

(Radical Jesus) 19 Radical Holiness

by Glenn Meldrum

The sermon emphasizes the radical nature of holiness as an absolute requirement for salvation and the importance of repentance and personal holiness in pleasing God.

Duration: 26:31

Scripture: Isaiah 64:6, Matthew 7:17, 2 Timothy 2:19

Topics: "Holiness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the significance of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. He highlights the agony and rejection that Jesus experienced on the cross as he bore the weight of our sins. The preacher argues that sin is not a small matter, but rather an immense evil that we must flee from. The sermon also emphasizes the importance of understanding the depth of sin's evil and the need to kill sin in our lives. Ultimately, the preacher points to the wonder of Calvary and the love of Christ, who died on the cross to save us from our sins.

Transcript

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The radical nature of holiness has been the subject of our last two podcasts, which is part of our continuing study on the radical Jesus. So far we have examined why God's holiness is so radical and why we have such a difficult time understanding it. We then looked at how holiness plays an integral part of salvation and that without holiness no one will see the Lord as Paul told us in the book of Hebrews.

Let me take a moment to explain part of the idea that is behind Paul's phrase, without holiness no one will see the Lord. The apostle is presenting an idea that would have been familiar with the people of his day, which was of a monarch sitting on a throne. People that received the king's favor were allowed to enter into his presence and make their petitions known.

So seeing the king's face has to do with obtaining the king's favor. Paul is telling us that the only way we can receive divine favor and so be able to enter into his presence is to be holy. This is an absolute requirement.

Implied in Paul's phrase is a negative where those that are not in the king's favor are denied access to his presence because they are not holy. We can then deduce that when people are not dwelling in the Lord's presence or experiencing his tangible presence in the church, there is clear evidence that they are out of God's favor because sin is in the church or in the personal lives. Paul's statement also tells us that the Lord will not answer their prayers because they are not in the king's favor.

Notice that the blessings come from being in the king's presence and judgment from not being in his presence and holiness is the determining factor. There is another picture that can be seen from this verse and this has to do with a person that was granted access into the king's presence but has fallen from the king's favor. In such a setting the king would turn his face from the person which was a pronouncement of disfavor and judgment.

The person that fell in disfavor would be instantly removed from the presence of the king and receive whatever judgment was befitting his crimes. The presence of the king would then be forbidden to him in the future. The only way that we can enter into the king of king's presence is that we must obtain his favor and holiness is an integral part of obtaining that favor.

Those that are not holy will not have access to the presence of the king of kings so their prayers will not be answered unless they are the prayers of repentance. And those that once had the favor of the king because they were holy at one time but have fallen from grace are removed from his presence because they have ceased to be holy. Why did Eve fall into sin as K.P. O'Hannon? Because she did not truly believe in the judgment that death really would come if she ate what God forbid.

This is the same reason why many continue in lives of sin and disobedience. Throughout this study I have tried to keep a focus on the necessity of living in right fellowship with God that we may know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings becoming like him in his death and so somehow to attain to the resurrection from the dead. If we miss this all-important point then we miss what the redemption Jesus purchased for us is all about.

In today's lesson I want to examine what it means to please God and how holiness is an integral part of that. Here is a very important question. Can people please God? There is a yes and a no in answer to this question and I want to take the time to clarify them.

Jesus perfectly pleases the father all the time and in everything. Twice the father spoke audibly from heaven declaring that he was pleased with Jesus. The first time the father spoke like this was at Christ's baptism and the second was at his transfiguration.

Jesus did not need this affirmation from the father because he already knew he pleased the father in everything. These two events happen to give witness to people who Jesus was and that he was perfectly doing the father's will. So we know that Jesus pleases the father.

Now here's the no response to the question can people please God? We are sinners by nature and by choice so we are unholy which means that there is no way that we can please God in our present condition. To please the father we have to be like Jesus but we have this terrible propensity towards sin that makes us unholy which is entirely the opposite of Jesus. Left to ourselves there is no way that we can please the father.

It is absolutely impossible. The good news though is that God can do the impossible. Somehow in our twisted ways of thinking we have made mankind the center of creation but this is just not true.

Creation is not about mankind but about God. Scripture tells us that the heavens declare the glory of God not the glory of man. We are also told that the Lord created everything that is for his good pleasure not for ours.

But such ideas grade against our humanistic concepts of life and the man-centered version of Christianity that is so popular in today's Laodicean church. Now let's look at the yes response to the question can people please God? With the yes response we must leave the realm of what mankind can do and enter into the realm of what God alone can do. The yes answer to the question is all about the supernatural.

The only way that people can please the father is for them to be like Jesus. This is how Adam and Eve were created in the beginning in the image of God which really would have been Christ's likeness. But Adam and Eve sinned and at that moment of their rebellion the judgment of death came upon them and they spiritually died just like the Lord warned them.

They no longer had the Christ-like character they were created with because sin had twisted and perverted that image into a wicked monstrosity. Now only the sin nature defines the human race in its natural fallen condition. The reality we now face is that we are willful rebels against the rightful king of creation.

It is not a Christ-like character that defines us naturally but a bent and wicked one that is drawn towards sin like rain is drawn to the earth. It is a fact that no mere mortal can live like Jesus through their own innate abilities. This leads us to the logical conclusion that there is no way that we can please God given our natural situation.

Plain and simple we are not good people. Actually good people do not exist except in the minds of those who do not believe the truths of God's word or have eyes to see the world in which they live or a mirror in which to see themselves. Paul told us the truth when he quoted some old testament verses in Romans chapter 3 verses 10 through 18.

As it is written there's no one righteous not even one. There's no one who understands no one who seeks God. All have turned away they have all together become worthless.

There's no one who does good not even one. Their throats are open grays. Their tongues practice deceit.

The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursings and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood.

Ruin and misery mark their ways and the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes. We can see then that the Lord does not paint a pretty picture about the human condition.

We are actually in very big trouble. Now listen to what the prophet Isaiah declares in the 64th chapter in the sixth verse. All of us have become like one who is unclean and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.

We all shrivel up like a leaf and like the wind our sins sweep us away. Left in our spiritual and moral condition we are in a hopeless state destined for damnation. We are unholy and have no right to approach

the king of kings in our wicked condition.

This brings us to the wonder and miracle of Calvary that we who were enemies of God due to our willful practice of sin can be made alive and holy through Christ. That is really good news. All of mankind is left outside of God's favor but that does not mean that there is not a way to obtain God's favor.

Through Christ's atoning sacrifice and shed blood we can be forgiven, pardoned, and made holy. Through the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit we can be transformed and grow in Christ's likeness through that same power. So Christ's likeness is obtainable for sinful people but it comes only through Christ.

For people to be pleasing to the Heavenly Father they must repent of their sin and receive by faith the forgiveness and cleansing that is freely offered to us through Jesus. The same grace that saves us is the same grace that makes us holy and grace was never given to us so that we could practice sin but so we could overcome it. Those that claim to be saved by grace and continue in the practice of sin have not been saved by grace and are grossly deceived.

Through divine grace we grow in the practical application of personal holiness. What does personal holiness look like and how does it work? Look at Jesus and you will see the life we are commanded to live and then look to Jesus for the grace and strength to live such a life. A holy life is obtainable but only through Christ.

It is like walking on water. Nothing is as impossible without Jesus yet it is fully possible with him. Only Jesus pleases the Father so the only way that we can please the Father is that we must bear the mark of Christ's character upon our lives.

We must become like Jesus in thought, word, and deed. This impossible work is not finished in a day though it does begin in a moment. It is a lifelong miracle of growing in Christ's likeness that is only finished when we reach those pearly gates.

If we have any conception of what it means to be Christ-like then we are faced with such a daunting task that we could easily throw up our hands in hopeless exasperation. Our only hope is that we would seek God to work in us a spiritual revolution so mighty that it would radically transform our lives that it would revolutionize us from the inside out. The problem of sin is so great and the nature of holiness so naturally unobtainable that apart from the miraculous we are doomed to damnation.

The gift of God is revealed to us in that he longs to revolutionize our lives through his transforming grace so that through Christ we can become what we could never be through our own wisdom and strength. This transformation has a beginning but will continue throughout our days on earth until we stand before our Lord's glorious throne and are granted divine favor so we can see his face. So can people please God? Like I said there is a yes and a no to the question.

The no to the question has to do with our sinful condition that alienates us from the Lord. The yes has to do with the remedy to our sinful condition and that remedy is found only in and through Jesus. So to be pleasing to the Father we must be like Christ.

Now we come to the subject of holiness and how it plays a major role in pleasing God. Holiness as it relates to mankind implies two things separation unto God and separation from sin. It is impossible to separate these two dimensions of holiness for they are indivisible and happen simultaneously.

Here's how it works. The moment a person is genuinely born again he or she is separated unto God and is separated from a life of sin. Since repentance is a change of mind that produces a change of course if there is not a change of course then the person has not genuinely repented.

In other words when people truly repent of sin they will cease the blatant practice of it. But we must see the more before we can turn from sin we must first turn to God. Without first turning to God we will not have the power to help us turn away from sin.

By the sheer act of turning to God we are turning away from sin. They go hand in hand. The picture of true repentance is when people do a 180 degree turn and go in the opposite direction.

We were once on the highway to hell and we got off that devilish expressway to go the opposite direction on the straight narrow way to heaven. This may seem very obvious but it is just a fact that we cannot go in two directions at once. When we turn to follow Jesus we will be turning away from the sin we loved and practiced for so long.

If we continue in the practice of sin then there is verifiable proof that we have not repented. Jesus told us that a tree is known by its fruit and the fruit of repentance is a life of righteousness and holiness. The fruit of no repentance or of what Paul calls worldly sorrow is the continued practice of sin.

I remember seeing this cartoon depicting Satan greeting people as they entered the gates of hell saying to them with a devilish smile, you will find that there's no right or wrong here just what works for you. To turn from the sin we have loved we must have a better, a stronger love than our love of self and sin. In essence the love of sin is all the same.

The only difference is the name of the sin and how it is acted out and the love of sin always produces the same results no matter what name it is called by and that is separation from God. There is only one love that can possess the power to cause us to forsake sin and that better stronger love must be for Jesus or we will not have the motivation to forsake the sin we have clung to for so long. Only when we love Jesus enough will we cease the practice of sin and when we truly love Jesus we will want to be holy.

It will be the desire of our heart. It is love for God that is the motivation for true holiness. This is the desire where we do not want anything to separate us from the place of sweet fellowship with the Lord so we get everything out of our lives that is offensive to a holy God.

Love for Christ will always produce a passion for personal holiness because we want to get every expression of sin and evil out of our lives no matter the cost. C.E. Autry stated, when men look at their sin through the presence of God they recognize the ugliness of sin. When this happens they become disgusted with their sin and turn from them to God.

It is just a simple fact that everyone who faithfully loves Jesus will refuse to practice sin. They will not want to live in compromise. They will not even want the questionable things in their life.

What I have just said puts me at odds with a large number of churches and preachers in America. The lukewarm religion that defines so much of the church today has no place for personal holiness in its theology or practice. Their watered-down religion makes intellectual assent or sentimental notions all that is needed to go to heaven.

Repentance has become a cuss word in many churches in America, as are the words sin, judgment, and evil, just to name a few. Within many church circles is a teaching that since they are saved by grace they have been liberated from the legalism of old. Now they claim that they have the right to drink alcohol, to do the bar and nightclub scene, to just plain party and sleep around because they're saved by grace.

What an absolute lie. Yet when you look at the lives of people that live in compromise, whether they call themselves Christian or whether they're pastors or board members, you will see that compromise always comes at a tremendous price. Always.

Steve Gallagher made an interesting point. Typically those who are most entangled in sin are the very ones who cannot see its presence at work inside of them. Sin has the ability to mask itself so well that it can actually make the person who deals with it the least think he is the most spiritual.

But how can people think such damnable nonsense in light of verses like 1 John chapter 3 verses 6 through 9? Let me read them to you. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous just as he is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil because the devil has been sinning from the beginning.

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin because God's seed remains in him. He cannot go on sinning because he has been born of God.

Notice the keep on sinning and continues to sin part. You cannot practice sin and be holy or innocent. Sin defiles the person 100 percent of the time and sin always, absolutely always, separates from God.

John is not talking about stumbling into sin here but about the practice of it. One day the Lord came to a man deep in prayer and asked him this simple question, why do my people entertain themselves with the very things that drove the nails through my hands? Isn't that a disturbing question? And if we ask that question of ourselves it would do us much good. Look at the history of Israel and you will see that they chose to practice sin instead of walking before the Lord in holiness.

The cost was tremendous which was the destruction of their nation, the tremendous loss of life and the eternal damnation of a multitude of souls. It's like William Tillet once said, sinful violations make sinful acts. Sinful acts often repeated make sinful habits.

Sinful habits long continued in make sinful character and sinful character at length determines and fixes unalterably the sinner's destiny. Through Tillet's simple logic we learn that the practice of sin produces a character of sin and the person with the character of sin came to that place through the willful choice to practice sin. Until we see just how evil sin really is we will never flee from it as from a wildfire consuming everything that is before it.

We will never know the depths and heights and riches of God's love until we grasp his blazing wrath at sin. But this is not a popular message today is it? If that message is not preached once again the results will be horrific with multitudes spending an eternity in hell both from within the church and from without. Calvary clearly reveals this to anyone that would but take an unbiased look at the word of God.

Sin is so evil there was no other remedy than for God to become human and die in our place. The perfect sinless lamb of God took upon his sacred shoulders the depths and depravity of our sin. Take a moment and gaze at the cross and see the Savior that hung upon it for you.

See the flesh hanging off of his body after all the beatings and scourging. Look at his once handsome face that was now swollen and bleeding from the blows of fists that rained down upon him. Can you not see how they ripped portions of his beard off his face? Get a glimpse of the nails in his hands and feet with the blood trickling down his arms and off his feet soaking the ground that was not worthy of such an offering.

Open your eyes can you not hear the final words he spoke from the cross? And can you not see the agony on his face when the father rejected the son because he bore our sin on his sacred shoulders? Now tell me sin is a small thing. If you truly get a sight of the crucified Savior there's no way that you could sanely claim that God is not passionately concerned about our sin. If you really get a look at the crucified Savior then you will want to flee from sin as you come to understand the vast evil it actually is.

The wonder of Calvary unfolds before us when we comprehend why he died on the cross. Through the cross we can see the glory of Christ and his marvelous love for us. Sin is absolutely evil and the depths of its evil are beyond human comprehension.

So much so that we do not have words in human language that can describe how cruel debase and evil sin actually is. The fact is that if you do not kill sin then sin will kill you. We will never overcome such blatant evil if we believe the devil's lie that sin is not a big deal.

For those that are honest with the reality of this world and with one's true moral condition will conclude that we are all sinners in need of a Savior. There is a huge difference though between the person that practices sin and the one that stumbles into it and at the core of the difference is the condition of the heart. Those that practice sin do so because they love their sin and want to continue in it no matter what God or people have to say about it.

Those that love Jesus will realize that in their sinful nature is a love for sin that if not crucified would take them into the practice of sin. Their love for Christ caused them to strive to live without sinning but when they do stumble into sin they know there is a remedy and what is that remedy? It is Jesus Christ himself. As one of the old hymns go there is a fountain filled with blood that never runs dry.

There is the cleansing power of Jesus blood which is freely given to anyone that would take the path of repentance which means they are turning to Jesus as they are turning from their sin. People that practice sin are of their own free will not turning to God because they have not turned from their sin. Charles Spurgeon made this powerful little point, men who only believe in their depravity but do not hate it are no further than the devil on their way to heaven.

That is absolutely true. It is not enough to know that we are sinners but we must become so weary of our sin that we want to flee into the loving arms of Christ to obtain the victory he purchased for us. Jesus freely forgives our sin and makes us holy when we run to him in heartfelt repentance.

He then offers the transforming power of the spirit that can change a character defined by the love of sin into one that loves Jesus but this power is only available to those that will live a life of repentance and walk in practical holiness. It is extremely tragic when people think that repentance is a negative thing rather than the positive blessing God designed it to be. They have come to believe one of satan's long-standing

lies because they are full of self and in love with their sin.

It is through grace and repentance that sinful humans can become partakers of Christ's holy nature. These are phenomenal gifts that we should cherish and guard. The man who wants to be holy will live holy and no devil person or temptation will stop him.

Now I'm not talking about determination or personal fortitude as the means to which we can be holy. Those that are strong in Christ have become strong in him by becoming dependent upon him. In other words they are doing what Paul commanded Timothy to do in second Timothy 2.1. You then my son become strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

To be strong in God's grace we must become dependent upon him. He must be our strength and song, the passion and desire of our heart. Jesus loves us so much that he compels us to crucify everything that breaks his heart and is contrary to his will.

It would be a cruel God that would command us to be holy and then not define what it means to be holy or tell us how to be holy or to help us to be holy. But the Lord has done all of these things and infinitely more. He has kept nothing back from us by freely making available to us his divine limitless power so that we can be like him.

It is the unfortunate reality that there are people that call themselves Christians who do not really want to walk with Jesus. They have no burning desire to be holy, no longing to live near Jesus, no passion for the secret place of prayer. They will contrive all kinds of excuses for their compromise and lack of submission to God, even trying to pervert the scriptures to justify their selfish desires.

Let me quote another of Paul's instructions to the young pastor Timothy from 2 Timothy 2.19. 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. The Lord knows those who truly belong to him.

He knows those that love him deeply enough to turn away from the wickedness they are prone to practice. And he knows every hypocrite that claims to love Jesus but remains in the practice of sin. He knows us inside and out and there's no escape from his all-knowing gaze.

There's nothing that goes on inside of us that he does not know about. And he also knows why we do what we do and why we don't do what we should be doing. I want to make a few concluding thoughts to end out this section on radical holiness.

Christ's holiness will forever be absolutely radical because it is both foreign to us and infinitely beyond our comprehension. Holiness is not part of God nor is it one of his attributes because holiness literally defines who he is. It is his essential being.

The Lord is perfect in holiness because he cannot become more holy nor can he decrease in holiness. The miracle of salvation is that a holy God can take unholy people and make them holy so they can live in unbroken fellowship with him. Our God is absolutely radical and absolutely amazing.

Now it's time we become like the radical Jesus. He deserves the reward of his suffering.

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