

Passion for Holiness

by Glenn Meldrum

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a lifestyle of holiness, which is achieved through intimacy with God and separation from the world.

Scripture: Psalm 84:5, Acts 26:20, Ephesians 5:1, Philippians 3:20, Hebrews 10:10-12, 1 John 3:3-4, Revelation 15:4

Topics: "Holiness Of God", "Sanctification"

Description

Glenn Meldrum preaches about the significance of holiness in experiencing genuine revival. He emphasizes that the holiness of God, infinitely pure and separate, is beyond human comprehension but essential for believers to reflect. Holiness involves consecration to God, separation from sin, and intimate fellowship with the Holy One. The pursuit of holiness through sanctification is both a divine act and a continuous lifestyle of repentance and growth in moral purity. Meldrum highlights the necessity of holiness for every citizen of Christ's kingdom, as it is the highway to revival and a transformed life.

Transcript

When the Lord rends the heavens He unveils to mortal men the beauty of His holiness. That is why genuine revival always advances Biblical holiness. The holiness of God can be terrifying to sinful man. Yet for those who yearn to know the Holy One, it becomes beautifully attractive. A passion for holiness burns in those who long to be near the Lover of their souls.

Only the Lord Almighty is holy in and of Himself (Rev. 15:4). The Scriptures teach that people, objects, animals or certain days can be holy, but only in accordance to their relationship with God. Holiness, as it relates to mankind, is a twofold work. First of all, it is an act of the Savior whereby He makes a repentant sinner holy. Secondly, it is the pursuit of the believer to live holy through divine grace.

The second point consists of two parts as well. It begins with consecration unto God. Consecration is the devotion, or act of setting oneself apart, to the worship and service of the Lord. That is followed by the separation from what is sinful and common (worldly). The primary point of holiness is being separated unto God through intimate fellowship. This both allows us and empowers us to live separated from what is worldly and sinful.

Isaiah 35 prophetically revealed the splendor of Christianity more than 700 years before the church was born. It would be a time where the feeble find strength, the fearful are made strong, the sick are healed and judgment is executed. "And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean

will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it" (Isa. 35:8).

To walk on the Highway of Holiness is a privilege. The impenitent will not be allowed to travel that road, for it is a royal road prepared for the King of kings and open only to His loyal subjects. This means that holiness is mandatory for every citizen of Christ's kingdom. As the Hebrew writer taught, "Make every effort . . . to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). This is why the Scriptures command us to produce "fruit in keeping with repentance" (Mt. 3:8).

This highway is also the way for revival to come. Before we can examine holiness as it relates to revival we must first look at the holiness of God and the holiness required of every Christian.

THE HOLINESS OF GOD

Jehovah God is infinitely holy! His character is holy, His actions are holy, His thoughts are holy, His words are holy, His justice is holy and He is the epitome of holiness. The holiness of God is so far beyond human comprehension that language miserably fails to adequately convey these truths. The infinite holiness of God may be the hardest thing for finite minds to grasp and explain. Nevertheless, we are called to know Him who "surpasses knowledge" (Eph. 3:19).

Two dimensions of God's holiness need to be mentioned: the Lord is absolutely pure and He is absolutely separate. God's absolute purity means that He is free from any form of corruption, fault or error; free from any outside influence that affects His nature and character; free from any need outside of Himself. The Lord remains perfectly consistent and uniform in being. "I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed" (Mal. 3:6).

The Lord's purity also speaks of His ethical, or moral perfection. "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong" (Hab. 1:13). Whatever God does He remains true to His moral perfection. His justice is based upon His infinite ethical qualities and limitless knowledge. He makes no mistakes. His moral perfection is actually who He is, not something He does. He never sinned, and even more than that, evil is totally absent from His being.

Secondly, the Almighty is absolutely separate and unique from His creation, including humanity (Isa. 37:16). There is no comparison between the Great I Am and man. The Creator is so far superior to His creation that our finite minds cannot fathom the distance. Not just that, He will always be totally other, separate and unique from His creation. Yet, He has made Himself touchable. Mankind will never become gods as Mormonism, New Age and Eastern religions assert. Besides such beliefs being thoroughly unbiblical, they are completely illogical.

The Lord created mankind in His own image. This means that God imparted to humanity only those attributes of His that are communicable (able to be transmitted or shared). We are privileged to share in His moral attributes such as love, kindness, and mercy. Mankind will never share in God's non-communicable attributes as omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence etc., which will always be unique to Him.

Those beautiful God given attributes of love, kindness, mercy, etc. have been perverted through selfishness, lust and pride. Sin has distorted our ability to accurately perceive our spiritual condition and to correctly comprehend the character of the Lord. This is why we have such a difficult time grasping the

perfection of His attributes. Nevertheless, God can open our eyes to His wonder and to our great need.

HOLINESS IN RELATION TO MAN

An unholy man is made holy only by a divine act. That person is then separated unto God for the purposes of God. When a person is truly separated unto the Lord, he will automatically be set apart from what is sinful and common. It is impossible for a person to be made holy by God and not be set apart from the sinful and worldly. Holiness and sin do not mix.

Scripture emphatically demands that His people reflect His ethical nature. The Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible) contains both ethical and ceremonial commands for holiness. The Psalms and the Prophets speak primarily of ethical holiness. The New Testament incorporates the ethical ideals of the Old Testament while adding the spiritual dimension of the heart. Holiness consists of moral purity and being separated from the love of this world unto the Savior. The Lord is calling His church (church means "called out ones") to be holy because He is holy. Through relationship with Him we begin to reflect His holy nature.

Holiness comes only through relationship with God. "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people" (Eph. 5:1-3). To be holy we must fix our eyes on Jesus and draw near to the only One who is holy. As dearly loved children we must imitate Him as a child mimics every word and movement of his father.

Sanctification

The act of making a person holy is called sanctification and can be understood in two ways. First of all, a person is sanctified, or made holy by a judicial act of God alone. In other words, a man can receive a pardon for all the crimes he has committed because he begged for mercy. Salvation is solely the gift of God freely offered to undeserving sinners. The Lord imputes, or accredits His holiness to a person according to his faith. The moment a person surrenders his life to Christ he is made holy by God. The person then becomes the cherished possession of the Lord and is separated (sanctified) unto Him for His good pleasure. God responds to the repentant by cleansing him from sin through Christ's atoning sacrifice and then accredits him with the Savior's own righteousness. Paul said, "we have BEEN made holy" (Heb. 10:10).

Secondly, God commands those He has made holy to live in moral holiness. This speaks of a lifestyle that pursues holiness in an ever-increasing manner, also referred to as the progressive work of sanctification. True Christians have been separated unto God and must now live separated lives from what is sinful and worldly. "By one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are BEING made holy" (Heb. 10:14).

Day by day we should be developing in holiness by sinning less in thought, word and deed. There is no place for stagnation in Christ's kingdom. If you are not more holy today than a year ago it is probably because you have grown lukewarm. Since God commanded us to be holy He is able and willing to empower us to live holy if we surrender all to Him. The Lord will never command us to do that which He will not empower us to fulfill.

Our natural propensity to sin keeps us in need of living a lifestyle of repentance and holiness until our dying day. We must never use our fallen nature as an excuse to sin since sin is always a willful act. There is power to overcome sin through the risen Savior.

NEED OF HOLINESS

Three ministers were among the crowd of people who responded to the evangelist's altar call. The first man held a PhD. in psychology and was the worship leader at a large Pentecostal church. He was an active homosexual. The second man was a youth pastor who was sleeping with his girlfriend. The last man was also a youth pastor who was living in sexual sin, but did not divulge his immoral practices. All these leaders were in brazen sin. The Apostle John plainly taught that if we practice sin we do not know Him (1 Jn. 3:4-10). Either these men were never truly converted or were blatantly backslid.

These three ministers claimed they were Christians even though they lived in outright rebellion against the Just Judge. They turned the precious grace of God into a cheap, vile thing by justifying their practice of sin while claiming to "live by grace." This cheap grace leaves the sinner in his sin because it is powerless to transform the person. People who live such lies have a perverted understanding of God's love, grace, holiness and justice. They think sin is not exceedingly wicked because they have not seen Jehovah as absolutely holy.

The Lord's transforming power flows through repentance. Proof of salvation is manifested through a change in lifestyle and character. If there is not a transformed character then salvation has not come to the person! When personal growth in holiness cannot be found it is because the person is not in a right relationship with the Savior. Paul wrote, "I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds" (Acts 26:20). Genuine repentance will always produce a holy lifestyle. Always!

HOLINESS THROUGH INTIMACY

Holiness and revival are indivisible. Revival begins with the dreadful conviction of sin. At times the experience is overwhelming--men are convulsed under the weight of their wickedness, people weep uncontrollably, confession of sin and restitution become common. This is the goodness of God revealed. Men, women and children finally discern their true spiritual condition and mourn over their transgressions. Revival produces tears of conviction and the fruit of repentance yields holy lives. Anything else is not revival!

America's First Great Awakening changed the nation as the fires of revival burned the sin out and kindled the flames of holiness. After a sermon in Lyme, Connecticut, "many had their countenances changed; their thoughts seemed to trouble them, so that the joints of their loins were loosed, and their knees smote one against another. Great numbers cried out aloud in the anguish of their souls. Several stout men fell as though a cannon had been discharged, and the ball had made its way through their hearts." . . . People had to be carried from the meeting house (America's Great Revivals, 19). Those terrified by their sin after encountering the Holy Spirit and repented of their rebellion against a holy God will not quickly turn their backs on Him. And yet, the terror of sin is not enough to make a person want to live a holy life. The sinner must see his sin in light of a Savior who loved him and paid the penalty for his crimes so he might be forgiven.

The Scriptural concept of being born again implies new relationship. One cannot be born again and remain in the old lifestyle of the past just as a baby cannot be born and remain in the mother's womb. A new life is born and proved by the new relationship. Love for God is the most powerful remedy for sin. When sin enters the life love will drive it out with ferocious abandon. As Spurgeon emphatically stated, "I cannot trifle with the evil that killed my best friend [Jesus]. I must be holy for His sake. How can I live in sin when He has died to save me from it?" (Spurgeon, My Conversion, 15).

It is impossible for any human to overcome sin through his own ability. If we were able to conquer sin through our own strength then Christ died in vain. Jonathan Edwards struggled with this issue. He desired to be holy, but found he was unable to attain holiness through his own strength. Edwards said he pursued holiness, "with far greater diligence and earnestness than ever I pursued anything in my life, but yet with too great a dependence on my own strength, which afterwards proved a great damage to me. My experience had not taught me, as it has done since, my extreme feebleness and impotence, every manner of way; and the bottomless depths of secret corruption and deceit there was in my heart" (Edwards, Memoirs, 10). Such truths are painful, but life changing. When Edwards finally panted after the Savior, he abandoned himself to the Lord. He later wrote, "What a sweet calmness, what a calm ecstasy doth it [holiness] bring to my soul! . . . there is no such near or intimate conversation between any other lovers as between Christ and the Christian" (Iain Murray, 46).

Edwards further revealed the joy of holiness that he found through intimate fellowship with Christ when he stated, "Heaven appeared exceedingly delightful, as a world of love; and that all happiness consisted in living in pure, humble, heavenly, divine love. . . . [Holiness] appeared to me to be of a sweet, pleasant, charming, serene, calm nature; which brought an inexpressible purity, brightness, peacefulness, and ravishment to the soul" (Edwards, Memoirs, 11). When a person desires the Jesus more than his love of self and sin he will know the wonder of Christ's tender mercies and the power of holiness that flows with life-giving force.

ALIENS IN A STRANGE LAND

Holiness is a lifestyle! It is not subject to popular opinion, the dictates of government or enslaved to the whims of situational ethics. The Eternal Law Giver alone as revealed in the Scriptures defines the standards and authority for holiness. Love for God is the ultimate motivator for holiness. Compassion for the lost should further compel us to be holy so we can be living epistles that proclaim the life changing power of a risen Savior.

As stated earlier, holiness is being separated unto God and separated from what is worldly and sinful. The Lord created mankind to be His precious possession, to be a holy community of faith so we could glorify and enjoy Him forevermore. Only as a separated community unto the Lord can we fulfill His purpose for our lives. Without a spiritually healthy body of believers, we follow the world and copy its ways.

The idea of being a separated community scares many people because of past abuses or misunderstanding. The accusations of being prejudiced, closed minded, and self-righteous have intimidated vast numbers of people. Nonetheless, the very nature of holiness demands that we live separated lives from the world no matter what the world, or other Christians, may think. The reason many do not live such lives is because they are more comfortable with compromise and worldliness than with holiness. The church has gone about "congratulating itself for transforming the world, not noticing, that in fact the world had tamed the church" (Hauerwas, 41).

Jehovah commanded Israel to be a separated people so they could discern between the holy and unholy (Lev. 24:24-26). The same standard applies to the church. The church's "most credible form of witness (and most 'effective' thing it can do for the world) is the actual creation of a living, breathing, visible community of faith" (Hauerwas, 47). For there to be a vibrant community of faith there must first be a fully separated people unto God for the purposes of God. We are not called to be cloistered in a closed community, for what value is a community no one can see, be touched by, or become a part of? Those who hold to such a view, whether theologically or applicationally, have not truly separated themselves unto Christ.

Abraham was constantly pressing towards an eternal country since his citizenship was not of this world, but in heaven (Heb. 11:8-16). He was on a lifelong pilgrimage to an eternal city and held everything in this life loosely because he lived unattached to this world. The psalmist tells us, "Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage" (Ps. 84:5). This is the nature of Biblical Christianity. Since "our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20), we are on a pilgrimage, living as aliens in this "present evil age." Aliens think, talk, smell, eat, dress and live differently than do the nationals. They live in tight social groups because they are different from everyone around them. Their entire spiritual and social lives revolve around their community.

For the church to be a community of faith, she must live as aliens in this world. We should think differently, talk differently, act differently, dress differently and live differently. Our lives should revolve around our relationship with Jesus and the community of faith. Since our citizenship is in heaven, the laws of heaven should define our lifestyle. "Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 Jn. 3:3; NKJV).

The Christian community should be open for the entire world to see as a city set on a hill. It should be open for non-believers to enter if they will flee from the wrath to come by living in intimate, holy, fellowship with the Lamb of God and the community of faith. A holy church should always be pleading with an unholy world to come up to the high standards of Christ's kingdom. She must never condescend to the world's standards to gain a following.

We need to ask the question, "Are we changing the world or is the world changing us?" The very idea of compromise should be appalling to Christians. Compromise is rebellion against the King of kings. When our lives are driven with the pursuits of this world we stop straining towards heaven and the standards define Christ's kingdom. We then cease striving for personal holiness and stop living a lifestyle of repentance. We become earth-bound people instead of heaven-bound saints.

Those who are true residents of heaven seek a spiritual revolution that will usher in Christ's kingdom. We are called to be aliens on a mission to overthrow Satan's kingdom by building the kingdom of God in its stead. This is what revival literally does. One eyewitness of the Rochester Revival in New York (1831) testified, "The whole community was stirred. Grog (liquor) shops were closed; the Sabbath was honored; the sanctuaries were thronged with happy worshipers. . . . Even the courts and the prisons bore witness to [the] blessed effects. There was a wonderful falling off in crime. The courts had little to do, and the jail was nearly empty for years afterwards" (Cymbala, 115). Within one year more than 100,000 fled from the kingdom of hell into the kingdom of heaven.

Revival is the amplification of the Spirit's call for Christians to live holy lives as aliens in this world. It is also the Spirit's plea to the unsaved to ascend the pilgrim's path of repentance to gain access to the Highway

of Holiness.

HOLINESS AND REVIVAL

John Huss (1374-1415) lived in this world as an alien. His love for God was greater than his love of sin and self. Fearlessly he advanced Christ's kingdom and the self-righteous were enraged. The Catholic Church was threatened by this humble man of God, so they seized him and put him on trial. The presiding bishops declared him guilty of heresy. They degraded him and stripped him of his priestly garments. The bishops placed upon his head a paper miter that had devils painted upon it with the inscription, "A ringleader of heretics." When he saw the miter he said, "My Lord Jesus Christ, for my sake, did wear a crown of thorns; why should not I then, for His sake, wear this light crown, be it ever so ignominious? Truly I will do it, and that willingly."

Huss was condemned to death. They took him out to be burned at the stake. When the iron chains were tied about him at the stake he said with a smiling countenance, "My Lord Jesus Christ was bound with a harder chain than this for my sake, and why then should I be ashamed of this rusty one?"

They piled bundles of branches and brush up to his neck. The duke of Bavaria demanded that he recant. Huss boldly retorted, "No, I never preached any doctrine of an evil tendency; and what I taught with my lips I now seal with my blood." The fire was then set. Yet as the flames arose around the body of the martyr a hymn burst from his lips in a loud and cheerful voice. He was heard above the roar of the flames and the noise of the spectators (Foxye, 192-93).

Huss lived and died with the integrity that holiness brings. Though wicked men raged, they could not silence his voice, for holiness speaks louder than evil. John set his eyes unswervingly on Jesus and remained faithful to the end. Huss lived a victorious life of holiness that did not supply his Romish accusers with a single reason to execute him. Like Stephen of old, they were enraged at a man full of faith and full of the Holy Ghost. Huss was a man aspiring to please His master in everything he did. He became an instrument for revival in his day and even for generations following his death. As Robert Murray McCheyne observed, "A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hands of God" (Spurgeon, Self-watch, 3).

Holiness is power with God and power with men. The Lord is attracted to holy people. He imparts to holy people an authority to speak to secular society and an anointing to set captives free. Furthermore, only holy saints can be instruments for revival. Sin and compromise robs the church of her anointing, steals her authority, and silences her voice to speak to a rebellious world. Revival renews the church's authority and restores her voice. Brian Edwards noted, "Revival is always a revival of holiness. And it begins with a terrible conviction of sin. . . . Sometimes the experience is crushing. People weep uncontrollably, and worse! But there is no such thing as a revival without tears of conviction and sorrow. . . . In 1921, in the revival that began in the East Anglican fishing ports of Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth, strong fishermen were literally thrown to the floor under conviction, until one eyewitness reported: 'The ground around me was like a battlefield with the souls crying to God for mercy'" (Brown, The End, 90).

When God rends the heavens He shakes men to the depths of their being. Holiness becomes normal as worldliness is swept away through the flood of the Spirit. Greed, drunkenness, homosexuality, fornication, pornography and the rest of humanity's lewd sins are forever forsaken. Even the questionable things are deserted as men behold the beauty of God's holiness. The worst of society can be found at altars of repentance next to lifelong church attendees. Marriages are restored, daddies come home and wives get their husbands back. When the King of kings descends on the Highway of Holiness, men and nations

tremble and are transformed.

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