

Intimacy With God

by Dennis Kinlaw

Dennis Kinlaw emphasizes the importance of intimacy with God through understanding the tabernacle, sacrifice, and the transformative power of the New Covenant.

Duration: 33:42

Scripture: Exodus 31:18, Matthew 12:28, Luke 19:1-10, John 4:16-18, Hebrews 8:10, Hebrews 9:1-2, Revelation 21:8

Topics: "Intimacy With God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of living a sanctified life according to God's commandments. He highlights nine areas of sanctity that believers should strive for. These include avoiding taking the Lord's name in vain, honoring the sanctity of time, maintaining a sanctified home, valuing the sanctity of life, upholding the sanctity of sex, having a proper relationship with possessions, and being truthful even when it's not convenient. The preacher emphasizes the need to trust in God's provision and take risks in obedience to Him. He also shares a story of a man who quit selling tobacco despite facing financial difficulties, and how God blessed him for his obedience. The sermon concludes with a reminder to be content and avoid coveting, as expressed in Philippians.

Transcript

Recently I was reading through the book of Hebrews and I came to a paragraph at the beginning of chapter 9 that has been sort of haunting me since. Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. A tabernacle was set up.

In its first room were the lampstand, the table, and the consecrated bread. This was called the holy place. Behind the second curtain was a room called the most holy place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant.

This ark contained the gold jar of manna, air and staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. Above the ark were the cherubim of the glory, overshadowing the atonement cover, but we cannot discuss these things in detail now. When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry.

But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the most holy place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first

tabernacle was still standing. A while ago I was talking about the matter of personal holiness, that what this country needs is not necessarily more Christians, but those of us who are Christians to be much more Christian than we are.

I have thought, as I'm sure you have, about how Jesus said that we were to be the salt of the earth, and that as salt in the earth we were to be an influence in society to drive back the corruption that's there and to give some help where pollution exists. Now I do not believe that saltiness is something that you and I can get a corner on and own and keep and dispense, but rather I've come to believe that that is something that takes place in us when we live in real intimacy with God. I've never seen a person whose life was a rebuke to me who walked at a distance from God, but I've met many people in my life whose lives were a rebuke to me, and always they were people who walked very intimately with God.

Now, what are the elements that take place in a life and in a heart that walks intimately with God? You know, I'm convinced that the tabernacle was a pedagogical device used in the Old Testament to teach people God's ways and the Old Covenant to prepare for the New Covenant, so that when God took Moses up on the mountain and said, You build it just the way I instruct you, that the purpose of that was so that the hundreds of years between Moses and the coming of Christ would be such that as they worshipped in the tabernacle and later in the temple, when Christ come there'd be some categories for interpreting who Christ was and what he did for us. So I have come to look upon God, and this is the great pedigod, the great teacher. And so the religion of Israel was structured to teach us, and that tabernacle is a good example of that.

You know that it was made up of an outer court 150 feet by 75 feet, and it faced east and west. The long way was east and west, so the 75 feet were at the east and west ends, and the north and south sides were the 150-foot sections. There was an outer court in that tabernacle.

The first item of furniture in that outer court was a brazen altar, an altar of brass where sacrifices were made. You remember God lived in the middle of that tabernacle, in the innermost thing. When a person was to find God, the first place he had to stop was at the brass altar.

Now one of the beautiful things is the symbolism in terms of where it was pitched. You remember that Israel was told that it should be pitched right in the middle of the tribes of Israel, the twelve tribes. So there were three tribes on the north, three tribes on the south, three tribes on the west, three tribes on the east, and the idea was that God wants to dwell right in the middle of our lives.

He doesn't want to be on the margin. He doesn't want to be an adjunct. He wants to be the center from which we work.

He wants to be the center out of which our life comes. Now that's the way it's supposed to be. But in the middle of that tabernacle was where he dwelt.

Now how'd you get to him? The only way you could get there was go by way of sacrifice, where a sacrifice was made that was to be an atonement for sin, and it was a sacrifice of a life, and it was the shedding of blood. And if you will go through our hymn books, you will find that that is picked up in a thousand ways in our worship and in our praise, because, and can it be that I should gain an interest in my Savior's blood? Died he for me who caused his pain, for me who him to death pursued? Amazing love, how can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me? So the first step is to let you know that if you get close to God, it's going to cost something. It's going to cost.

It's not easy to know intimacy with God, and it never comes cheap. Now we live in a day, and I love the phrase that A. W. Tozer made common when he talked about cheap grace, but there is no such thing as cheap grace biblically. It comes at great cost.

There's no easy way to know God intimately, and there's no cheap way to know him intimately. The first thing had to be that altar. The next thing was a laver, which was filled with water.

Before a priest could serve in the holy place, he had to wash himself and cleanse himself. As Isaiah says, they that bear the vessels of the Lord must be clean. So isn't it interesting, those are the first two steps in getting to God, and the first two steps in any kind of intimacy with him.

And we can never bypass these if we want to know God. Only one way through, and that's through the blood of Christ, and there's only one way that we can stay in his presence, and that is his cleansing. Now in the holy place, you will remember there was a lampstand that speaks of Christ as the light of the world.

There was a table of showbread, and there was the altar of incense. The altar of incense represented the prayers of the people of Israel that went up all the time before God. But now the thing I want to talk about is the most holy place, and the three elements that were in the ark in the most holy place.

When you got beyond the second curtain, and the high priest only got there one day out of the year, and nobody else but the high priest could go in there, I've often thought about it. You know, it was worked in corpse, and the Gentiles could come so far, the women of Israel could come so far, the laymen from the eleven tribes of Israel could come so far, the Levites could go a little farther, and the sons of Aaron could go a little farther, and the chief priest could go, he was the one who could go all the way into the presence of God. Now you take the contrast between that and the New Testament, where we say the way is open for anybody to come to God, and for all of us to come to God, but there were those stages.

Now why did God do that? You know, it could be taken that God was saying, I don't want many people to find me, and that it's going to be difficult for them to. I'm convinced that all of that was given to let us know that it's not easy to find God, and you can think you've found Him when you haven't. And so this was a pedagogical device to let us know that we have to know the way to God if we're to find Him, and there's only one way, and that's through Christ, and you try any other way, and you'll have one of the idols of the world, but you will not have the true and living God, because the same God who built the tabernacle is the God who gave us Christ.

But the only thing worse than not having God is to think you have Him when you don't. And so the whole system was given to us to lay down some basic principles. But when you got in the most holy place, the thing that was central there was what is called the Ark of the Covenant.

It was a box, you will remember, what was it, 45 inches long, 27 inches high, and it was covered with gold, and on top of it on each end was a cherubim, and the lid of it was gold, and that was called the mercy seat. And God said, I will meet you between those cherubim over the top of the Ark. And the book of Hebrews says, and there were three things in the Ark.

Now I've come to believe that there are three things that are at the heart of any kind of intimate fellowship with God, and those three things that were in the Ark speak about it. First thing that's mentioned was the pot of manna, and immediately you know that story. When they found themselves in the wilderness and they were saying, got plenty of food back in Egypt, how are we going to make it out here, and Moses said,

you trust God and he will give you food, and so you will remember in the morning they found this white stuff.

And you know where the word manna comes from. The Hebrew phrase manhu means what is it? And so when everybody looked at it and said manhu, they came up and called it manna, and we've talked about manna ever since. They didn't know what it was.

But it was what God had given to them to sustain them. Now why did God insist that every time the chief priests come in to meet him, he stand in the presence of manna, and the pot of manna to remind them of it? I'm convinced one of the things that every one of us needs to really believe is that the God who revealed himself in Jesus Christ is the creator of the universe. He's the creator of everything.

He's not only the creator of everything, he's the sustainer of everything, and he's not only the sustainer of everything, he is the divine providence that orders everything, and when he orders it, he is the divine Lord who is in sovereign control without rival or competitor. There is no one to compete with him anywhere. He is God, creator, sustainer, providence, Lord.

Now, you know, that means that we ought to recognize everything in our lives is coming from him. Everything. I had a friend who was in the Navy in the Second World War, and he was a committed Christian, but a little afraid about going in the Navy, and he said, I knew I'd need some friends, and I wanted the right kind of friends, and he said, I suddenly had a good idea.

When I went to mess the first time, I looked around to watch for somebody that bowed his head before he ate, and it was a guy not too far from me, and I went to him and said, you must be a Christian. He said, that's right, and he said, that was the beginning of a friendship that led to other friendships that sustained me during my years while I was in the military. Now why do we say grace? It's a recognition of this, that everything that we eat, everything that sustains us comes from his hand, and we need to be perpetually grateful.

It's interesting that in the Lord's Prayer, we pray every time we pray, give us this day our daily bread. He's the one that gives it to us, not the farmers, and not you. If it weren't for him, we wouldn't get it.

Now there are intermediary forces, but he's the one. Now that brings me to the second thing about the manna. If you don't believe that he's the creator, sustainer, the divine providence and Lord, you will have real trouble trusting him enough to obey him when it comes to sticking your neck out.

Now you know, I don't believe anybody believes until he's stuck his neck out. The faith that you can have sitting in your chair with no danger and no vulnerability is not biblical faith. The faith that gets you to where you've stuck your neck out, Abraham's the example, Herb Cherry, Tim Philpot, ensconced in a good legal profession, fixed, and daring to step out.

It's when you stick your neck out and say, if I don't get divine help, this is going to be embarrassing. Now we will never obey unless there's some risk, and we believe that. And I wonder if we should not, when we deal with people, lay this down.

Old Dr. E. A. Seamans at Asbury, who was in India for years, had a Hindu merchant who decided to become a Christian, and he came to him and said he wanted to be baptized. And he said, good, we'll baptize you in the pool in front of your business establishment on market day. And the Hindu said, if we do that, everybody in the countryside will know I've become a Christian.

And E. A. Seamans said, that's right. Well, he said, what's that going to do to my business? And E. A. Seamans said, you're going to, you're going to hide the fact that you've decided to become a Christian? Best thing in the world is to let everybody know it at one shot. Get it over with.

Much less painful that way. And he, with fear and trembling, was baptized on market day. Now, how are you going to do that? The only way you're going to do that is if you believe that he is the creator, sustainer, the divine providence, the Lord.

If you really believe it, you can stick your neck out. Katie was telling me today about a couple that they met, and he had a grocery store. And so he felt led to quit selling tobacco.

And he almost went bankrupt. And his family turned and said, you're crazy. And most of his Christian friends said, you're crazy.

But it was an inner check. And he said, look at what this stuff does to people, and I'm a Christian. The first three years were rugged, and the fourth year, God blessed him.

I believe that God, when we come to God, if we're going to walk intimately with him, we're going to have to run some risks. And if we don't believe he can take care of us, we won't do it. Now I think we may need to come to the place where we say whether he takes care of us or not, we're going to do it.

But there's the pot. Every time the high priest came in, there was a witness that, you don't have an alibi for not obeying me when it comes to financial things. And economic things, and material things.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and these other things will be added to you. Now the second thing that was in there, you will remember, was the rod that was, I started to say Aaron's rod and Moses' rod. And as I read the book of Exodus, it looks to me like both of them used that rod.

And on one day Moses held it, and on another day Aaron held it. And you will remember it was the rod that was put before the Lord, and it budded. But the significant thing to me in terms of that rod was, it was a symbol of power.

That was the rod that was lifted up when he challenged Pharaoh and all of the Egyptian forces. And that was the rod that he lifted up when he stood at the Red Sea. And when he lifted it up, you will remember the Red Sea parted.

So that what is being said by that rod is, the clear superiority of Yahweh over all the optional gods, and the fact that he really alone is God. I don't know about you, but I've come to love the latter part of the book of Isaiah, the number of expressions where it says, I am the Lord and there is no other. That's magnificent to me.

I am the Lord and there is no other. And in the Hebrew, the word he is used so often that he becomes a synonym for the Lord God. I am he.

And when it says, I am he, he's the only one. He's the sovereign Lord. Now that rod was there to show his superiority and to show that he was the savior, the deliverer who had delivered the people of Israel.

And if he had delivered the people of Israel in the past, he could do it today when the high priest comes in. And when you and I come before God, we need to be reminded that he is the savior and he is the deliverer, and he is adequate for every problem we've got, and he's adequate for every foe that we face.

Doesn't matter whether it's an external foe or whether it's an internal foe.

Now sometimes we think he can handle the external foes easier than he can the internal foes, but I think he can handle the internal foes as well as he can handle the external foes. I know you remember the story of the Presbyterian missionary, John Hyde, who was learning the language in India, and he heard a missionary speak one day, and he spoke on the power of Jesus Christ to deliver a person from all sin. When he got through, an Oxford-educated Hindu came up to the Presbyterian missionary who had preached, and he said to him, Has he delivered you that way? And John Hyde said, I had stark terror in my heart because I had one habit in my life that I knew was wrong and I had never been able to break.

And he said, when that conversation was over with, he said, I went to my room and locked the door and said, Lord, I cannot live with this defeat any longer. You're either going to give me victory or I'm going back to the United States. And that night God did something in John Hyde's heart and delivered him from a habit that had bound him for years.

He was set free and he became one of the greatest missionaries easily in the twentieth century. Now that rod is symbolical of the resurrection power of Christ for my heart and for my life and for your heart and for your life. And it is through his power that he can be Lord in your life and mine.

But now the third thing is the tables of the law. And I wish I knew how to handle that adequately because it enamors me that it is there. Every time the high priest came in, there were the tables of the law.

There's a rabbinic tradition that says that the two tables of the law that were in there were the broken tables of the law. That when the priest came in in the presence of God, you remember it was called the Ark of the Testimony. And so that tradition, not all the rabbis said it, but some of the rabbis said it, that it was the testimony against Israel that Israel had been stiff-necked and broken the law.

But I think that it's a more positive thing. You know, when God spoke from Sinai in the law, he was really revealing his character, his nature, and his will for us. Who he is, that he's the Holy One.

And there is something here that I think we need to face, and that is that the law of God is a reflection of his nature in his holiness, and that element is an inevitable factor in fellowship with God, and you cannot get around it. All you have to do is do something that is out of touch with his essential nature, and when you come back into his presence, you know that you're guilty, and there is something within you that tells you that you need to repent of that and repair it. I used to think that the law was basically an Old Testament phenomenon, but the thing I notice is that in the New Testament, when Jesus came to anybody before he got through it was present in that relationship.

Take for instance the woman at the well. When he looks at her and says, go call your husband, there's the law, thou shalt not commit adultery. When he faces the adulterous woman and he says, go and sin no more, there it is.

When he deals with Zacchaeus and he spends some time in his home and Zacchaeus goes out to pay back what he has taken that he shouldn't have taken. When you come to the last chapter of the book of Revelation and when it says, and on the outside are the description that is given as a digested version of the moral law that's contained here. But the thing I've come to love is that when we come to the New Testament and in the book of Hebrews, what it says is that the difference between the Old Covenant and the New is that in the New when the Spirit comes, read Jeremiah 31, read Ezekiel 36, that the mark of the

New Covenant is that instead of God writing it on tablets of stone, he'll write it on the human heart.

Now you know that we are told, I think it was the Holy Spirit whose finger, those tablets on the Old Testament were written by the finger of God on those tablets of stone. You remember Jesus identified the finger of God as the Spirit of God. If I by the finger of God cast out devils, in Matthew, then the kingdom has come to you, but in Luke it's if I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, the kingdom has come to you.

So it's the Spirit of God that wrote it on the tables of stone, and Jeremiah said and Ezekiel said when the Spirit's come, he'll write that same law not on tables of stone, but he'll write it on human heart. And then we can live under his Lordship. Have you ever thought seriously about how all-encompassing the Ten Commandments are? Let me just run down my version of them for the moment.

The first one, Thou shalt have no other gods before me, says let God be God. Get rid of all the rest and let him be God. There's a sense in which the other nine are commentaries on that, are consequences.

When it says Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, what it's talking about is our relationship to everything that isn't God. The first one talks about our relationship to God, let him be God, and the second one talks about our relationship to everything that isn't God, nothing excepted, because after God everything is created, and that's what the second one is dealing with. The third one has to do with the sanctity of language, doesn't it? You can't get closer to us than that, can you? You're not to take the name of the Lord in vain when you speak.

The fourth one has to do with the sanctity of time, and what's more common to us than language and time? And the fifth has to do with the sanctity of the home, and the sixth has to do with the sanctity of life itself, and the seventh has to do with the sanctity of sex. And do you know anybody that isn't sexed? The eighth has to do with our relationship to possessions, and the ninth has to do with our relationship to truth. Can you tell the truth when it's not in your favor? Thou shalt not bear false witness.

Always interests me when you talk to teenage kids, and if you can get them to begin thinking about this and just say, did you ever report to your mother an account of your relationship to your brother in which you made it look a little better for you than it really was? You don't have to deal with kids, do you? You can talk about the ladies over the coffee clatch, can't you? You can talk about the conversations in the hallway at church. You can talk about the gossip that runs through all our circles. Can we get to the place where when we tell a story, it is told objectively, truthfully, or is there still that self-interest within us that colors it? And then, of course, the last one has to do with our desires, and really I love the fact that I think that that has to do, that's the background, Old Testament background for what Paul says in Philippians, I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content, because if I don't covet, I'll be content where I am.

And if I'm not content where I am, I'll covet. Now you look at the totality of the demand that comes in that. It brings me to the place where it's very clear in the New Testament that what he wants to do is be totally Lord of my life, and I do not believe anybody ever knows Christ intimately until he's turned the last key over to him totally, the last key.

And that intimacy has to include that demand upon us and let Christ be what he is supposed to be, the Lord over us. Now I don't know about you, but I'd like to walk as intimately with God as I can. Now there are those three things.

He can take care of me, the manna. It's interesting when you get my age, you begin thinking about how you're going to live, where you're going to live. I think there's something in that for a security conscious America.

I thought about that when Mary was talking about young people in our universities who can't gamble, can't risk, can't gamble on Christ. I always was impressed by C.T. Studd's father when they asked him if he quit gambling when he became a Christian. He was a horseman.

No, he said, I just started gambling on a sure thing, and his son did that, C.T. Studd. You know how different the world would be if we could stick our necks out for Christ? I'm convinced American evangelicals need to come to grips with that. I'm convinced I need to come to grips with that.

Can he really take care of me? Or is some of my fear such that I can't hear him speak to me, and I won't let his will come into focus for me because it might shake me up a little too much. But there's that pot of manna he can take care of me. There's that rod.

Look at his power. He's the sustainer, creator-sustainer. He is the God of all power.

He is the God of gods. Why shouldn't I trust him every day, not only sort of gamblingly, riskingly, but also joyously? You know, I'm sure the Hebrews got a lot of fun out of telling about how the water parted after it had parted. Wouldn't it be interesting if we could have that attitude ahead of time? You know the story.

Let me label one of them. Norman Grubb told me about spending, I think it was 18 years in Africa with, maybe it was, I think it was 18 years in Africa with C.T. Studd, about how he'd open the mail every two weeks when it came in. How many of you are familiar with that? He'd shake out the money, and if there was a little money there, he'd say, God knows what a bunch of grumblers and complainers we are.

He sent us something to keep us quiet. One fortnight, there wouldn't be too much, and he'd say, we must be growing in grace. And he thinks he can trust us.

One week there was nothing, and he said, hallelujah, we're in the kingdom already, because the kingdom is righteousness, joy, and peace. There's neither eating nor drinking in the kingdom, but righteousness, joy, and peace. So we're in the kingdom already.

You know, now we don't need to be presumptuous, but we need to be free. We need to be free. And if the pot's there, and the rod is there, there ought to be some basis for it.

And if it's his law, I ought not to be afraid of it, because he's not a bear, and he's not a hard task master, and his will is good. And more than that, he's willing to give me his spirit, who can write it in my heart, so that his will becomes my way, as well as his way. As the psalmist said, not only I will do thy will, but I delight to do thy will, O God.

Now are those elements in your daily relationship to him? Every time you come into his presence, are those things there? I'd like to keep those present in my life. I'd like to keep them present in my prayer life, conscious that he can take care of me as long as I'm in his will. He has the power, and he can even make me clean and live according to his patterns of personal holiness.

You know, Ted Koppel, they tell me, I didn't see the program, they tell me that he interviewed a bunch of evangelical leaders after the Jim Baker and Jimmy Swaggart debacle. And as it, the way I was told to me,

as he began quizzing them, most of the fellows who were on the panel began to sort of speak almost defensively, as if that could happen to any of us, and you shouldn't be too shocked, and you shouldn't be too harsh in your judgment on these guys. And finally, Ted Koppel said, from my understanding of the Old Testament, the Ten Commandments were not ten suggestions.

Did you hear that now? But they're not ten brutal laws either. Do you know I have no alibi if I don't live by his standards? And when I fail, you don't need the alibi for me, because it's an insult to a holy God. His will is good, and his will is right.

And there's grace, there's a rod, there's grace for me if I will receive it. Well, that's what I wanted to share with you tonight. Let me tell you what I've come to believe.

If you move up a peg in your spiritual life, I'll get some of the benefits from it somewhere. I believe we're bound together enough that if you fail in your spiritual life, somewhere or other I'll lose because of it. Look at evangelicalism across the United States today.

And if God can just move in your heart and mine, there'll be some effect that will go from it out. My mother went out one day. We had company.

She said, Dennis, I want you to help me. So she took me to the smokehouse, and she pointed to the biggest ham in the smokehouse. It must have been special company.

And I pulled it down, unwrapped it, and she took her big butcher knife and sliced into it. And when she did, I'll never forget the look on her face. It was one of horror because you could smell that ham, and it wasn't good.

And when she sliced into it, it was loaded with maggots. And when she saw it, she stared at it for a minute, and then she looked straight at me. And she said, that's your fault.

I said, what do you mean? She said, you salted it, and you didn't rub enough salt into the joint. And the maggot got in through the joint. I can remember rubbing salt in that crazy stuff.

I rubbed in enough that I thought maybe she was preserving me instead of the pork. But on that one, I didn't get enough in. Do you know, if you've got enough salt, you don't have to worry about the pollution.

And that's an indication of the demonic. The demonic fills a vacuum. The evil fills a vacuum.

And if God reigns in my heart and fills my heart, then he can have his way in my heart because he has the power. And we need to quit alibi. We need to, evangelicalism needs to quit alibi.

We need to avail ourselves of his grace.

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