

# (Audio Book) Being Like God

by Catherine Booth

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*This sermon emphasizes the pursuit of holiness and likeness to God as a central focus for Christians on earth, leading to a desire for sanctification and purity in heart and actions. It addresses the resistance some Christians have towards the concept of holiness, highlighting the importance of allowing Christ to work in overcoming weaknesses and infirmities. The sermon also discusses the necessity of trusting in Christ's power to purify thoughts and transform lives, ultimately aiming for a state of moral rectitude and righteousness to stand before God.*

**Scripture:** 1 Thessalonians 4:3, James 4:8, 1 Timothy 1:5, 1 John 3:3

**Topics:** "Pursuit of Holiness", "Trusting Christ for Transformation"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the pursuit of holiness and likeness to God as a central focus for Christians on earth, leading to a desire for sanctification and purity in heart and actions. It addresses the resistance some Christians have towards the concept of holiness, highlighting the importance of allowing Christ to work in overcoming weaknesses and infirmities. The sermon also discusses the necessity of trusting in Christ's power to purify thoughts and transform lives, ultimately aiming for a state of moral rectitude and righteousness to stand before God.

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## Transcript

It must be self-evident to a great many people that the most important question that can possibly occupy the mind of man is how much like God we can be and how near to Him we can come on earth, preparatory to our being perfectly like Him and living in His very heart forever in heaven. The mystery of mysteries to me is how anyone with any measure of the Spirit of God can help looking at this blessing of holiness and saying, well, even if it does seem too great for attainment on earth it is very beautiful and very blessed, and I wish I could attain it. It seems to me that we all should hunger and thirst after it, and feel that we shall never be satisfied till we wake up in the likeness of the Saviour.

And yet, alas! we do not find it so. In many instances the very first thing professing Christians do is to resist and reject this doctrine of holiness. I heard of a leader of religion saying that for anybody to talk about being holy showed that they knew nothing of themselves and nothing of Jesus Christ.

It has come to something if holiness and Jesus Christ are at the antipodes of each other. I thought He was the centre and fountain of holiness and through Him holiness could be wrought in us. Large numbers of people make infirmities into sins.

They insist that the requirements of the Adamic law have never been abated. We are not, they say, under the evangelical law of love, or the law of Christ, as the apostle puts it, but still under the Adamic law, and imperfections and infirmities are as sins. I wonder such people do not think of a certain passage which must forever explode such a theory, where the apostle says, Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Had these infirmities been sins we should have the outrageous anomaly of an apostle of Jesus Christ glorying in his sins. These infirmities were only those defects of mind and body which were capable of being overcome and overruled by grace to the glory of Christ and to the furtherance of His kingdom. I glory in my infirmities that in consequence of them the power of Christ shall rest upon me and lift me above them, that Christ shall make me independent of them and master of them, so that I shall glorify His strength and grace more than if I were perfect in mind and body.

Previously Paul had said, Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me. Some people think this was sin, but surely the words messenger of Satan show that this thorn was no act or disposition of Paul's, but some external temptation or affliction inflicted by Satan. Besides, the divine assurance, My grace is sufficient for thee, ought to forbid the idea of sin.

Paul sought the Lord thrice to have this thorn removed. If it had been sin, the Lord would have been as anxious to have it removed as His servant was. This thorn was doubtless some physical trial, as the words in the flesh indicate some tribulation or sorrow through the patient endurance of which the strength of Christ could be magnified.

Mark that this was a divinely permitted discipline to prevent Paul from falling into sin, and that is quite a different thing from sin itself. The Lord sent this to Paul not for the purpose of making him humble, for he was humbled before, but to keep him humble, and does he not send something to us all? Do we not need trials and tribulations in the flesh in order to keep us humble? But is this evidence that pride is dwelling in us and reigning over us? It is an evidence just to the contrary. Holiness is being saved from sin in act, in purpose, in thought.

A young lady wrote me that she had been the bond-slave for four or five years of a certain besetting sin which she had struggled and wrestled and prayed to overcome. Now and then she would gain the victory, and then down she would go again. She said, It is such a subtle thing, connected with my thoughts and imagination, so that I do not think I ever can be saved.

I showed her how dishonouring this unbelief was, and that if she would trust Christ to come and reign in her heart He could cleanse the very thoughts and imaginations. She made a little advance, but said she could not come so far as to think that Christ could purify her thoughts. She believed that He could save her from putting them into practice, but not that He could purify them.

I tried to show her how Jesus, by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit, could purify the very thoughts of our hearts, and, thank God, she did go another step. She said, I rejoice with trembling for fear it should be only temporary, but I have trusted Him to purify the source. I must say He has done it, and instead of thinking these thoughts I have holy thoughts.

If Satan presents anything to my mind it is so repulsive to me that I cannot tell you the grief and horror with which it fills me. Later she said, I am conscious that my thoughts are pleasing to Him and He has saved

me from this sin which has been the torment of my life for all these years. What I say is that anything He can do for one He can do for another.

If I am wrong here I give up the whole question. I am perfectly mistaken in the purpose and aim and command of the Gospel dispensation if God does not want His people to be pure, not, however, to count themselves pure when they are not. We are told over and over again that God wants His people to be pure, and purity in their hearts is the end and purpose of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

If it is not so I am utterly deceived. This is the will of God, even your sanctification, wrote Paul to the Thessalonians. There is a sense, and an important sense, in which sanctification must be the will of man.

If it is not my will the divine will can never be accomplished in me. I must will to be sanctified, as God is willing that I should be sanctified. James, in his epistle, says, Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.

Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. This was said to people who had been professing to believe, but had gone back under the dominion of their fleshly appetites. There are two or three other texts which seem to sum up the whole matter as, for instance, Jesus Christ gave Himself for us, that is, for us Christians, the whole church of God that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Then 1 Timothy 1-5 shows God's purpose and aim in the whole method of redemption. Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned cleansed and kept clean, for if it had been clean and had become dirty again it would be not a good, but a bad conscience. And again, in 1 John 3-3, Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

These are summing up texts, and there are numbers of others to show that the whole purpose of redemption is to restore us to purity, not only to purge us from the past, but to keep us purged to serve the living God. This shall be by the application of the blood of Christ to the conscience, and by the power of the Holy Ghost keeping us in a state of purity and obedience to righteousness. If God through Christ cannot do this for me, what is my advantage at all by His coming? What a great deal more there is in these epistles directed to the individual Christian to be this, that and the other, and to do this, that and the other, than there is about what God will do for him.

This is not an objective Christianity. This is not a sitting down and sentimentalizing and thinking of Christ in the heavens, but a bringing Him down into our hearts and lives here. One of the continual exhortations is, Be ye this, and do ye this and the other.

These epistles represent a real, practical transformation to be accomplished in us, which is the only thing that we'll do to die with. If it is not so accomplished in you now, you will want to be cleansed before you can venture into the presence of the King of Kings. You will want a sense of beautiful moral rectitude and righteousness spreading over your whole nature that will enable you to look up into the face of God and say, I love thee and know thee, and thou knowest me and lovest me, and we are one.

You will want that, and nothing less will do to die with. And why not have it? Put away the depths of unbelief which are at the bottom of your difficulty and say, Be it unto me according to thy word.

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