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## *The Call to Holiness*

The Walk of Holiness

### Various Passages

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**T**he godly farmer who plows his field, sows seed, fertilizes and cultivates, is acutely aware that in the final analysis he is utterly dependent for an assured crop on forces outside of himself. He knows he cannot cause the seed to germinate, the rain to fall, the sun to shine. But he pursues his task with diligence anyhow, both looking to God for blessing and knowing that if he does not fertilize and cultivate the sown seed his crop will be meager at best.

Similarly, the Christian life must be like a cultivated garden in order to produce the fruits of holy living unto God. "Theology," William Ames wrote in the opening words of his classic, *The Marrow of Theology*, "is the doctrine or teaching of living to God." God Himself exhorts His children, "You shall be holy for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). Paul instructs the Thessalonians, "For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification" (1 Thess. 4:7). And the author of Hebrews writes, "Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14).<sup>1</sup>

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### III The Holiness of Christ

- A. Introduction
  - B. The Call of Holiness
  - C. The Work of Holiness
  - D. The Testimony of Holiness
  - E. The Joy of Holiness
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**A. Introduction:** This morning we will examine some of the same passages we have considered over the last three weeks, but with the intent of pulling this all together to see how we are to live out the call to holiness in the reality that we are called holy. This is why a focus on holiness is so important. J. I. Packer put it this way ...

*"Teaching on holiness has been largely forgotten, and that also is a pity, for it is central to the glory of God and the good of souls.... There was a time when all Christians laid great emphasis on the reality of God's call to holiness and spoke with deep insight about his enabling of us for it.... But how different it is today! To listen to our sermons and to read the books we write for each other, and then to watch the zany, worldly quarrelsome way we behave as Christian people, you would never imagine that once the highway of holiness was clearly marked out for Bible-believers, so that ministers and people knew what it was and could speak of it with authority and confidence."*<sup>2</sup>

And so as we have discussed holiness, we have seen what it is and what it isn't. We have seen both Father and Son model it. And we have constantly reiterated Peter's statement ...

***"... but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:15–16 ESV).***

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<sup>1</sup> Beeke, Joel R., *Reformation & Revival*, Vol. 4.2 "Cultivating Holiness," Reformation & Revival Ministries,

<sup>2</sup> Packer J. I., *Rediscovering Holiness*, Servant Publications, Ann Arbor, MI, 1992, p. 12-13.

**B. The Call of Holiness:** So for the purposes of living godly lives, lives modeled after God’s character, we are to walk in holiness. And at its most simple, Jerry Bridges describes it this way:

*“What is holiness? The best practical definition that I have heard is simply “without sin.” That is the statement that was made of the Lord Jesus’ life on earth (see Hebrews 4: 15), and that should be the goal of every person who desires to be godly. Granted, we will never reach that goal in this life; nevertheless, it is to be our supreme objective and the object of our most earnest efforts and prayers.”*<sup>3</sup>

We are holy. And—we are to live in a way that demonstrates that holiness. We are to pursue a sinless life, and as John notes in his first epistle:

*“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked” (1 Jo. 2:1–6 ESV).*

We are holy in that we are separated to God’s service, rather than from the world. This means holiness isn’t a way of living that makes us holy, a life of “don’ts”. Rather, it is a way of living that flows from an ever-growing focus on the Father’s will in dependency on the Spirit. Christ provided the example of this kind of focus.

*“For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me” ... “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work” (John 6:38; 4:34 ESV).*

First and foremost, Holiness startswith a heart attitude, that is, a commitment to obedience to the will of the Father, lived out in dependency on the Spirit. We see how, as we walk with God, the Spirit manifests holiness in us as demonstrated via the fruit of our lives.

*“... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (Galatians 5:22–23 ESV).*

And God the Father also works in our lives the work that is necessary to encourage us to depend on Him and to not be caught up in the world.

*“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives” (Hebrews 12:5–6 ESV).*

**C. The Work of Holiness:** Clearly I can’t discuss all the implications of the holy, the godly, walk. We could spend the rest of the year on that subject. But I’ll add one recommendation to

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<sup>3</sup> Bridges, Jerry, *The Practice of Godliness*, NavPress, Carol Stream, IL, 2014, p. 121.

the list of books I have already referred to you. This is Jerry Bridges' The Practice of Godliness. (I've included the titles of all three on your notes' sheet.) And there are a number of other good works on the subject.

But for purposes of this morning's discussion I want to touch on the three areas we are most familiar with, being in prayer, in the word and in fellowship. Here I will simply reinforce what we've seen in previous sessions.

**1. Be in Prayer:** (Parenthetically, I'd like to note a good book on this subject is Brother Lawrence's The Practice of the Presence.) Our lives are to be typified by all aspects of prayer. Most importantly, as we see from John's epistle, prayer must include repentance, depending on Christ as our advocate. Without repentance we "hang up the phone" on God and we have to functioning fellowship.

Second, our primary focus in prayer, for it to be powerful, is on who God is, not on what we want. In other words, our primary priestly role is to praise, to worship our great God. It is in light of who He is that we are committed to holiness, which in turn will have dramatic impact on our prayer life.

***"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name." ... "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Matthew 6:9; Philippians 4:6 ESV).***

The purpose of prayer is fellowshiping and having conversation with God. It isn't about getting Him to act according to our will. It is about getting us in line with His. It is only through this type of prayer that we find direction for our lives and are truly blessed in seeing Him work. It is through this type of prayer that we find peace and acceptance of lives struggles when He choses to let us remain where He has us for His glory and our blessing — even if we can't see it. Remember Christ serves as our example.

***"My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." ... "Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities" (Matthew 26:42; Isaiah 53:11 ESV).***

**2. Be in the Word:** It is amazing how much of a struggle we have in being systematically in the word. This is especially true when it is more available than it has ever been. Many, if not most of us have multiple versions on our smart phones, tablets, laptops, and computers. I don't remember the last time I actually picked up a printed copy of the Bible.

I suspect this is an area where we need to be praying, not just that the Lord would help us to be more disciplined in being in His word, studying and meditating, not just skimming. But rather that He would give us joy and excitement in it. After all desire because of joy is a better motivator than simply the sense of obligation. Meanwhile we still need to be studying. But what a blessing if we could discover the desire for holiness seen in the words of the writers ...

***“How can a young man keep his way pure [holy]? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!”... “As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God” (Psalms 119:9–10, 42:1 ESV).***

While I think the idea of reading through the Bible in a year sounds like a good idea, and is certainly beneficial, I’d rather see someone chose a book of the Bible and take the time to study it in depth, seeing wisdom and understanding from the Spirit, meditating on it, and gaining a deeper understanding of God. In other words, the goal of our walk shouldn’t be how much we read, but how much of what we’ve read we understand and apply.

**3. Be in Fellowship:** Striving to ***“be holy in all [our] conduct***, even in dependency on the Father, Son, and Spirit, isn’t easy. And it certainly isn’t if we are living in a vacuum, that is, in the world but isolated from other believers. The “Lone Ranger” Christian is not seen in Scripture. To the contrary. Jesus called disciples. He sent them out two by two. Paul had numerous people around him in his ministry, both men and women.

When we fail, we need one another to encourage each other in the struggle of walking the walk. Just as Jesus models support for us in that ...

***“... he [was] made like his brothers in every respect, .... For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Hebrews 2:17–18 ESV).***

We are to share our struggles and blessings, thereby encouraging each other ...

***“... let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”...“Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another” (Hebrews 10:24–25; Romans 12:15–16 ESV).***

And as previously noted, this means more than simply showing up for services, because that generally don’t offer the opportunities to share and encourage as much as we’d like and need. Our problem is we are so busy endeavoring to survive life that we struggle to find time for ourselves, much less for one another. So this too needs to be an issue for prayer, so we don’t see this as one more burden/obligation, but that the Lord would help us find a way to see this as a blessing for ourselves and for others. We each have something to offer one another.

In all this, being in prayer, being in the word, being in fellowship, we are talking about a commitment to holiness, godliness — obedience ...

**D. The Testimony of Holiness:** ... not just for ourselves, but for our testimony to the lost.

***“For the grace of God has appeared ... training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,” (Titus 2:11–12 ESV).***

When the lost looks at us, they are to see a reflection of God's holiness in our walk. Yes, we fall, and when we do, how we handle it is part of our testimony and demonstrates God's glory and mercy.

***“ You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matthew 5:13–14 ESV).***

One of our greatest testimonies, which by the way flows from our previous point of fellowship, is how we love one another. Remember, God loves all His creatures. He died for them/us all. He desires that none be lost. And we as the body of Christ, living examples for Him, are called to this world, to His creatures in need of a Savior. And that example is to be one that draws them to Him.

***“ ... love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34–35 ESV).***

**E. The Hope of Holiness:** You may be saying by this point, “I know this is what God desires for and of me. But you don't know me. I've tried and failed. I want this but some how it gets lost in the shuffle.” Believe me, I get it. I can say exactly the same thing. But scripture provides us with the truth of the source of our ability to walk in holiness

**1. The Possibility of Holiness:** Remember, first we are called holy. Second, we are called to walk accordingly. And third, God never calls us to be something we can't be in dependency on Him, empowered by His Spirit. He tells us of our position which empowers our walk

***“ So you ... must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:11 ESV).***

Bridges asks ...

*“ What is the significance of being alive unto God? How does it help us in our pursuit of holiness? For one thing, it means we are united with Christ in all His power. It is certainly true we cannot live a holy life in our own strength. Christianity is not a do-it-yourself thing.”<sup>4</sup>*

Paul speaks to this when he said:

***“ Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:11–13 ESV).***

Scripture, as we've already seen reassures us that our struggle is common and God provides for us.

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<sup>4</sup> Bridges, Jerry, The Pursuit of Holiness, NavPress, Carol Stream, IL, 2014, p. 93.

*“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13 ESV).*

*“... if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say 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” (1 John 1:7–9 ESV).*

*“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” (1 John 2:1 ESV).*

So, at the most basic level, God has called us to live in the reality of our positional holiness, therefore it is possible. We’ve seen examples here of why it is possible. And we have barely scratched the surface. While we have to work at walking the walk, God provides all we need to accomplish the task, and comfort and mercy for those times we fall of His path.

**2. The Joy of Holiness:** Finally, I don’t want us to fall into the trap of seeing all this truth as a burden, as always grim and toil, for there is joy in walking as God has called us to walk. The Christian life, lived in obedience, is an adventure, a blessing, a hope, and most important it brings glory and blessing to God.

*“If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” (John 15:10–11 ESV).*

*“in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”” (John 16:33 ESV).*

*“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” (Romans 15:13 ESV).*

*“Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory” (1 Peter 1:8 ESV).*

And so we are greatly blessed. Great blessings come from the work of living out the reality of our holiness. It that work comes joy and peace that is available nowhere else. Or as our Lord says to us ...

*“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30 ESV).*

And so finally ...

***“ ... in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6–7 ESV).***

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## *The Call to Holiness*

The Walk of Holiness

### Various Passages

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  - B. The Call of Holiness
  - C. The Work of Holiness
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#### A. Introduction:

*(1 Peter 1:15–16)*

#### B. The Call of Holiness:

*(1 John 2:1–6; John 6:38; 4:34; Galatians 5:22–23; Hebrews 12:5–6)*

#### C. The Work of Holiness:

##### 1. Be in Prayer:

*(Matthew 6:9; Philippians 4:6; Matthew 26:42; Isaiah 53:11)*

##### 2. Be in the Word:

*(Psalms 119:9–10, 42:1)*



**3. Be in Fellowship:**

*(Hebrews 2:17–18; Hebrews 10:24–25; Romans 12:15–16)*

**D. The Testimony of Holiness:**

*(Titus 2:11–12; Matthew 5:13–14; John 13:34–35)*

**E. The Hope of Holiness:**

**1. The Possibility of Holiness:**

*(Romans 6:11; Philippians 4:11–13; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 John 1:7–9; 1 John 2:1)*

**2. The Joy of Holiness:**

*(John 15:10–11, 16:33; Romans 15:13; 1 Peter 1:8; Matthew 11:28–30; Philippians 4:6–7)*

**Recommended Reading:** Jerry Bridges, The Pursuit of Holiness, NavPress  
Jerry Bridges, The Practice of Godliness, NavPress,  
J. I. Packer, Knowing God, InterVarsity Press  
A. W. Tozer, The Attributes of God, Wing Spread Publishers