

The Purpose of Holiness

A Teaching Outline

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The purpose of Holiness

Leviticus 19:2

"Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.'

God instructed the Hebrews to provide for those in need. He required that the people leave the edges of their fields unharvested, providing food for travelers and the poor. It is easy to ignore the poor or forget about those who have less than we do.

But God desires generosity. In what ways can you leave the "edges of your fields" for those in need?

Be perfect, for God is perfect.

Matthew 5:48

"Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

How can we be perfect?

(1) *In character*: In this life we cannot be flawless, but we can aspire to be as much like Christ as possible.

(2) *In holiness*: Like the Pharisees, we are to separate ourselves from the world's sinful values. But unlike the Pharisees, we are to be devoted to God's desires rather than our own and carry his love and mercy into the world.

(3) *In maturity*: We can't achieve Christlike character and holy living all at once, but we must grow toward maturity and wholeness. Just as we expect different behavior from a baby, a child, a teenager, and an adult, so God

expects different behavior from us, depending on our stage of spiritual development.

(4) *In love*: We can seek to love others as completely as God loves us.

We can be perfect if our behavior is appropriate for our maturity level—perfect, yet with much room to grow. Our tendency to sin must never deter us from striving to be more like Christ. Christ calls all of his disciples to excel, to rise above mediocrity, and to mature in every area, becoming like him. Those who strive to become perfect will one day be perfect, even as Christ is perfect (1 John 3:2, 3).

Saints were disciplined so they could share God's holiness.

Hebrews 12:10

For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.

Who loves his child more—the father who allows the child to do what will harm him, or the one who corrects, trains, and even punishes the child to help him learn what is right? It's never pleasant to be corrected and disciplined by God, but his discipline is a sign of his deep love for us. When God corrects you, see it as proof of his love, and ask him what he is trying to teach you.

We may respond to discipline in several ways:

- (1) We can accept it with resignation;
- (2) We can accept it with self-pity, thinking we really don't deserve it;
- (3) We can be angry and resentful toward God; or
- (4) We can accept it gratefully, as the appropriate response we owe a loving Father.

God is not only a disciplining parent but also a demanding coach who pushes us to our limits and requires our lives to be disciplined. Although we

may not feel strong enough to push on to victory, we will be able to accomplish it as we follow Christ and draw on his strength. Then we can use our growing strength to help those around us who are weak and struggling.

We must not live with only our own survival in mind. Others will follow our example, and we have a responsibility to them if we are living for Christ, as we claim to be. Does your example make it easier for others to believe in and follow Christ, and to mature in him? Or would those who follow you end up confused and misled?

You shall be holy for God is holy.

1 Peter 1:15-16

But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

Peter's words mean that all parts of our lives and character should be in the process of becoming conformed, both inwardly and outwardly, to God's standards.

After people commit their lives to Christ, they sometimes still feel a pull back to their old ways. Peter tells us to be like our heavenly Father—holy in everything we do. Holiness means being totally devoted or dedicated to God, set aside for his special use and set apart from sin and its influence.

We're to be set apart and different, not blending in with the crowd, yet not being different just for the sake of being different. God's qualities in our lives make us different. Our focus and priorities must be his. All this is in direct contrast to our old ways (1:14).

We cannot become holy on our own, but God gives us his Holy Spirit to help us obey and to give us power to overcome sin. Don't use the excuse that you can't help slipping into sin. Rely on God's power to free you from sin's grip.

Everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself.

1 John 3:2-3

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be we know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

The Christian life is a process of becoming more and more like Christ (see Romans 8:29).

This process will not be complete until we see Christ face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12; Philippians 3:21),

But knowing that it is our ultimate destiny should motivate us to purify ourselves.

To keep pure means to keep morally straight, free from the corruption of sin.

God also purifies us, but there is action we must take to remain morally fit (see 1 Timothy 5:22; James 4:8; 1 Peter 1:22).

You are God's temple.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand that they were a unified assembly ("all of you together are the temple of God" and "the Spirit of God lives in you"). They were not to see themselves as a collection of competing interests or independent individuals.

Paul was emphasizing the intent of Jesus' prayer in John 17:21-23 that believers be unified in God. What actions could you take this week to strengthen your ties to fellow Christians in the church of Jesus Christ?

The people served God only with lip service.

Matthew 15:7-9

Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, [8] This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. [9] But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

The prophet Isaiah also criticized hypocrites (Isaiah 29:13), and Jesus applied Isaiah's words to these religious leaders. The Pharisees knew a lot about God, but they didn't know God.

When we claim to honor God while our heart is far from him, our worship means nothing. It is not enough to study about religion or even to study the Bible; it is not enough to act religious. Our actions and our attitudes must be sincere. If they are not, Isaiah's words also describe us.

Present yourself holy unto the Lord.

Romans 12:1

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

When sacrificing an animal according to God's law, a priest would kill the animal, cut it in pieces, and place it on the altar. Sacrifice was important, but even in the Old Testament God made it clear that obedience from the heart was much more important (see 1 Samuel 15:22; Psalm 40:6; Amos 5:21 -24).

God wants us to offer ourselves, not animals, as *living* sacrifices—daily laying aside our own desires to follow him, putting all our energy and resources at his disposal and trusting him to guide us. We do this out of gratitude that our sins have been forgiven.

God has good, pleasing, and perfect plans for his children. He wants us to be transformed people with renewed minds, living to honor and obey him. Because he wants only what is best for us, and because he gave his Son to make our new life possible, we should joyfully give ourselves as living sacrifices for his service.

Paul warned Christians: "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world" that are usually selfish and often corrupting. Wise Christians decide that much worldly behavior is off-limits for them.

Our refusal to conform to this world's values, however, must go even deeper than just behavior and customs; it must be firmly planted in our mind: "Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think."

It is possible to avoid most worldly customs and still be proud, covetous, selfish, stubborn, and arrogant. Only when the Holy Spirit renews, reeducates, and redirects our mind are we truly transformed (see 8:5).

God will prove himself holy among the people.

Ezekiel 20:41

"As a soothing aroma I will accept you when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered; and I will prove myself holy among you in the sight of the nations.

The Israelites were worshiping idols and giving gifts to God at the same time! They did not believe in their God as the one true God; instead, they worshiped him along with the other gods of the land. Perhaps they enjoyed the immoral pleasures of idol worship; or perhaps they didn't want to miss out on the benefits the idols might give them.

Often people believe in God and give him gifts of church attendance or service, while still holding on to their idols of money, power, or pleasure, not wanting to miss out on any possible benefits. But God wants all of our life and all of our devotion; devotion to anything else is idol worship. Beware of trying to please God while also pursuing the pleasures of sin. You must choose one or the other

The blood of Christ cleanses from all sin.

Hebrews 9:13-14

For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

When the people sacrificed animals, God considered the people's faith and obedience, cleansed them from sin, and made them *ceremonially* acceptable according to Old Testament law.

But Christ's sacrifice transforms our lives and hearts and makes us clean on the inside. His sacrifice is infinitely more effective than animal sacrifices. No barrier of sin or weakness on our part can stifle his forgiveness.

Serve God without fear unto holiness.

Luke 1:74-75

To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.

This was God's promise to Abraham to bless all peoples through him (see Genesis 12:3). It would be fulfilled through the Messiah, Abraham's descendant.

Become a vessel of honor.

2 Timothy 2:20-21

Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work

Here Paul urged Timothy to be the kind of person Christ could use for his noblest purposes. Don't settle for less than God's highest and best. Allow him to use you as an instrument of his will. You do this by staying close to him and keeping yourself pure so that sin and its consequences do not get in the way of what God could do in your life.

While God can redeem any situation, how much better it is to stay close to Christ and ready to be used by him at a moment's notice.

Running away is sometimes considered cowardly. But wise people realize that removing themselves physically from temptation often can be the most courageous action to take. Timothy, a young man, was warned to run from anything that produced evil thoughts.

Do you have a recurring temptation that you find difficult to resist? Remove yourself physically from any situation that stimulates your desire to sin. Knowing when to run is as important in spiritual battle as knowing when and how to fight. (See also 1 Timothy 6:11.)

Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.

Hebrews 12:14

Pursue peace with all men, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

The readers were familiar with the ceremonial cleansing ritual that prepared them for worship, and they knew that they had to be holy or clean in order to enter the Temple. Sin always blocks our vision of God; so if we want to see God, we must renounce sin and obey him (see Psalm 24:3, 4). Holiness is coupled with living in peace.

A right relationship with God leads to right relationships with fellow believers. Although we will not always feel loving toward all other believers, we must pursue peace as we become more Christlike.

The pure in heart shall see God.

Matthew 5:8

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

With Jesus' announcement that the Kingdom was near (4:17), people were naturally asking, "How do I qualify to be in God's Kingdom?" Jesus said that God's Kingdom is organized differently from worldly kingdoms.

In the Kingdom of Heaven, wealth and power and authority are unimportant. Kingdom people seek different blessings and benefits, and they have different attitudes.

Are your attitudes a carbon copy of the world's selfishness, pride, and lust for power, or do they reflect the humility and self-sacrifice of Jesus, your king?

He will establish your heart in holiness.

1 Thessalonians 3:13

So that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

"When our Lord Jesus comes again with all his holy people" refers to the second coming of Christ when he will establish his eternal Kingdom. At that time, Christ will gather all believers, those who have died and those who are alive, into one united family under his rule. All believers from all times, including these Thessalonian believers, will be with Christ in his Kingdom.

The blessed and holy will have part in the first resurrection.

Revelation 20:6

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

The first resurrection occurs after Satan has been set aside. It is a physical resurrection of believers, who then reign with Christ on the earth for a literal 1,000 years. The second resurrection occurs at the end of this Millennium in order to judge unbelievers who have died.

The Holy City is made ready for the bride.

Revelation 21:2-3

And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,

The New Jerusalem is where God lives among his people. Instead of our going up to meet him, he comes down to be with us, just as God became man in Jesus Christ and lived among us (John 1:14). Wherever God reigns, there is peace, security, and love.

An invitation is given to open your heart's door to Jesus

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

New American Standard Bible

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print