

Holiness: Pursuing Life Not Death

Week #1

Our ordinary concept of holiness is a cold, stale purity. We might picture it, I think, as a glass that is spotless on the outside, spotless on the inside, and empty of any content. We might see it mostly in terms of what it is not. It is not murder. It is not adultery. It is not lusting. It is not anything bad. But this definition doesn't go far enough.

Jesus defined it in a more positive manner. Jesus said that the essence of obeying the law, or holy living, was to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and to love others as ourselves (Matthew 22:36-39; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:25-27). This definition of the law is much more open-ended than the Ten Commandments, so that there really is no limit to all of the different ways we might obey it. This definition is also much more liberating to our souls. It challenges us to focus on doing more that is good, instead of doing less evil.

Take a look at Romans 6:20-23

19 I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as **you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness** leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. 20 For **when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness**. 21 But **what fruit were you getting at that time** from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But **now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life**. 23 For **the wages of sin is death**, but **the free gift of God** is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:19–23 (ESV)

- What does it mean “**you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness**”? (v. 19)
- What does it mean “**when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness**”? (v. 20)
- And, “**when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness**”? (v. 21)
- In what sense does the holiness of God give us life? (But **now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life**.) (v. 22)
- If God's holiness brings life, then what does sin bring? What is the fruit of sin? (**the wages of sin is death**) (v. 23)
- What is the free gift of God? (v. 23)

Looking longer and deeper at holiness we find that the Bible teaches that holiness is what makes life worth living. In fact, the Apostle Paul defines holiness as what produces eternal life in a believer (Romans 6:22). On the other hand, sin paves the way that leads to death and damnation (Romans 6:23). If holiness produces eternal life, then holiness is a precondition for authentic creativity. Without holiness all of our creative activities will eventually lead to destructive behavior. Some sinful motive will surface in time, and we will see it in the form of destructiveness to others or to ourselves. Ultimately, holiness provides the essential structure for building family, community, church,

and a relationship to God. We cannot create holiness without God. It must always come from Him. Holiness provides a way to channel our creative juices to do things the right way so that we won't destroy what is good.

So how can we get more holiness in our lives? How can we drink this living water of life-giving power?

Who is holy?

1. Who is holy? (Who will not fear you, **O Lord**, and bring glory to your name? For you **alone are holy**. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have **been revealed**." (Revelation 15:4 NIV)
2. Who is good? ("Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good--except God alone. (Mar 10:18 NIV)
3. If you wanted to find a source for holiness or goodness where would you find it?

Encounters with God's Holiness

^{KJG} **Isaiah 6:1** In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. ² Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. ³ And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory. ⁴ And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵ Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. ⁶ Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: ⁷ And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. ⁸ Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me. (Isa 6:1-8 KJG)

1. How does Isaiah react to recognizing God's holiness?
2. What reason does Isaiah give for reacting like this?
3. What happens to make Isaiah acceptable to God?
4. Does everything that happens make Isaiah want to get far away from God? Why or why not?

Holiness: Pursuing Life Not Death

Week #2

²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. Romans 6:22

1. In what sense is holiness the pursuit of life and not death?

How should we understand our part in pursuing holiness?

Doctrine of Grace:

Augustine (AD 354-430), Bishop of Hippo, North Africa, taught that God's grace changes us so that our sinful nature no longer rules over us. He developed His teachings on grace when he chose to oppose the teaching of a man named Pelagius, whom Augustine proved was teaching heresy. He believed that Pelagius' teaching would cause Christians to believe that all they needed to do was to try hard, and their efforts to be good would be all that they needed to be right with God.

Augustine taught that there are two kinds of grace that God uses to transform us:

1. Cooperative grace – God works with our will cooperatively. We want to be more like Jesus and God helps us to become more like Jesus.
2. Operative grace – God transforms us independently of our will. Without our participation God makes us want to love Him more. Some Christians have felt that this understanding of God's grace wipes out free will. Augustine was convinced that operative grace does not eliminate free will.¹

Ever since the time of Augustine Christians, whether they realize it or not, have used his idea to help understand the scripture.

How does God make believers holy? (Operative Grace)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And **this is not your own doing**; it is the gift of God, ⁹ **not a result of works**, so that no one may boast. Ephesians 2:8–9 (ESV)

²⁸ For we hold that one is **justified by faith** apart from works of the law. Romans 3:28 (ESV)

¹⁶ yet we know that **a person is not justified by works of the law** but through **faith in Jesus Christ**, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. Galatians 2:16 (ESV)

⁶ But if **it is by grace**, it is **no longer on the basis of works**; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. Romans 11:6 (ESV)

⁵ **he saved us**, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but **according to his own mercy**, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, Titus 3:5 (ESV)

¹⁶ So then **it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God**, who has mercy. Romans 9:16 (ESV)

⁹ who saved us and called us to a holy calling, **not because of our works** but **because of his own purpose and grace**, which **he gave us in Christ Jesus** before the ages began, 2 Timothy 1:9 (ESV)

¹⁰ For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." ¹¹ Now it is evident that **no one is justified before God by the law**, for "The righteous shall live by faith." Galatians 3:10–11 (ESV)

¹⁰ And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Hebrews 10:10 (ESV)

1. What has God done through Jesus Christ's sacrifice that we could not do?
2. Why couldn't we do it?

¹ I am greatly indebted to Dr. Phillip Cary for lecture #7 of The History of Christian Theology which have helped me to present the teaching of Augustine.

3. How much credit can we take for what God has done?

What Part Do We Have in Pursuing Holiness? - (Cooperative Grace)

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling**, Philippians 2:13 (ESV)

⁵ For this very reason, **make every effort to supplement your faith** with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸ For **if these qualities are yours and are increasing**, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

¹⁰ Therefore, brothers, **be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.** ¹¹ For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:5–11 (ESV)

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also **faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.** James 2:14–17 (ESV)

1. What should we be doing?
2. God saved us without our help, but does that mean there is nothing for us to do?

What about Both Together, Super Cooperative Grace?

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling**, ¹³ for **it is God who works in you**, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Philippians 2:12–13 (ESV)

¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, **I worked harder** than any of them, though it was **not I, but the grace of God** that is with me. 1 Corinthians 15:10 (ESV)

²¹ **equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us** that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. Hebrews 13:21 (ESV)

1. If we couldn't do anything to save ourselves before coming to Christ, why are we able to do what is pleasing to God now?
2. How important is it for us to be doing what God wants us to do, if it can't save us?

¹⁹ Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness." ²⁰ In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. ²¹ **If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy**, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work. ²² **Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace**, along with those who **call on the Lord out of a pure heart**. ²³ Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. ²⁴ And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. ²⁵ Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will. (2Ti 2:19-26 NIV)

1. How are we supposed to respond to evil temptation?

What's ahead:

Lesson #3 – How can Jesus' sacrifice on the cross make us holy?

Lesson #4 – How can Jesus make us holy?

Lesson #5 – How can the indwelling Holy Spirit make us holy?

Lesson #6 – How can fellowship with other Christians make us holy?