

Dealing With Sin

by Donny Coulter

This sermon emphasizes the importance of pursuing holiness by looking unto Jesus as the ultimate example. It highlights the need to deny oneself, take up the cross, and endure in the race set before us, focusing on the joy that awaits beyond the challenges. The message calls for self-examination, repentance from sin, and a commitment to live in holy conduct and godliness, preparing for the coming of the day of God.

Scripture: Matthew 16:24, 2 Peter 3:11, Hebrews 12:1, 1 Peter 4:12, Philippians 1:6, John 17:4, 2 Timothy 2:12, Matthew 13:22

Topics: "Pursuing Holiness", "Endurance in Faith"

Description

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Transcript

the sin that God has named in his scripture. Because if we are going to exert the power of God over sin and experience our maturity, our sanctification, progressive sanctification in this life, then we have to deal with the sin. We have to.

And so I want you to consistently see this picture. That this yellow line represents you and I as we run the race that has been set before us. This is the race that is set before every one of us as believers is to live as God has called us to live and that is to live, come on, help me out, live, be holy for I am holy, right? We've heard the command, be holy for I am holy, and now this is the course that has been set out before us, the race that has been set before us, is this desire and move towards holiness so that on that wonderful day when I receive my permanent glorification, there is this little change from this life to the next.

Do you really want that? Well, if you do, then that's why we have to live the kind of life that God has asked us and called us, commanded us, he didn't ask us, he's commanded us to live. Hebrews chapter 12, read with me verses one and two. Therefore we also, since we're surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight in the sin which so easily ensnares us and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

Just a couple of reminders, we are to lay aside, we are to take away from its location and put it in a completely different location and leave it there, we are to lay aside both the weights, those things in our lives that keep us in an encumbrance that keep us from running the race effectively, we need to lay those aside, those may or may not necessarily be something wrong, they may even be something good, but we need to lay them aside if they hinder in our faith in Jesus Christ, lay them aside. Now we're also, as we found out last week, we are to lay the sin aside and we discovered that the sin is talking about, within its context, the sin of unbelief and unbelief then leads to a tsunami of sin in your lives, it opens the floodgates, the opportunity, when we have unbelief, when we stop believing God, when we stop believing His word, when we stop believing that what God says is good is good and what God says is bad is bad, when God says something is right, then it's right and when God says something is wrong, it's wrong, when we stop believing that, then it opens the door for a tsunami to come in and control our lives, a tsunami of sin. So we want to lay aside those weights that hold us back and we want to lay aside the sin which controls us.

Now, let's read on, verse two. Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Pray with me, if you will.

Father, I pray in these next few moments that we have to look into your word. May your spirit reveal all of the places, God, where we hold back. I pray that you would remove the distractions that come into our lives and help us, Lord, to move beyond them, to see, Lord, beyond the pain that is ahead and God, may we see the ultimate end and that is the joy of being holy, the joy of being in the presence of Christ.

Lord, I pray that we would see the clear vision for that today, I pray. We ask these things in Jesus' name, amen. So when we say looking unto Jesus, as we discussed last week, this word looking is a very specific word.

It means to look away from everything else and pinpointing a focus on something ahead. So we are looking away from any other thing that's around us. We are looking away from all of the other distractions.

And the beautiful thing about this is when it's written there in the original, when he says looking away, it's not a one-time act. It is something that we do all the time, every day, making sure, looking at our focus, that we are looking unto Jesus, that we are not looking to the right, we're not looking to the left. I remember in studying for this a couple of weeks ago, I saw a video of one of the old Olympic races, and these two men, they were, the one guy was expected to break the record and to come in first, but it was another guy that was right behind him.

They were two top in the world, and they were gonna set the time record. And the one guy broke his concentration and looked the wrong way. Rather than looking over his left shoulder just to see, kind of take a peek where he was at, he turned this away, and he was on the inside lane.

And when he turned, the other guy went zoom right by him. Now, they both set a record, but he got second because he lost his focus. Looking unto Jesus.

Now, we talked about how that in that looking, we have to make sure that we are looking in the right direction. And here, the word says, you look to your author of your faith and the finisher of your faith. That Jesus was the starter or the beginner of your faith.

He endured this cross. He endured this cross so that you could be able to approach a holy God. That's why he endured it, so that that's the beginning of your faith, the author of your faith.

And he is also the perfecter of your faith. Do you know that? He is the finisher. He's not only the starter of your faith, but he is the perfecter of your faith.

Look at 2 Timothy chapter, sorry, 2 Timothy chapter two, verse 12. For this reason, I also suffer these things. Nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know in whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

He is the perfecter of your faith. Paul had a faith in God that said, it doesn't matter what comes. It doesn't matter the suffering that I face.

It doesn't matter how hard this race is. I am going to trust him to whom I've committed everything. So he is the finisher.

Philippians chapter one and verse six. Do you know what it says? Anybody remember offhand what it says? That he who began a good work in me, in you, will complete it. He will complete that work.

He is the finisher of our faith. And so, because he is the author and the finisher of our faith, we turn our eyes away from everything else. We are looking unto Jesus.

We are turning away from everything around us and we are looking unto him. Be careful that you don't keep your eyes as we said last week on the church because they're gonna fail you. It's a shame to say, and I don't wanna think about it, but how many of us have been failed by the church? How many of us have been failed by a leader in the church? We cannot put our eyes in those places.

You can't put your eyes on your abuser because there is danger in not looking. There's danger in not having a focus as we found out last week with Peter as he walked on the water. And so we run.

We run this race because of our vision of Jesus, not because of our vision of the witnesses, not because of our vision of the denomination, or not because of our vision of such a godly man or a godly woman. We run because of our vision of Jesus himself. I see him and I want to be like him.

Do you wanna be like him? The problem is is that our gaze is often controlled by what our hearts are longing for. Let me say that again. Our gaze, our ability to see, to look, to take our eyes off everything else is often debilitated because our heart has a longing for something else.

What is your heart longing for? Is it human applause? Is it just so we can get that atta boy, atta girl? I read you the words of the old hymn. I'd rather have Jesus than anything. I'd rather have Jesus than men's applause.

I'd rather be faithful to his dear cause. I'd rather have Jesus than worldwide fame. I'd rather be true to his holy name.

A looking unto Jesus that is undistracted by human applause and acceptance. How about the cares of this world? Boy, I'm telling you, that becomes a hard one, doesn't it? The cares of this world, especially now as inflation is soaring and supply chains are diminishing and finances are getting tough. We see those things, the cares of this world come in and they begin to distract us and pull us away from looking unto Jesus.

It's relationships that come in and distract us from looking unto Jesus. But the cares of this world come. But Matthew 13, 22 says, now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word and he becomes unfruitful or he becomes distracted.

What about your difficulties, your trials, your persecution? Listen to me. If you're going through a valley, if you're going through something difficult, that does not mean that you can't focus on Christ the way that we have been called to look. This object of our looking is Jesus and Jesus alone.

Your difficulties and your trials have a tendency to pull your heart away and it becomes, woe is me and oh, how hard life is. If you only knew, Pastor, how bad it is, and I understand, I'm not trying to minimize what you may be going through, but listen to what 1 Peter 4, verse 12 says. Beloved, do not think it strange, the fiery trial which is to try you.

Did you hear what he said and how he said that? Don't think it strange when the trial that is going to try you, it wasn't that might come, that could possibly come. It is written in this way. Do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you.

In other words, and he goes on to talk about suffering as Jesus suffered, keeping our focus on Christ, not on the trial, not as if it is something that is out of the ordinary, that shouldn't happen to me and to you. Looking unto Jesus, where is your heart? Is your heart on your own comfort? Is your heart in needing relationships? Is your heart in needing bigger finances? And I'm gonna tell you, if it's there, then your gaze at Jesus is going to be distracted. And we cannot have a distracted vision of Jesus if we're going to pursue what he's asking us to pursue.

We talked about the looking itself. We talked about the object of our looking. Now let's talk about the principle of our looking.

Look what it says. Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame of the cross, and has sat down at the right hand of the Father. Do you hear what he's saying? The principle of what he's trying to communicate here is that there was something beyond the cross that made the cross worth enduring.

The joy that was set before him. Yes, if we are contextually making sure that we are correct, then the joy is the fact that he has sat down at the right hand of the Father. He has restored into his King of Kings and Lord of Lords position.

He is now back in the presence of the Father. But I do not believe that that is the only part of joy, this joy that he was looking at. I believe for me principally that Jesus saw beyond the cross and saw you and I being reconciled to God, the whole purpose of his coming.

Do you believe that? Yes, Jesus came to do the will of the Father. Look at John 17. I have glorified you on the earth.

I have finished the work which you have given me to do. Do you see what he says? I have glorified you and I have done your will. Now, oh Father, glorify me together with yourself, with the glory which I had with you before the world was.

So yes, a part of the looking before is that restoration of the glory. But I don't believe that that was all it was. What was the will of the Father? If there is a joy that is set before him and he is willing to endure it, then we have to say, why did he come in the first place? It's not just about sitting down on the throne.

Why did he come in the first place? And you know why he came? He came for me and you. That's why he came. And I'm trying to think of a way to illustrate this as best I can.

And I'm sorry, I need a volunteer I can trust. Dan, would you help me out here? I'm gonna put you on the spot, man. Now, I want you to imagine, you can pull the screen off there and we're gonna teach for a minute here.

Hold on right there. You're looking at the cross and Jesus is looking at the cross. Imagine that now.

Jesus, from before time began, saw a cross. And he looked beyond the cross and endured it for a purpose. The will of God, yes, he came to accomplish the will of God and he did on the cross.

On the cross he said, it is finished. He has accomplished the will of the Father. But the will of the Father in him coming was not just to hang on a cross.

What is the cross for? The cross was an instrument of death. And so the Bible says that Jesus endured the cross because of the hope that was set before him. So Dan, if you come, stand on this chair for me.

You feel safe there? It's not quite tall enough. How's that? Puts in a little perspective. Now, do you see the picture? As Jesus looked beyond the cross, the hope that was set before him was you.

It was Dan. The hope that was set before the cross was Dan's reconciliation to God, that he now has the privilege of approaching a holy God and being declared to be righteous so that he can do that. That's the beauty of what Jesus has done.

And because he saw beyond this, instrument of death and shame. Look what it says. It says that he despised the shame.

This was an instrument of death as well as an instrument of shame. You know, when men were hanging from a cross in the Roman world, people didn't come by and say, hey, Joe, glad to see you up there. Stop by and we'll have a coffee sometime.

It was a place of death and shame. They were put out in front of everyone. And Jesus on this cross, think, he who knew no sin became sin for us.

His holiness, his righteousness is impugned by the very fact that he is on a cross. And it says that he despised the shame. He looked down on the shame.

He took the shame that belonged to Dan. And Dan deserves the shame that comes along with his sin. But Jesus took on himself that shame and despised it.

He looked down on it and says, I will not let you conquer because I have Dan over there reconciled to God. So for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross. That word enduring is a beautiful word because it means to hold up under.

Jesus endured the cross. He held up under the weight of the cross, but it doesn't stop there. It means that he held up under the weight of the cross with a joy and a hope, with a hopefulness.

In other words, say that you're an army in Mariopole. You remember the story of Mariopole? Why in the world would those men there and those villagers hold off in Mariopole? Because they had a hope and they stood under the weight of the bombs dropping because they had a hope. They endured all of that because they had a hope.

That's what Jesus did on the cross because he saw Dan on the other side. For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross and despised the shame. Thank you, Dan, appreciate your time.

God had intention from the very beginning of creation. God had an intention to bring you to himself. You need to see now, it's not just seeing Dan.

Look beyond the cross and see you. See me. All right, Pastor Donnie, thank you so much for that illustration.

What does that mean to me? What does that mean to me? You have a race. Within its context, you have a race that you are called to win. God is calling on you to run this race, your yellow line, and he wants there to be as little change in this life to the next when it comes time.

And so that is your race course and he has called you to race that. And it sounds like it's hard. He says put away the weights and the sins that so easily ensnares us.

Put those things away. And run with endurance the race that is set before you. Well, how do we do that? He says, so he gives us the answer of how I'm doing that is look unto Jesus who because of the joy that was set before him, endured the cross.

He ran his race, he endured the cross, despised his shame so that he could come out on the other side, setting on the throne of God and present you someday righteous and holy before God. Now what does that mean to me? It means that I am looking to him as my example. Unfortunately for you and me, that can be quite difficult.

If we are to look unto Jesus, here's the picture that we have. Because we have to look beyond the cross, we've got to look beyond the cross too. You and I have a cross to bear.

What did Jesus say in Matthew 16? Look with me in Matthew 16 verse 24 and 25. Jesus said to his disciples, if anyone desires to come after me, is that you? Would that statement include you as his children? So if anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. Now I have to hope you can see the vision of this, that when he talks about taking up the cross and following me, did he mean follow me around downtown? Just follow me around downtown because we're just gonna go hang out, we're just gonna carry our cross.

What is the cross for? It's an instrument of death. Where did Jesus carry his cross? To the top of Golgotha. And what did Jesus do at the top of Golgotha? He died.

And that's exactly what Jesus is saying, that to do this, you and I must, we have to see beyond this. Sorry, take me a second to get it. Beyond our cross is what? Our own personal holiness.

And it's gonna cost you. And to be able to do that, look what Jesus says. And Jesus said to his disciples, if anyone desires to come after me, look unto me.

Let him or her deny him or herself. First point that we must do is denying ourselves. If you want to work on your sin and the sin that God is going to name for us in the scriptures, if you want to work on it, then there is first a denial of self.

But we don't like that. We don't like to deny our own comforts and our own joys and our own pleasures. We don't like that.

But Jesus is saying that if you're gonna come after me, if you're gonna do follow my example, then you're going to have to deny yourself, take up your cross and die. That's the whole point of this verse is that you're not walking down Main Street with your cross. You're walking up the hill and you're dying on the cross just like Jesus did.

That's the example for us. But it's a cross that's worth enduring when we see this. It's the ultimate result on the other side.

Do you hear me? And so are you willing? Are you ready? Are you ready as we move on from here into looking into the specifics of God's word that's going to name some things in your own life that you were doing and that you are not considering that are offensive to God? Are we gonna do that? Are we willing to deny ourselves, pick up our cross and die so that we can become the kind of men and women, the children of God that he has called us to be? Are you willing to do that? Are you willing to take that chance? Jesus said that no man goes to war without first counting the cost. Are you ready to count the cost? Count the cost of whatever your cross may be. Denying yourself, maybe it's being alone for the rest of your life.

Maybe it's losing all of your financial stability. Maybe it's losing some relationships. Maybe it's being castigated by your neighbors.

What is it? It has to be your cross so that you move into a place where you can experience the holiness that God has called us to. Are you willing? Are you willing to say to God, God, I want to deny myself. Now teach me what that means.

Would you say with me to the Holy Spirit who is our teacher and our convictor of truth, teacher of truth, would you say with me, God, may your Holy Spirit pinpoint in every spot of my life where I have become distracted. Would you say with me, God, would you take and begin to revive this conviction of the little sins in my life that I have let go and let go slide by? Would you say that with me? Can we do that together as a body of Christ? Look, I believe that if we will do this together, if we will do this together, then we will be a glorified church, a purified church. Folks, we are living in the last days.

I know that it seems cliché, and I'm not gonna tell you that there's a date on it because I don't follow that, but I can tell you that I see more and more of Scripture being fulfilled around us and it excites me. And because of that, let me read to you. This was sent to me last week on Sunday morning right before the service by somebody here.

I don't wanna read this for you. Second Peter chapter three verses 11 to 13. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, he's talking about this world will be completely dissolved.

All the human applause that you sought, all of the comfort that you desired, all of the relationships that you longed for, all of the money that you worked hard for, all of that someday will be dissolved. And look what he says. Therefore, since all of these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness as we see and believe? I don't know if you're there or not.

And if I were one of those guys that could stand up and tell you all of the things in the world that are happening and point it to Scripture, then you might be convinced. I don't know, but we're getting closer and closer. I can tell you right now that we are one day closer than we were yesterday to the coming of Jesus.

And our calling, folks, our calling is not to live a mediocre, sin-filled life that only turns to Jesus when things are going bad or when we need to throw a prayer request at Him. Our call is this. He says, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness? Is that not what we've been talking about? As we see this, the end will come.

It may come next week. It may come next month. It may come 100 years from now, but it's coming.

And when it comes, He says that we ought to be holy in conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with the fervent heat. Nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. So much to say there.

No time to say it. Will you with me become that kind of person, that kind of believer, that kind of child of God who wants to be so sensitive and so desiring to seek out holy conduct and godliness? I'm not talking about following rules and regulations. I'm talking about loving on Jesus and letting the Holy Spirit spill out of who we are and show in our everyday lives.

That's what I'm talking about. I will never throw up to you a list of things that you should do, but I can tell you God gives us a list of things that we ought to be cognizant of. That's for sure.

Would you with me say those things, Holy Spirit, show me where I'm distracted? Show me the sin and the weights so that I can pursue like you this holiness, this godliness that you've called me to. Would you do that with me? Let's pray together. Father, gracious Lord, I do not believe that you would ever ask us anything to do anything that you have not given us the ability and the power through the presence of your Holy Spirit to accomplish.

Lord, I pray that you would help everyone here to know that you and I are not talking to just those people that are really lost in their sin, that we're talking to, Lord, the confident believer. God, every one of us need to be moving towards that walk, that conduct of holiness and godliness. And I pray that you'd give us a realization as we've seen so many times in 2 Peter, God, that you have given us everything, the divine power for just that life and godliness.

I pray, Father, as we move from this place here into our race, God, the specifics of our race in the next few weeks, I pray that your Holy Spirit would bring a conviction that we cannot walk away from. Bring conviction in my life, Lord. Bring conviction of the sins, both great and small.

I pray that you would bring a conviction to me. Bring conviction of the distractions, those things which have taken my eyes off you and put them somewhere else. God, may we be focused on our calling to live holy.

May your spirit do his work in our lives, we pray. In Jesus' holy name. Amen.

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