

The Beauty of Holiness

The Doctrines of the Church

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Bible Text: 1 Peter 1:14-16; Romans 12:1-2
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1 Peter 1. We're going to be reading verses 14 to 16, the first chapter of 1 Peter this morning. The title of the message is "The Beauty of Holiness." The beauty of holiness. The reason we're talking about this is because we've been looking at the doctrine of the church in recent weeks, and as we looked at the doctrine of the church we've talked about that the work of the church, the work of Christians, the day to day, week to week responsibilities are to pursue peace and pursue holiness, to pursue oneness, unity, but we also pursue holiness, and I want us to look at a passage that sheds some light on what we mean by holiness. I mean, if I were to ask you the question to define the word "holy," I mean, think about that for a moment, how would you define it? What does the word mean? Precisely what does it mean? I mean, what is holiness? It's one of those words we use a lot but we don't stop and reflect on exactly do we understand precisely what it means? It's one of those things we take for granted and the reality is we're prone to have far too narrow a view of the word, of the meaning of the word "holiness," and really far too low a view of what it means to be holy.

I think that most of us would probably answer the question something like this, "It means to be morally pure, to be righteous." Just think of God's holiness. We think of, "Well, He's perfectly righteous, exceedingly pure beyond description. He is too pure to look at evil." We might say something like that but if we were to say that, we would be missing the main essence of what holiness is. We'd be getting a secondary meaning, the secondary meaning is righteous morally pure. That's the secondary meaning, that's not the primary meaning of the word "holy." The primary meaning of the word "holy" means "to be set apart; to be separated; to be different; to be radically so."

When we think of God's holiness and this is, R. C. Sproul says it's the supreme attribute of God. It's the only attribute of God that is repeated three times in rapid succession, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory," Isaiah 6:1-5. That same refrain is found in the book of Revelation 4:8, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord." Once again as the veil is pulled back and we look into the heavenly places, the angels are saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord," and it means to be set apart and separate in a way that goes beyond merely righteousness and purity. It means to be transcendent, to be so far above and beyond, God is so far distant and distinct from his creation that he is holy, holy, holy.

And to show you this not just about righteousness and moral purity, interesting thing Isaiah sees in Isaiah 6 when he says, "I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and lifted up and the train of His robe filled the temple." The angels, the seraphim, had six wings. He describes the seraphim that had six wings. You know, God is not a God who makes anything extraneous and, you know, just extra. He doesn't, like, get through with a project and says, "Well, I only needed two wings to fly." He gave them six wings. What are the seraphim doing? With two wings they covered their feet, and with two wings they covered their eyes, and with two wings they fly, and they say, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts." The seraphim are absolutely sinless, they're not morally impure in any way and yet they cannot look upon God in his holiness.

So it's not just righteousness, it is transcendent majestic splendor. It is separateness. It is otherness. And so for God to be transcendent and separate, when he says to us, as we're going to see in this passage, "You are to be holy for I am holy," it's much richer than just moral righteousness. There's something much more beautiful going on. This should shape and inform the struggle that we all have with sin. Those of us who come to Christ, you know the Lord Jesus Christ, you now know what it is to war with sin, before you were saved you might have been, you were certainly the slave of sin but you didn't, there wasn't a principle inside of you fighting that other than just other sins. But when you came to Christ, now you have a new principle of life in you that longs to be holy and yet you still find in your flesh remaining sin, lust and passions that seek to bring you captive, and the calling is to be holy but not just to be righteous, not just to be pure but to be set apart because we are in danger of misunderstanding what it means to grow in holiness.

It doesn't just mean to grow in your area of battle with sin, it doesn't just mean that you're not stumbling as much as you used to, as important as that is, because we can tend to think of the battle with sin simply in terms of self-improvement. We don't want to sin because sin makes us feel dirty. We don't want to sin because sin embarrasses us, brings shame upon us among the people that we love. We don't want to sin just because we want to do better, we don't want to believe this about ourselves. All of those are not godly reasons for pursuing holiness. The reason we should not want to sin is because we want to be more holy, we want to be more set apart from all that is of the world unto God.

So holy means to be set apart from and set apart to. To be holy as a redeemed person is to be set apart, separate from all that is common and devoted to God and his purposes. That's what we're called to and that is something that is wondrous and beautiful when we understand it in Christ. So let's read this passage of Scripture, 1 Peter 1, we'll read verses 14 to 16. We're going to start here this morning and we're going to move around to some other passages, particularly one in particular. Verse 14, 1 Peter 1,

14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

Let's pray together.

Our Father, as we come to Your word and we come to this subject, how aware we are that we are inadequate. We don't have the capacity or the standing to speak on these things and we ask that You by Your Spirit, the Holy Spirit, might open the eyes of our hearts to see and understand the glory of who You are, to see You and to love You more, and to want to be like You and with You. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

The beauty of holiness. To be holy is to be set apart, to be distinct, different, to be special. In one sense, you can see the practical way this word has even impacted the way our language in the word "holiday." Holiday is actually holy day, apart from all the other common ordinary days. It's set apart from the ordinary and the common for a specific purpose. To celebrate the glory of motherhood, the beauty of what God has done in giving us the family, ordaining that we be born into families with a father and a mother, and what a precious gift mothers are and particularly godly mothers.

So the word "holy" means "to be set apart, different; to be set apart from that which is common." It's one of the most important words in all of the Bible. When you look at the various Hebrew and Greek roots for "holy," it doesn't always come through in your English Bible this way, you'll find that over 900 times these words are used in the Bible, about 640 in the Old Testament, 260 in the New Testament. Holy. In fact, one of the things while we're talking about words for a moment, let me just mention this. You know, we're going to talk about holiness and we sometimes talk about the word "sanctification," and the word "sanctification" essentially means holiness. Sanctify is the verb form of holy, that the adjective or noun, holy, the holy thing, holiness, the verb is sanctify in English. Now this is one of the problems we have in English that's not true in the Hebrew or the Greek. In Hebrew the two various words for "holy" are "qadosh," q-a-d-o-s-h, and "qadash." Do you see how close they sound together? So that's holy and sanctify but it's qadosh, qadash. In Greek it's hagios and hagiozo. Hagios, holy. Hagiozo, make holy. In English it's holy and sanctify, totally unrelated words. Etymologically they come different roots into the English language. There's some things about the English language that are nice. I remember in reading Winston Churchill, he always said the English language is the most beautiful language. He was an Englishman, what else would he say? But, you know, there's a lot of oddities about the English language and this is one of them. The roots come from a lot of different areas so what I want you to think about is when you hear the word "sanctify" or the word "saint," you're hearing the word "holy" in the Bible. Same word. To sanctify is to make holy. To be a saint is to be a holy one. And this word that dominates the pages of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, to be holy, set apart, different, distinct, that we are called to be holy, we're called to be sanctified, set apart, is something that we must understand and it is a glorious term.

Now as we look at this, this morning, I want to talk about the beauty of holiness and I want us to think about how we apply this to our lives. So there's three points this morning that help us to pursue holiness. Remember that's what we're trying to do, we're talking about the work of the church is to pursue holiness on a daily basis individually and to help others do the same thing. We're called to all help one another pursue holiness. So

how do we do that? How do we pursue holiness? Three points. First, first point, know who you are. Know who you are. Maybe more accurately, know whose you are.

In our text, "like the Holy One who called you," I'm reading in the New American Standard, "like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves." The NIV says, "but just as He who called you is holy, so be holy." The ESV sounds a lot like that too, "but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy." But the key word here that I want to talk about for a moment is the word "called." The Holy One called you. This is a very important word in the Scriptures. To be called is synonymous to be saved. Those who are saved are those who have been called. In fact, he's going to use that same word in chapter 2, verse 9 when he says, "you are to proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." So God has called you. He's saying to the Christians, he's about to tell them to be holy but he says, "I want you to remember that the One who called you is holy. He called you out of darkness to Himself. He is holy. He's called you to Himself and the command is be holy." But to be holy, to understand that command and to obey that command you have to, first of all, know that you are in a sense already holy when we understand the word correctly.

Now we tend to think of this in kind of an upside down version because we think always from ourselves and so we'll think and this is right and true but it's not the main point of it, when you say God says you're already holy in Christ, we tend to think of that as how God sees us. He sees us as holy, righteous because of what Christ has done, yes, that's true, but when we're talking about holy in the strictest sense, for God to see us as holy means this, he sees us as belonging to him. He sees that he has taken us from where we were and he has set us apart over here to himself and to be a Christian is to be, to understand that you have been taken from where you were and placed now at the disposal of God. To be holy is to be set apart – listen to this – to be holy is to be set apart for God's exclusive use and purpose. Do you see that? You're no longer free to do anything else. You're free, you have been set apart unto God.

The Old Testament imagery and when you watch...remember I've talked about how God progressively reveals his truth throughout the Scriptures; we read from Genesis through and we understand more and more of what God is telling us about himself and what relationship with him is. One of the ways that he taught us in the Old Testament is through the images and pictures that he gave us in his relationship with Israel. These pictures communicate deep spiritual realities and one of the things that we see is when God goes into Egypt, sends Moses into Egypt and delivers the people from Egypt to himself, he calls them to himself and he tells them in Exodus 19, "You now are a holy people. You've been set apart unto Me. I brought you to Myself. And you are to see yourself now as separate from the nations, separated unto Me, to belong to Me for My purposes."

What does that mean? Trying to understand that and so he gives them some rules about how the temple is to operate when they go to worship God, and he uses this word "holy" over against the word "common" or "profane," profane basically means common. That which is holy is not that which is common. That which is common is available for every

ordinary use and like you'll an example that if they had, you know, a smith, a silversmith, goldsmith, is making various implements, you know, and with metal, overlaying them with gold or silver, he makes a bowl. He makes one gold bowl and he sets it apart for worship and to give it to the temple. He makes 10 more bowls and he sells them to people who want to buy gold bowls or silver bowls. The one that is set apart is never to be used in a common way. All of those can be used for whatever you want to use them for. You're probably going to use them for pretty good stuff because you don't buy a gold or silver bowl just to, you know, put junk in it. It's not going to be your junk bowl, like a junk drawer. I have like a bowl in my junk drawer that overflows with junk. My wife wishes I didn't do that but anyway.

So you're not going to put that and it's not going to be your junk bowl, it's going to be special even to you because you bought an expensive bowl. But listen, the distance between that bowl and any other common bowl in your house is small in comparison to what it is for the distance from that bowl to the bowl set apart unto God. This bowl can never be used for any other purpose than God. It belongs to God. So everything else, a fork, a knife, things that were set apart to the temple, they're holy and they cannot be touched by unholy people. To touch those things you have to be a priest who goes through rituals to be set apart unto God to use that. Now all of that was teaching them. It was, as Calvin said, a prattling baby-talking with us. To be holy means to be set apart from the world, set apart from sin unto God's exclusive use for his purposes. Do you see yourself that way, Christian? Do you see yourself as truly belonging to God, that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price.

This is a word that is used throughout the New Testament and we just kind of run past it when we're reading the Bible. Romans 1:7, you're called as saints, called as holy ones. Paul begins that letter to the Romans saying that. 1 Corinthians, look with me at 1 Corinthians. Now I want to explain this. When we're talking about when we say "know who you are," we're talking about the reality of positional sanctification. Positional sanctification. Positional holiness. Remember holiness and sanctification are the same idea. And we're going to see in a minute we're going to talk about progressive holiness, progressive sanctification. Positional is the idea that you already are by virtue of coming to Christ, you are in a position of holiness and nothing can change that. One of the reasons God uses the word "saint," 1 Corinthians 1:2 Paul says, "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus." There in the Greek it says, "To those who have been hagiozo in Christ Jesus, saints by calling." Hagioi, by calling. So again, you hear sanctified and saints are close together but the word is holy. Those who have been made holy in Christ Jesus, holy ones by calling.

So one of God's favorite ways to refer to his people is holy ones, "You're set apart unto Me. They belong to Me." And this happened at the moment you were born again. The Holy Spirit set you apart. Colossians 1:13 that when a person comes to saving faith, they are delivered from the domain of darkness and translated to the kingdom of his beloved Son. There is this, I mean, just catastrophic act of God that brings great blessing but it's cataclysmic in its effect. You go from being under the domain of darkness, enslaved to sin, and delivered completely out of that realm and placed as God's precious possession.

In fact, the same idea of positional holiness or positional sanctification is there in chapter 1, verse 30, 1 Corinthians 1:30, "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption." You even now are completely in holiness before God. You're set apart.

Look with me while we're in 1 Corinthians, look at chapter 6, verses 9 to 11. 1 Corinthians 6:9, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God." And here's the key verse, "Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." You were like this but you have been taken out of that realm, you've been washed, you have been sanctified. It's already happened. You see, it's not a progress, this is a finished reality. Holiness is a reality.

Now this holiness really, like I said, it doesn't mean so much how you look to God. It is true that you look to God, he looks at the righteousness of Christ in that sense, you're no longer impure in his sight, he looks at you through the blood of Jesus, that's true, that's true, but what it really means is you belong to him. He looks at you as belonging to him. You have been sanctified, set apart from the world, belonging to God. In the same way that one bowl would be used for common use and another for holy use, you have been set aside from common use to holy use and God wants us to think about ourselves that way. It's our identity we're talking about, and it's so important that you see identity comes before our experience because you have to understand who you are positionally before you can then progress in experiential holiness.

So know who you are or whose you are. You are a saint, a holy one called, set apart, completely belonging to God. Now secondly, the second point. We said, first of all, know who you are, secondly, know what you are called to do. Back to 1 Peter. The imperative in this passage, there's only one command, it's in verse 15, the middle of the verse, "be holy." Be holy. Be set apart. "Be holy yourselves also in all your behavior." Now when you look at this and you look at how we go about this, it's important to look at the structure of the passage. He says, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts." That's not really a command in the Greek. This is one of the things that happens in our translations because it has the force of it but the real emphasis, the only command in the Greek is "be holy." When it says "do not be conformed," literally it says in the Greek "not being conformed." "As obedient children not being conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, and not being conformed but like the One who called you is holy, be holy."

So the main idea is "be holy." See yourself as God sees you. Be set apart. Pursue separation from the world, and as he says here from these "former lusts." I mean, to be holy, what he's telling us though with the participle there which is translated in the New American Standard, "do not be conformed," which is actually the way it's translated in almost all of the translations, NIV, "do not be conformed," ESV, "do not be conformed."

The King James gets it right here, actually it says, "not fashioning yourselves." Do you see that participle there? "Not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts."

So the idea is you're resisting this conforming pressure and this participle that's translated "do not be conformed," not conforming, not fashioning yourselves, is a present tense Greek participle. Remember present tense in Greek doesn't mean so much the time of action but the kind of action. It's not present, past, future time as much as it is the kind of action, and present tense in Greek means ongoing continual action. So the idea is that there is this continual ongoing pressure to conform you. It is continually happening and it's happening, your former lusts, that is, indwelling sin, remaining sin in you is exerting continual pressure on you, relentlessly, continuously, you must not allow that to conform you in its mold. In fact, the word here is actually the same word as the passage we're going to look at in a little bit, Romans 12:2 when it says, "do not be conformed to this world." Same verb here, *syschematizo*. The word "schema" is there and it means "to have the same form and the idea is that there's this pressure to give you the same form and shape as the world. In Romans 12:2, don't be conformed to this world, but here the same shape and form as your lust, your former lust, that these lusts, that the world, that the lusts of our flesh are trying to exert a power over us, to shape us and conform us.

You have to resist that, not being conformed, but then remember your calling. So you're going to move away from your lust. The Christian life is going to be a continual battle of moving away from our former lusts. This is the way the Christian life is all the way until we die. If you're a new believer, a lot of times when somebody gets saved they have, the Lord gives you a real period of grace where some of the former battles are just really weakened, the newness of Christ, and then sometime later a lot of times those former sins rear their heads again and you have to fight and you have to labor against sin for the rest of your life and to put them to death. We're called to do that and that's the way it's going to be. They're going to be that way until the end because the pressures of this world and the pressures of our sinful nature can only be subdued by the power of Christ through faith but it's going to be a relentless battle.

So get up every day being ready to fight. Don't think you can take a day off because your enemy does not take a day off. The world does not take a day off. Your sin nature does not take a day off so you have to be prepared to fight, to resist, to move away from those things. But you see, it's not just resisting and fighting that which we think we want to do, no, it's actually, it's actually resisting that which is what I used to be, now I belong to God. I'm actually being true to myself when I resist that. It doesn't feel like that. It feels like we're being hypocritical but actually to live according to your former lusts is being the supreme hypocrite if you belong to Christ because you have been set apart from these things. Now in the providence of God he's glorified by allowing us to battle day by day, needing his grace to put to death the deeds of the body. I wish it wasn't so in some ways, right? I mean, don't you wish when you got saved or if you had a breakthrough in your life, suddenly you never struggled with that sin again, it's done forever? Like you could put a little cemetery, I mean, like a headstone over that, you know, "This was greed. This was lust. This was anger." Yeah, I used to have a problem with that. Not anymore.

Well, I mean, there's a sense in which we have major victory but let him who thinks he stand take heed lest he fall. Even as you progress, the true believer is always more and more humble and aware of their ability to fall at any moment if they don't lean on Christ. But you have all in Jesus that you need to win the battle every single time if you learn to be as humble and dependent as a little child depending upon a mighty Savior. That's the calling that we have, but beware, every day I've got to be prepared to move away from that which is enticing, that which feels like in many ways like home but that which is in reality, that is as foreign to me as the east is from the west. I have moved in a whole other realm now. If you belong to Christ, that is not who you are. Whatever it is, whatever sin it is, it's not who you are anymore. You are holy. You belong to God.

I love how he says this in 1 Corinthians 6, he talks about overcoming sexual sin and he says, "Flee immorality." This is movement away from these desires, you see, and the movement away has to be decisive. Flee, I love that. Flee. Run. Sexual sin entices you, run from it. Flee immorality but then he says this, "For every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral man sins against his own body." Now think about it, if you actually give in to that which you think feels like home, you're actually sinning against your own body. You're actually destroying your own body. You're not doing what's natural. Maybe it was natural before but it's not anymore. You have to learn now to walk in a new way. But he goes on to say this, he says, "the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God." So what you're doing if you sin sexually, you're actually defiling the temple of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit who is in you. "For you are not your own he says, "For you were bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."

You see, our bodies are holy. They're set apart. They're set apart unto God. How can I think and do this evil thing? How can I let my tongue speak a harsh ungodly word of anger against someone, this tongue belongs to God, it is set apart unto holy use. I cannot do that. Now we do it when we forget and when we're foolish but we're not acting consistent with who we are. If you know who you are, then you know what your called to do. What you're called to do is be in your experience the same thing that you are in your position. Be true to yourself as God has made you, not true to yourself as you think looking at your own heart, what you want. No, be true to yourself as what God says you are, your true self in Christ.

You could say the first point was know who you are, whose you are, you are a saint, a holy one. The second point, know what you're called to do, to be holy in your experience, to live your life consistent with who you are. I love this, he says be holy in all your behavior. He's saying what we're called to do on a daily basis is to look at our whole lives as we go through life and be putting things, moving away from the common, away from worldliness, away from lust, and putting things over devoted to God. Every area. That's the Christian life. That's the calling and that gives God glory as the believer learns to lean on Christ and to bring more and more of your life, and when you do that, when you're winning little battles on a daily basis, God's glory is being made known.

This idea of being holy means being different. Be different in all your behavior. Be different from the world. Be different from those around you, unbelievers. You look at that command that Peter gives in verse 16, "You shall be holy, for I am holy," taken from two different passages in the book of Leviticus, Leviticus 11:44 and 45 and Leviticus 19:2. Leviticus is one of those books where God is teaching them what it is like to be holy. "I brought you out from the nations but I want you to be completely different than them." And in chapter 11, verse 44 is the first time he says "be holy, for I am holy." And what he's just been talking about for those 43 verses before that is the dietary laws, the Jewish dietary laws, and when you read the Bible you've got to labor to see how the big picture fits together. This makes everything so beautiful when you see that. If you're not seeing the big picture you're sometimes wondering, "What in the world is this about?" I mean, I find myself at times wondering, "I don't get this. What's happening here? Why is this here? Why did God waste the space?" Genealogies are that way, aren't they? I'm tempted to skip over them. I have done that before and I have to confess that, at times, but it's not good, let's read them all, every word is good. But the dietary laws, you know, what animals you can eat, what animals you can't eat, and it needs to split the hoof and chew the cud. I mean, when I'm reading those passages, the dietary laws, I'm just thinking, "Man, they couldn't eat shrimp? They couldn't eat pork?" That's how I think. But when you step back from it and you say, wait a minute, what God was doing, God is a God who is good and who delights to give good things to his people, what was he teaching them? Why would he do this? Because the thing he's teaching them is so supremely important that this sacrifice, this apparent sacrifice is really no sacrifice at all when given over against what he's teaching.

He was teaching them in every way that they were to think of themselves as separate and distinct from the world. They were set apart. The nations that looked impressive, they lived in a time where, you know, the nations around them were mighty, they were impressive. They had been in Egypt, they saw the pyramids, the glory of Egypt. "You see all of those things but you don't understand, you belong to Me, the God of heaven and earth and I want you to know that you belong to Me, and I want you to know it and think about it so much that it affects everything that you ever put in your mouth." You're thinking about God. He was teaching them whether you eat or drink, whatever you do, do all for the glory of God. It was a spiritual reality because Jesus declares all foods clean in Mark 7, Acts 10. It's not what goes into the mouth that defiles man, it's what comes out of the heart, but God was teaching us that we need to think about what goes into us in every way, especially our hearts and what comes out of us, especially our hearts.

So he says "be holy, for I am holy," he's saying, "be like Me because I brought you to Myself and I want you to be like Me because if you're like Me, you can fellowship with Me," and this is the beauty of it, to be holy is to be able to experience the presence of God in greater fullness. That's one of the blessings that comes to the Christian. Understand this, you never merit anything of your standing before God. If you're saved, you only can come into God's presence because of what Jesus Christ has done. From A to Z, nothing that you have done, nothing that you do affects your standing before God. It's only what Jesus has done. His perfect life, his perfect righteousness makes a way for sinners like you and me by faith to come into the very Holy of Holies, the throne room of

God. Washed in his blood, cleansed by his righteousness, we come in a righteousness not our own, we come into his presence.

That's the gift of perfect righteousness that we have in Christ but in reality in our experience as we cultivate holiness in our lives, we are able to experience more of his holiness in our lives and that means we're able to be more attuned to his presence. Holiness has great value. It makes you much more joyful because in his presence there's fullness of joy, and when unconfessed sins in our lives, when sin is in our lives, when we're not making progress in areas, it's like areas of our experience are blocked off from seeing the glory of God, but as you grow in holiness, you make your heart an even more delightful place for you to commune with God. Now you only commune with God based on what Jesus has done. So if you've just sinned, you go to him, you run to him because of what Jesus has done, but as you grow in grace, anticipate the fruit of a holy life. You will have more capacity to see his glory and you'll also be more useful. Holiness makes a difference in usefulness. He uses us by his grace, always by his grace, yes, of course, and you don't stop from serving him because you're a sinner, you're always a sinner, you always need grace, but there is a sense in which as you progress and you move away from the world and you devote yourself to God and you live more that way, you become a more meet instrument in his hand.

This is a little bit of a paradox. I like what Jerry Bridges says in his book "The Discipline of Grace," this is one side of this truth. I want to share this with you and then share the other side because it's very important we not trip up here. He's written a number of wonderful books, he's a great author, Jerry Bridges. In "The Discipline of Grace" he said that he would go around and teaching material of how grace and holiness relate to one another, he would ask people, audiences of Christians, he would say consider this scenario. Day one, and he would compare two days. Day one, you got up in the morning and you had your quiet time, a really good time with the Lord. You've really walked in his presence. You've been praying different times through the day and then it comes to the end of the day and you have an opportunity to witness to someone. So now day two. Day two you get up in the morning, you don't have time to spend time with the Lord or you're falling asleep while you're reading the Bible and you don't have a good time with God. You're kind of grumbling all day. You're not walking with the Lord and suddenly you have an opportunity to witness to someone. He said how many of you would feel more confident on day one than day two? Feel confident, feeling, yeah, and he says he would usually get about 80% of the people would say they were more confident on day one than day two. He said in reality you shouldn't be more confident on day one than day two because your standing to witness to someone, to do something for God is not in your performance. Your standing is in what Jesus Christ has done so it really doesn't matter whether you've had a good day or not because that's not the basis on which you hope to have God's blessing upon you now. You can never look to your performance. You must always look to the finished work of Jesus Christ and Jesus' work is the same on day two as it was on day one. It hasn't lost any of its luster. Perfect righteousness. So you come even at that moment you can say to the Lord, if you're wise you'd be saying, "Lord, forgive me for not spending time with You. Forgive me for not walking with You today. I have an opportunity to witness here, I'm pleading the blood of Christ. Help me." And you

just launch into it. But you should on day one say, "Lord, it's been a pretty good day today but I don't want to trust in my own righteousness, I want to trust fully in the righteousness of Christ. Help me. I'm inadequate for this. Give me Your grace."

Now that's one side of the reality but there is a sense in which as you grow in holiness you grow in sensitivity and usefulness, you grow in your awareness of spiritual things. You're going to recognize more witnessing opportunities when you are more holy than you did before. Do you see that? You still must rest in the finished work of Christ to help you do it but you're actually going to become a more effective Christian and servant and instrument in the hand of God as you grow in holiness. He'll be able to give you bigger assignments. I mean, holiness is not just something that we should think of as optional. It's not optional because God has purchased us, we belong to him, but it shouldn't be optional because it's just too important.

Robert Murray M'Cheyne, a wonderful Scottish pastor, early 1800s, died at 30 years old. This man had such an impact, as a 30 year old pastor when he died all of Scotland mourned. He wrote a letter to a young man who was going to study theology and he said, "And I want you to work hard. I want you to study hard. But I don't just mean the languages and the books, I mean you to work hard in pursuing holiness." He said, "A holy vessel in the hand of God, that's what you want to be. A holy vessel in the hand of God." He said, "Think about the soldier, he cleans the blade of his sword continually lest there be a defect in the blade. He wipes it clean so that that blade when battle comes will strike true and sound and strong. He wipes away every defect, every stain. So shall you be," he says, and he says, "If you labor at holiness to put away sin and to put on righteousness and holiness, then you will be," he says, "there's nothing so wonderful as a holy instrument in the hand of God. He will do great things with you because of your holiness, greater things because of your holiness than because of your learning."

So we're called to that, we're called to be holy and, you see, this changes why, again why we try to overcome sin. We're not trying to overcome sin so we feel better about ourselves, we're trying to overcome sin so that we can be more useful to our Master, we can be more in communion with our Lord and Savior. That's why we put off sin. It's not because it just makes me dirty and makes me feel bad, it's because it's hindering my fellowship with my Lord. I want to see him more clearly. I want to be more useful to him. And that's what I'm called to do.

He set me apart, I mean, whenever we actually are doing anything other than being holy, we're actually embezzling from God. We belong to him, what are we doing running off? It's like taking, you know, key, if you work for a company and you take, you know, stuff home that they then need on Monday but you left it at home over the weekend. You weren't supposed to take it home. They need it on Monday. They can't get the work done. Whenever we sin that's what we're doing, we're taking away from God what belongs to him. I mean, he can get it done without us, he's got plenty of backup tools and all of that, but the reality is it's appalling that we would do that.

So know who you are, know what you're called to do and, finally and quickly, know why you're called to do it. This passage doesn't speak to this as directly, it does later in the passage but I want to turn to Romans 12. I mentioned that Romans 12:2 has the same word in it as we saw there in 1 Peter 1, not being conformed. Romans 12:1-2,

1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

He's saying in this passage basically live your life like a priest. The language in verse 1 is all of the temple, present your bodies a holy sacrifice acceptable. All these words are words of the temple worship, service of worship, that last phrase, five different terms in that verse that speak of the priesthood. So see yourself as a priest and what you're to present is your bodies as a living sacrifice. So this is how the Christian life is, we go through life, we have desires, we're to move away from them, here we're to put them to death. Again and again and again we offer sacrifices. Every time you have a lustful impulse, every time a worldly desire comes at you, you have an opportunity to worship God by putting it to death and you trust in the finished work of Christ to do that. "Jesus, You died so that I can put this to death."

But the key thing here is, he says, "I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God." The ultimate reason that we should be holy is out of gratitude. It's not to earn anything. It's because you've already received everything and just out of gratefulness to God you offer yourself up to God. This is the calling of the Christian, called to be holy for he is holy. Be different and separate. Come out from them and be separate and know the joy of living in the presence of his holiness, his glory, and his beauty. That's what we're called to as Christians. The beauty of holiness. It's all of our inheritance in Christ. Every one of us is entitled to that. You are entitled to walk in that and you have all the resources you need in Jesus and in the church to do that.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we thank You so much for the glory of the salvation that You've made known to us in Jesus. As we come and think about Your transcendence, Your holiness, Your separateness, we look at ourselves and we see that we are not as we ought to be. Far too often, Lord, we yield to the lust of the flesh, we value the things of the world, we're being conformed rather than being transformed. Have mercy on us, O God. Lord, help us to capture a vision of how glorious it is and how right it is to live lives set apart unto You. Let us see in our own experience more and more the beauty of holiness and may Your church, Your church exhibit more of the beauty of holiness. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.