fuel our hunger for holiness is the promises of God
- A. It makes sense that faith has to be present to be saved
 - 1. “it is by grace through faith that we are saved”
 - 2. So we get that faith plays a huge role in salvation
 - 3. But after salvation, what role does salvation play?
 - 4. Is the process to grow in holiness removed from exercising our faith?
 - B. Obviously not - faith is needed and exercised in both
 - 1. We already started talking about exercising our faith in believing God’s promises
 - a) We believe God’s promises in what happened to us in salvation
 - b) We trust that God has given us the position of saint and sees us as holy and righteous because of Christ’s righteousness being imputed or given to us
 - 2. But for us to pursue holiness, we need to believe in more than just what was done for us in the past, and believe in “future grace”
 - a) In other words, understanding what God DID for us will not tear down every idol in our hearts
 - b) There are longings in us that will only be satisfied by the promises of future blessings
 - c) God makes all kinds of future promises in the Bible, and they are meant to fuel obedience

A Hunger for Holiness - How

3. Let me give you some examples from the Beatitudes
 - a) The Sermon on the Mount has lots of commands, and lots of promises
 - (1) Some are promises for judgment
 - (2) Some are for blessing
 - b) The meek will inherit the earth
 - c) The persecuted will have the kingdom of heaven
 - d) The mournful will be comforted
 - e) “Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God”
 - (1) Kevin DeYoung said that this verse has been most helpful to him in regard to sexual temptation
 - (2) Jesus is fighting pleasure with pleasure
 - (a) Sexual temptation promises a form of pleasure (for the moment)
 - (b) Jesus says that those with a pure heart will see God
 - i) So if you struggle with lust, or sexual temptation of any kind
 - ii) Here is a motivator for you - seeking a pure heart allows you to see God
 - (3) Seems like a good verse to memorize
 - (4) But an even better verse to believe in the promise that seeing God is better than any temptation sex can offer
4. Even the negative promises from the Sermon on the Mount can fan the flame of obedience
 - a) If you murder, you will be judged
 - b) Don't forgive, and you won't be forgiven
 - c) Take the easy road and you will face destruction
 - d) Build your life on the sand by ignoring Jesus words, and your life will fall apart
5. There are lots and lots of promises in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7
 - a) Take the time to look at it later today
 - b) Ask yourself how Jesus is trying to motivate me by the blessing or the judgement being offered
 - (1) What is the promise that I should be holding on to
 - (2) Why is this promise better than whatever lie I might be tempted to believe
 - c) Work your way through the whole sermon
 - d) Put some notes on your mirror or some place to remind you of the promises of God

A Hunger for Holiness - How

6. God gives us these because He knows that our fight for holiness is really a fight to trust that God's way is better than the world's way
 - a) It is a battle to trust in our Heavenly Father
 - b) Worry is not just a character trait, it can be a sign of unbelief
7. Satan is called "the father of lies"
 - a) It indicates that he is the source of the lies we believe in society
 - b) But think about it: He lies about God
 - (1) He lies about your sin
 - (2) He lies about forgiveness
 - (3) He lies about the Bible
 - c) Resisting Satan has nothing to do with Hollywood's version of ghosts, haunted houses, and demon possessed kids whose heads spin
 - d) Resisting Satan is all about faith, trusting in the truth of God's Word

IV. Conclusion

- A. I did not get to everything I wanted to this week
- B. I will have to push it into next week's message
- C. For today, the main things to come away with is the source or the "how" of our holiness
 1. Holiness is powered by the Holy Spirit at work in our lives, pointing out sin, teaching us the truth, and shining the spotlight on our glorious Savior, Jesus Christ
 2. Holiness is powered by understanding the gospel - because when we understand the gospel, we are humbled, and the humility produces gratitude (or it should).
 - a) Preach the gospel to yourself
 - b) Remind yourself frequently of your new life, your new position in Christ; the new way in which God has re-made you, and the fact that you are dead to sin
 - c) These are the things that we would do well to meditate on regularly
 3. Holiness is powered by God's promises
 - a) God motivates us both negatively and positively by the promises He makes
 - b) But is our rejection of Satan's lies, and our trust in God's promises that help us strive toward holiness