

Holiness and Christian Living

by Lewis T. Corlett

The sermon emphasizes the importance of holiness in Christian living, highlighting its role in character development, stewardship, worship, and Christian service.

Topics: "Christian Living", "Personal Holiness"

Description

Lewis T. Corlett preaches about the practical operation of God's program in transforming lives, releasing guilt and condemnation, and helping individuals live in a world distorted by sin. He emphasizes the importance of developing strong Christian character through cooperation with God, making right choices, and setting goals for personal growth and efficient service for the Master. Corlett also highlights the inseparable relationship between holiness and worship, stewardship, Christian service, human relationships, and Christian appearance, stressing the need for discipline, gratitude, goodwill, reverence, loyalty, and trust in all aspects of life.

Transcript

One outstanding glory of God's program is its practical operation in the affairs of men. Lives are transformed, guilt and condemnation are released, new life is given, for the purpose of helping the individual to live normally in a world distorted by sin and carnality. Christian experiences of grace are only the starting points from which each child of God should plan to develop in maturity and achieve some marks of sainthood as the years of Christian obedience and service pass by. Various suggestions will be made in this chapter to encourage the young Christian to set goals and make plans for the enrichment of personal Christian character and to increase in efficient service for the Master.

Holiness And Character

Character is the essence and core of the color or tone of personality. Character varies according to the type, intensity, and persistency of motives. The sincerity and purity of motive build a positive character, while the opposite principles build a negative and destructive character. Character includes more than the motive aspect of life as the mental attitude toward the manifestation of the principles of the motive life regulate whether the character in personality is aggressive or weak. Thus the whole development of strong Christian character is a cooperative work accomplished jointly by God and the individual Christian.

In the steps in the process of His plan of salvation God has made provision for the basic and progressive needs of character. In regeneration, the character of man is transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit in

making man a new creature in Christ Jesus. New principles are imparted into the motive life out of which new ambitions and new affections are felt and manifested in man's mental life. The fundamental factor of good character has been implanted as "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. 5: 5). Man's focal point of interest is changed. Now it is anchored in pleasing God rather than doing evil. The objective of his life is changed; now he seeks to glorify God in all that he says and does rather than planning for his own self-indulgence or self-interest. The entire horizon of life has been altered. Now life with all of its activities and backgrounds is seen as the handiwork of God, whereas formerly little thought was given to God's place in the universe. Out of these changes in the life comes a strong desire, on the part of the child of God, to grow in grace and to become more like his Master every day.

While these are all good, yet the Christian must continually make choices in daily life to keep his life in harmony both with all that God has done in him and also in agreement with the first decisions of the will that were made by the individual to prepare for God's operations in his heart. Good character is built by a process of right choices. Holiness in the heart and life of the believer is maintained and increased by a process of choices in harmony with God's will and purpose. Thus, with an objective of pleasing God set as the criterion of life, the Christian discovers that the process of making right choices to develop in Christian graces has the reaction of developing strong and useful character at the same time. God's program has always been the strengthening and development of character and personality; so, as man walks in the light that God gives him, he discovers that he is walking the best path for the improvement and enrichment of character.

To accomplish these worthy goals in character and Christian living the child of God must recognize the need of the exercise of discipline in every phase of life. The motive life of character may be pure and holy, yet may be obscured in manifestation to the outward world by poor mental habits or careless physical habits. Paul directed the Philippian church to discipline their thought life by thinking on the good, the true, and the pure. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8). He admonished the people at Corinth that they were under obligation to discipline their mental activities when he said: "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:5). Paul also admonished the Corinthians to exercise a discipline over the appetites and passions of the body when he said: "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Cor. 9:25-27). This discipline, of both mind and body, to strengthen character is best accomplished by positive planning to guide both mental and physical desires and urges in the pathway which would glorify God the most. This is what Peter had in mind when he said: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1:5-8).

Thus the development of good character and heart holiness go together. The process is never complete; there are always better spiritual pleasures ahead and greater victories to be won. The Christian is

challenged continually to keep a character which will "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (Titus 2:10).

Holiness And Human Relationships

A friend used to state frequently that "each person needs to learn that the world is chiefly inhabited by other people." One individual is not much when considered in comparison to the total population of the world, yet each one influences a number of people in the sphere in which he operates. A person can improve the world or he can make it a worse place because he lived in it. It is practically impossible for one to get away from the rest of the inhabitants of the world; so each person should give consideration to his relation to the others.

An individual can take one of two attitudes. He can feel that the world owes him a living and expect others to do something for him all the time. If this attitude is taken, then the individual is bound to be disappointed and discouraged. This will cause the person to magnify the faults and shortcomings of the others and drop into a critical, faultfinding, cynical attitude toward everybody. Or a person can take an attitude of appreciation and gratitude for others, see the value of the individual, feel with him in sympathetic interest, and try to be of help and benefit to everybody. Then people become a great blessing to the person taking this attitude, which, in turn, aids and benefits him.

1. The Bible Commands People to Take This Latter Attitude

Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, stated that Christians are to take the responsibility for trying to clear up misunderstandings and mistakes. He said: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matt. 5:23-24). Paul, under inspiration, wrote a similar truth when he said: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18).

2. Christ's Standard of Relationship Is Love

When asked the question by the lawyer as to which was the greatest commandment, Christ directed his attention to a wholehearted love to God, and added, "And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 22:39). This was also the standard for the Early Church. Paul wrote the church at Rome: "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another" (Rom. 12: 10). To the church at Ephesus he wrote: "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32). John wrote most of his three Epistles exhorting the people to major on love one for another. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (I John 3:14).

3. Christ Commanded His Disciples to Love Their Enemies

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:44-45). God expects His children to set a proper example of right attitudes toward others. This includes a spirit of love and respect to those of other races and colors. God does not classify any race as superior to another. If greater advantage and blessings have come to some, then He

expects a greater manifestation of kindness, sympathy, and interest: "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." The only solution to race hatred is on the plane of divine love, and Christians should set the right example for others to follow.

4. The Christian Is to Encourage Others in Doing Good

The writer in the Book of Hebrews said: "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" (Heb. 10:24). The best way to get someone else to do good is for the Christian ever to be active in the work of the kingdom of God and show others what to do and how to do it. Too many church members are shirking responsibility and letting someone else carry their share of the burden of the work of God. The greatest need is for persons who can be ever up and doing in the work of the Lord, thus reminding others of the need and by example encouraging them to join in the good work.

5. The Christian Life Is Always One of Courtesy

The true Christian is always thinking of the needs and welfare of others. He is so anxious to help that he forgets his own rights and in honor prefers the other person. He does not shirk responsibility; neither does he seek position to make himself feel superior or to lord it over God's heritage. The child of God is courteous at all times -- at home, in shop, in school, on the playground, in the church, and every where he goes. If he must differ, he disagrees agreeably and is considerate of the rights of others. He is not overbearing in intolerance, but is kind and gentle while refusing to budge the least bit from the principle he believes God would have him stand on. He is willing to be mistreated for the sake of the kingdom of God; he never allows himself to be censorious and cynical but always shows forth the love of God in kindness and courtesy at all times.

Holiness And Things

A personal experience of salvation is a spiritual relation with God; yet it has a direct contact with material objects in this world. Holiness is the state of life the Holy Spirit gives to the one who has accepted Christ as a personal Saviour. In this state God intends that man shall live a normal life in the ordinary routine of life. This involves the daily association with other people and the developing of a proper relation to the world about him. He will have to balance properly the innate desire he has to acquire possessions of wealth of various kinds. He will have to adjust and accommodate his relation to these possessions to the higher law of God. It is not sinful to own a home, to have a farm, or to develop a business -- large or small. It is not injurious to character to have an automobile or an airplane, God's will and plan for the individual is kept uppermost in the life. Every material blessing and benefit is given man only in trust. He can use it only while he is in this life; he cannot take it with him to the grave or in death.

Stewardship

God desires that each one of His children should learn the true meaning of stewardship. A steward is one who handles or supervises the use of the wealth or possessions of another, generally greater and richer than the steward himself. God is the Creator and rightful Owner of all material wealth in the universe. He allows man to gather some about him for his use while in this world; yet He does not intend that man should allow his affections to go out to these things in such a way that the person forgets his Maker.

The Christian can use and enjoy things of material worth in such a way as to enrich character. They can become the medium of exchange for eternal values, and the children of God can "lay up for yourselves

treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:20-21).

A life of holiness is one in which God's will, plan, and purpose are kept as the ideal and criterion of life -- a life in which the believer consciously follows the guidance of the Spirit of God in all things. Thus, to continue to be holy of heart, the child of God must discipline himself in his relation to every phase of material worth. He must not allow himself to become so absorbed in acquiring or caring for any possessions as to crowd out the necessary daily devotions or cause him to neglect the appointed means of grace. Millions of Christians have found a proper balance in life which helped them to grow in grace and at the same time handle great material possessions while they lived in this world. If others have done this, everyone can do it if the life is disciplined to "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness."

Tithing, A Recognition Of Personal Stewardship

One of the best disciplines to make things glorify God and to bring honor to His kingdom is the practice of tithing as a sign of stewardship. God has commanded that His children should give a tenth of their income to the Lord for the care and development of the interests of His kingdom. As His children obey this command, it is a regular reminder that the Christian is only the steward. Tithing helps the child of God to turn material things into the gold of holy character because the tenth is given both out of appreciation for what God has done and from a deep sense of obligation to Him for what He has given. While tithing is good, to keep a correct attitude toward material things and to assure a person that God must be kept first, the Christian should give offerings over and above the tithe. God has richly blessed His children in material goods the last few years, and, in turn, His children should be bountiful in pouring out of their goods for the advancement of His kingdom. John Wesley gave an excellent motto for all Christians to follow in their relation to earthly goods when he said: "Make all you can, save all you can, and give all you can." If the Christian will follow this ideal, he will find himself growing in the life of holiness and increasing in devotion to his Lord and Master.

Holiness And Worship

Holiness and worship are inseparable. True worship is ascribing worth and value to God. God is the source of holiness; Jesus Christ is the means whereby man is made holy; and the Holy Spirit is the Christian's Guide to greater enjoyment of God and to more efficient service to His kingdom. Thus worship is an efficient means whereby the individual Christian can improve his relationship to his God. Worship is both an art and a skill, and as man becomes proficient in both he enters into a closer walk with his Master and becomes a greater channel through which the Spirit can release divine power upon a needy world.

Worship is bringing proper mental attitudes to the contemplation and appreciation of God, His character, His wisdom, His power, and the ways and methods in which He operates. The fundamental elements of worship have been classified as gratitude, goodwill, reverence, loyalty, and trust. These are not foreign to human character, but rather each person has within him all the necessary powers and capacities to exercise each and all of these in daily life. Serious contemplation of these and the faithful application of them toward God and man will strengthen the relationship to God, stimulate faith, and develop courage for greater activities in the kingdom of God. The best atmosphere for the exercise and application of these fundamental elements of worship is a life of holiness out of a heart that is entirely devoted to God and has been purged from the carnal disposition which directly offsets these principles by making the believer self-centered. The Psalmist emphasized this truth when he said: "O worship the Lord in the beauty of

holiness" (Ps. 96:9). The relation of holiness and worship is further revealed in the Bible by the account of the few times the curtain is drawn back to give us a glimpse of the glory realm. Each time the inhabitants of heaven are seen in the position of adoration and worship, and the joy of their spirits is expressed in their exclamations of "Holy, holy, holy [is the] Lord God Almighty." Thus, in both earth and heaven, worship serves as a most excellent means and method in the expression and manifestation of holiness of heart and life.

Holiness And Christian Service

God has a distinct purpose for man in His plan of salvation. The first phase of His purpose is what He plans to do in the individual's personal Christian experience. In the first work of grace He purposes to free man from his guilt and to make him a new creature in Christ Jesus. In the second work of grace He promises to unify man's inner nature by purging from it the nature which disturbs inner harmony and peace of soul. This aspect of God's purpose makes a person a fit subject to associate with God and the angels; yet this state is only one phase of God's purpose. The other is that He expects His children to help to propagate the gospel which Christ died to provide for all men. He expects a life of useful service by each one of His children.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus emphasized the importance of doing the will of the Father. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine" (Matt. 7:21-28). Paul exhorted the Christians at Philippi to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12-13). Paul admonished the young man Timothy to "stir up the gift of God" (II Tim. 1:6) and to "study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15). Jesus, before He ascended to heaven, commanded His disciples, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even into the end of the world. Amen." (Matt. 28:19-20). This Great Commission was given to all the followers of Christ, as He desires to have all of His children participate in the spread of His gospel. Each Christian should have a strong sense of belonging to the kingdom of God and a keen consciousness of personal responsibility toward all of the interests of the Kingdom.

Man appreciates deeply only that which he takes part in. So each child of God should cooperate with the Spirit of God and plan to render the best service possible to the Kingdom. All will not be able to render the same service, but Christ taught in the parable of the pounds (Luke 19:11-27) that He did not expect the same of every person. Yet He does require that each one will be faithful according to his ability and give of his best to the Master. Everybody can be kind and encourage people to respect Christianity and Christ. Every healthy Christian can be faithful in attending the services of the church and by so doing encourage

others by a consistent example. Each one can invite someone to attend the services at the house of God. There is a place for every Christian to do his part in rendering service to his God, and the Heavenly Father will be disappointed if any one of His children is unfaithful in service to Him and His kingdom.

Holiness And Christian Appearance

The Christian lives in a world which is not always friendly. The higher standards advocated and the life of love manifested make the child of God different and more conspicuous than he would be otherwise. Consequently, because he is different in spirit and standard, non-Christians around him will watch him more carefully than they do one another. Also, young Christians will be studying the lives of those who have been in the way longer, in order to see what should be done and to learn how to do it. Thus the first appearance of the Christian is of great importance; and since the dress of an individual is among the first things noticed, the child of God is under obligation to be more careful about how he or she dresses than are those of the world.

The subject of proper dress lies primarily in the realm of good taste and respectability rather than in Christian experience. People should dress neatly because of good taste even without a Christian experience. The matter of how a person dresses is not the primary test of Christian experience, for some good people never are able to have harmony of colors in their appearance. They are good at heart but do not have the proper mental concepts of neatness, arrangement of colors, and of what is becoming to them in their dress. Generally they are extreme in all that they do and need more supervision than others who are more balanced in thought, appearance, and action. Consequently, in order to help them be the best possible children of His, God has to give them more detailed information of what to wear than He does to the other group. Yet all should give careful consideration to their appearance, so that they can adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."

General Rule For Appearance

Avoid extremes of fashion. Do not dress so far ahead of the average person as to be conspicuous; neither dress do far behind the prevailing style as to draw attention to the oddity of dress. One person said that "a well-dressed person is one whose garments are so becoming to the personality that people do not notice the details of the dress." Flashy, gaudy dress is always out of order for those professing godliness.

The Christian should be careful not to bedeck himself or herself with things which are not becoming to the simplicity and purity of one professing the experience of heart purity. Good people will differ in just how far a Christian can indulge in these things; so the young Christian should keep two things constantly in mind. First, keep an open and submissive mind to the Holy Spirit, as He will help each child of God to exercise the strongest possible influence for the kingdom of God. He will check the Christian who is careless and will sometimes rebuke for carelessness in dress and activity. The child of God will always be on the safe side if he follows the guidance of the Spirit. The second principle he should keep in mind is that the other person should be given the same privilege to follow the personal guidance of the Spirit. Do not allow others to bring you into bondage on the matter of dress or any other factor of Christian living. Also do not force your standard which the Spirit gives you on the other Christian, for he may need something a little different to bring him to his best for the Lord. The Spirit will guide and direct; so do not take the judgment seat regarding what seems a point of difference.

In appearance of dress, hair, adornment, and action, show forth the quality of a meek and quiet spirit, which is of great value in the sight of God and of strong influence among men.

The Life Of Holiness

God has not set up an abnormal standard for man in any phase of life. His plan is practical, beneficial, and constructive both to the individual and to society. The more fully a person meets God's requirements for a life of holiness, the more he will enjoy a release from tension, strain, and fear. He will find his personality becoming more poised and his life becoming more useful. God's program is one which leads to holiness of heart and life, and this will operate successfully in the daily life of every person who yields himself unreservedly to the will and purpose of God.

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