

Most of you will remember that last week we began to consider 5 common mistakes to Christian or Gospel Holiness—because time ran out we were only able to consider the first three—what I intend to do this morning is—give a brief review of what we considered last week—and then examine three additional errors or mistakes of Christian Holiness...

[1] Moralism—by this I meant—those who attempt to live holy lives without being savingly attached to Christ—thus they work by themselves for themselves—in contrast to this, true holiness is the result of changed heart, union with Christ and the work of the Spirit, and is obtained for the glory and honor of God...

[2] Legalism—I mentioned last week—that strictly speaking legalism refers to man's attempt to get right with God through or by law-keeping—but I also mentioned, there's another version of legalism that's far more subtle and popular even among Christians—namely—the attempt to treat traditions and options as the word of God and impose them upon others—in contrast to this—true holiness is regulated by the law of God, results in humility, and is always characterized by love...

[3] Passivism—like these other mistakes—passivism comes in many forms—the form I was here concerned with was that view that maintained Christians are not active in the process of sanctification—that what Christians need to do is—Let go and let God, or, Get out of the way and let God sanctify them, or, Get to a certain level of sanctification, where all struggles ceases...

In addressing this third mistake, I suggested three correctives—[a] true holiness is the result of God's work, 1Thess.5:23—"May the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely"—salvation is all grace, from the beginning to end...

[b] True holiness is the result of our work—that is—holiness is never obtained without us pursuing it—thus we're told to "pursue holiness," "pursue righteousness," "seek righteousness," "practice righteousness," and "perfect holiness..."

[c] True holiness is the result of our working because of His working—that is—we are only able to work out what God works in, Phil.2:12-13—"work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure..."

Thus—within sanctification, God works 100% and we work 100%—God doesn't work 95% and leave the rest to us—no—God works 100%—but His work is worked out by us through faith—we work by faith in Christ—everything we do we do by faith—we live by faith, we walk by faith, we fight by faith, and we stand by faith—WE do these things by FAITH—that is—by the strength and grace of Christ [Rom.8:13; Phil.4:13; Col.1:28-29; Heb.12:1-2]...

I. Two Additional Mistakes

A. Asceticism

1. Strictly speaking the term "ascetic" refers to someone who has a strict or simple way of living to avoid physical pleasure...
2. Thus Asceticism refers to the philosophy or practice—of denying the body certain needs for the purpose of spiritual gain...
3. Its for this reason—associated with Asceticism is various forms of seclusion or isolation—retreating from the world...
4. Joel Beeke—"In this tradition (asceticism), holiness was pursued by forsaking the world literally (e.g., abandoning secular occupation, marriage, worldly goods) and by engaging extensively in prayer vigils, fasting, and self-mortification..."

5. Thus—two of the most common forms of Asceticism is that tied to monasteries and Anabaptists—[a] monasteries...
6. These of course became popular throughout the Medieval ages—where men would separate themselves from the world...
7. They would gather in monasteries where they would refrain from basic physical needs and pleasures for spiritual benefit...
8. Such men would refrain from marriage—and often go long periods of time without food, water, and sleep....
9. Now—fundamental to this practice was the faulty view that—the physical body was natively evil or impure....
10. Thus—to deny the physical and bodily appetites—served as a means to benefit or prosper the soul or spirit...
11. [b] Anabaptists—this has its origin in 16th century Europe—and crossed the Atlantic in the mid 18th century...
12. Now—the specific brand or brands of Anabaptists that I'm here thinking of are commonly called Amish and Mennonite...
13. While these are distinct—they have a common root—that is—the 17th century Swiss and German Baptists...
14. Essential to their thinking was their doctrine of separation—which included a literal separation from this world...
15. Now—it must clarified that while the Anabaptists have many problems—for the most part they were orthodox...
16. Now—unfortunately, as time progressed, this separation increasingly became marked by moralism and legalism...
17. Thus—essential or central to this tragic distortion—is the thinking that sin—resides in the PHYSICAL BODY...
18. But this is contrary to Scripture—for Scripture teaches that sin originates not in the BODY but in the SOUL...
19. Furthermore—this view wrongly stresses that sin originates outside of man—that the world is what defiles us...
20. But again—this isn't true—sin doesn't originate from without but from within—the heart is the source of sin...
21. Matt.15:19—"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies..."
22. Now—this doesn't deny that the world defiles us—but the world defiles us because it's comprised of people like us...
23. Thus—wherever there's people—there's the world—and there will of necessity be every form of wickedness...
24. Even if were to isolate ourselves from humanity—and live on a lonely island—the world would still be present...
25. And thus brethren—let me simply remind you—that the monasteries were filled all sorts of evil and immorality...
26. Thus—in our attempts at shutting out the world—let us remember—that the world's already present within...
27. Now—in considering the Christian's relationship to the world—I want to suggest two important assertions...
28. True holiness takes place WITHIN this world—and—True Holiness takes place SEPARATE from this world...
29. Jn.17:14-16—"I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world..."
30. Notice two phrases—"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world"—that is—He wanted them to remain IN THE WORLD...

31. There was work for them in this world—they had to preach the gospel and advance His kingdom within this world...
32. But notice a second phrase—"They are not OF THE WORLD"—that is—they were separate from the world...
33. [1] True holiness takes place IN THIS WORLD—that is—Christians are intended to shine as lights within this dark world...
34. Phil.2:14-15—"Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights IN THE WORLD..."
35. Christians must remain WITHIN this world—we are to rub shoulders with the regular people of this fallen world...
36. We are to rub shoulders with unsaved co-workers, fellow students, neighbors, and extended family members...
37. This is one reason, not the only reason, but one reason why the Lord has chosen to leave His people in this world...
38. Matt.5:14—"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden...Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven..."
39. [2] True holiness takes place SEPARATE FROM THIS WORLD—that is—the sinful and wicked elements of this world...
40. Thus—throughout the Scriptures—we are exhorted to be separate from the world, remain unspotted by the world, and not to be conformed to the thinking of the world...
41. 2Cor.6:17—"Therefore, Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you..."
42. Jas.1:27—"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world..."
43. Rom.12:1-2—"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God..."
44. Now—its exceedingly important to understand—what the Scriptures refer when they use the term "world"...
45. For the same Bible that says—"God loved the world" also says—"Do not love the world" and "friendship with the world is enmity with God..."
46. Thus—whatever world we are to be separate from—is an enemy of God—it's against God and His holy word...
47. Accordingly—let me suggest rather simply—that by "world" is meant—fallen man as opposed to God and His word...
48. That is—it refers fallen man as he's an enemy of God—ensnared in his sinful, lawless, and God-hating ways...
49. Now—most of you will know that—the Scriptures use the word "world" in at least three ways—[a] of the material universe, [b] of the mass of humanity viewed as miserable, [c] of the mass of humanity, viewed as rebellious...
50. Thus—the "world" we are to separate from, remain unspotted by, and not conformed to—is this present evil age...
51. 1John 5:19—"We know that we are of God, and the WHOLE WORLD lies under the sway of the wicked one..."
52. Thus—in summary—by this "world" is meant—the thinking and acting of fallen man—controlled by Satan...
53. Thus—its the command of God, that every Christian, separate themselves, and remain unspotted from—the world...
54. Now—with this in mind—we are enabled to define "worldliness"—worldliness is thinking and living like the world...
55. That is—thinking and living like fallen and rebellious man, at odds with God and His word, controlled by Satan...

56. Thus—Christians in an attempt to stay separate from the world—need to determine what is and is not worldly...
57. Simply put—"worldly" is the same as "sinful"—it's to align yourself with the thinking and acting of God's enemies...
58. Now—at this point, I need to remind you—it is NOT the responsibility of the church to regulate what is and is not worldly...
59. Yet—it is the church's task, and the task of every Christian, to apply the broad principles to our hearts and homes...
60. Thus—I want to do this by suggesting we ask three questions—Is it lawful, Is it harmful, and, Is it helpful...
61. [a] Is it lawful—this is where we must start—does my involvement with the world—violate the clear precepts of God's holy law...
62. 1Jn.2:15-17—"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever..."
63. Here John provides us with a definition of what he means by "the world and the things in the world [that comprise it]..."
64. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—these are the things we are to separate ourselves from...
65. Thus—we must each ask ourselves the questions—does this involvement promote or encourage these three things...
66. The lust of the flesh—does it excite the sinful desires of the flesh—does it tempt me to want something sinful...
67. The lust of the eyes—does it excite within me a discontented spirit—a desire for things that I do not possess...
68. The pride of life—does it excite within me a sinful desire for recognition, honor, fame, reputation, and prestige...
69. [b] Is it harmful—that is—something can be lawful in and of itself—and yet, used in a way that is harmful...
70. 1Cor.6:12—"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any [1Cor.10:23-24]..."
71. [c] Is it helpful—this takes things a step higher—does our involvement actually and positively benefit you...
72. Is it a good use of time and resources—is it something wise to do—will it prove benefited to our heart and home...

B. Perfectionism

1. Now—as with these other views—this view has several variations—perhaps the most common was the Wesleyan view...
2. In fact—in many ways, John Wesley was the father of perfectionism—as he defended it in several sermons and tracts...
3. Now—it must be admitted at the outset—that by perfection Wesley did not believe absolute perfection in the full sense...
4. Those who reached this perfection, were nevertheless capable of sinning, falling, and were in need of growing...
5. But basic to the Wesleyan view of perfection—is the notion that Christians can reach a place of ENTIRE sanctification...
6. That is—the Christian becomes so holy that he no longer consciously or purposefully violated the law of God...
7. John Wesley [Sermon, The Scriptural Way of Salvation]—"It is thus that we wait for entire sanctification; for a full salvation from all our sins, from pride, self-will, anger, unbelief; or, as the Apostle expresses it,

- "go on unto perfection." But what is perfection? The word has various senses: Here it means perfect love. It is love excluding sin; love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the soul..."
8. Methodist Confession of Faith—"Entire sanctification is a state of perfect love, righteousness and true holiness which every regenerate believer may obtain by being delivered from the power of sin, by loving God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, and by loving one's neighbor as one's self. Through faith in Jesus Christ this gracious gift may be received in this life both gradually and instantaneously, and should be sought earnestly by every child of God..."
 9. Thus—for Wesley, and historic Wesleyan Methodism, perfectionism, entire sanctification, and perfect love are all synonymous...
 10. [1] The remains of sin—that is—the Scriptures teach that sin remains within the heart and life of every Christian...
 11. Thus—Scripture not only describes sin as a potential of every Christian, to this Wesley would agree, but as a reality in every Christian's life...
 12. That is—Scripture not only describe Christians are potential sinners—but as actual sinners, who actually sin...
 13. Now—here we must be clear—historic Protestant theology maintains, Christians should strive for perfection...
 14. That is—the Scriptures commands us not to sin—every Christian is commanded to be perfect as our Father is perfect...
 15. Furthermore—the Scriptures also teach that Christians no longer live in the same way they did before conversion...
 16. Christians no longer live in open rebellion before God—they have been radically changed by the Holy Spirit..
 17. But—along with all this—the fact of Scripture and experience remains—Christians will continue to sin until death...
 18. Rom.7:15-17—"For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that *it is* good. But now, *it is* no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me..."
 19. 1Jn.1:8-10—"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us..."
 20. [2] The ongoing struggle—that is—Scripture teaches that within ever Christian there remains a constant struggle between the spirit and flesh...
 21. Rom.7:19—"For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice" Gal.5:17—"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish..."
 22. My dear Christian friend—fighting and wrestling with sin, even the same sins, is very consistent with true holiness...
 23. [3] The need for forgiveness—that is—the Scripture not illustrates Christians asking for forgiveness but actually commands us to pray for daily forgiveness...
 24. Matt.6:9—"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by your name...give us this day our daily bread..and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors..."
 25. [4] The example of saints—that is—all throughout the Bible, the best of Christians commit all kinds of sins...
 26. Abraham, Sarah, Moses, David, Solomon, David, Peter—all throughout Scripture—the best Christians sin...
 27. [5] The nature of the law—that is—the nature of the law makes perfection by any Christian—an impossibility...
 28. What happens in most cases—those who espouse some version of perfectionism, redefine the nature of the law...
 29. But the moral law of God is never lessened or lowered—it demands perfect obedience in word, deed, thought, and motive...
 30. This is the rule or standard of our sanctification—"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your father in heaven is perfect" (Matt.5:48)...

31. Thus—every Christian—the best Christian—fails to measure up to this standard every day—he sins very often...
32. Let me leave these last two sermons on The Mistakes of Gospel Holiness—with one single remedy for all five mistakes...
33. What is the remedy for moralism, legalism, passivism, asceticism, and perfectionism—the perfection of Christ...
34. Heb.10:14—"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified [Heb.7:19; 9:9; 10:1]..."
35. The author of Hebrews frequently uses this word "perfect"—it primarily refers to perfection of justification...
36. Now—I want you to see how these two blessings are related but distinct—we have been perfected and we're being sanctified...
37. My Christian friend—the only perfection that you and I will know in this life—is the perfection of justification...
38. Jesus Christ lived a perfect life—and this perfection has been imputed to our accounts—we are perfect in Him...
39. Thus—His perfection is not only the remedy for this last mistake of holiness—but for ALL and ANY mistake...