

Holiness -- Objective and Foundation

by Lewis T. Corlett

This sermon emphasizes the importance of holiness as God's ideal and the foundation for a moral and spiritual life, highlighting its significance in recognizing authority, providing a concept of righteousness, and giving value to man.

Scripture: Leviticus 20:26, Romans 8:15, 1 Corinthians 3:11, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Hebrews 12:10, 1 Peter 1:16, 2 Peter 1:4

Topics: "Christian Holiness", "Moral Character"

Description

Lewis T. Corlett preaches about the importance of holiness as the foundation for a solid and enduring life, emphasizing the need for young people to seek God's ideal for their lives and to become conscious of the solid foundation provided by holiness. Holiness is described as the moral character of God, requiring recognition of authority, giving man a concept of righteousness, presenting an ideal of morals, and contributing ideals to man's relationships and life. It is the only foundation that can provide man with a stable footing in moral values, harmonious living, purity of motives, and a personal Christian experience.

Transcript

Young people are looking for something definite and certain. Many are puzzled and perplexed today by the uncertainty and confusion of the general conditions of society and civilization. Standards have been lowered, morals are laughed at, modesty is ridiculed, and righteousness has been classified as "old-fogey" and outdated in the modern routine. Yet character has not changed in its principles, nor has the law of sowing and reaping been repealed. God still exists, and each person must give account to Him sometime for the way his life has been carried out both in deed and in motive.

Youth today can be as holy and useful as any in previous generations. God has made ample provisions for the salvation of each person in every generation of world history. Today the Spirit of God is waiting to make the application of God's provision to each soul who asks for it. Young people need to become more conscious of their need and turn to God to find the proper motivation. They need to see God's ideal for each individual and also become conscious of the solid foundation provided for them as a foundation for life.

Holiness Is God's Ideal

Holiness is the name ascribed to the moral character of God. He definitely states that He is holy. "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:16). "And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy" (Lev. 20:26). These

verses also indicate the quality God desires in the inner nature of man's soul, "Be ye holy." In man holiness is the transfer of the moral nature of God to man's inner life whereby he is transformed to become like God's character. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (II Pet. 1:4). Also the writer to the Hebrews speaks of God's process as culminating in man's being a "partaker of his holiness" (Heb. 12:10). These two definitions cover the entire meaning of holiness regarding both its source and its operation between God and man.

There are two phases of holiness in God. One is positive and includes the possession of absolute purity honesty, love, and righteousness. It is not only the personal possession of these moral qualities, but also it is the divine approbation of these things regardless of where they may be found. The other phase of holiness may be termed the negative side and includes the absence of sin with all its roots and kindred evils and principles. Included within this aspect in the character of God is His total abhorrence of everything pertaining to sin. His nature is diametrically opposed to the principle of sin and everything pertaining to it. Holiness is the essence of His personality, the purpose of His will, and the standard of all of His operations. Holiness is also a doctrine. But it is not merely a theory; it is a reality in the nature of the character of God. Thus holiness has very definite objectives. It includes the highest ideals and standards known to God and man. Holiness is the fountain of truth, the source of moral standards, the origin of righteousness, and the criterion and standard for the thoughts and actions of mankind. Holiness is the ideal of God's nature and thus becomes His ideal for the quality of man's moral nature.

Holiness Contributes Ideals To Man

Holiness is the only proper ideal for a person to accept and set up as the criterion to which he or she must measure. Unless holiness is kept as the ideal of life, God cannot bestow upon the individual the blessings and benefits He desires to give.

It will be impossible to mention all of the ideals which are brought through holiness since all of the good qualities of mankind are directly or indirectly responsible to holiness as a source; yet a few basic ones will be presented.

1. Holiness Requires a Recognition of Authority

Holiness demands a recognition of authority. Man is so constituted that, unless he recognizes a higher power and authority than himself, he becomes lawless and lives on the animal plane of his nature. Holiness makes a great contribution as an ideal to man in the fact that it sets before him a God who is the absolute Authority of the universe. He is mighty; He is powerful; He is majestic; yet He is pure, holy, and wise. God is superior to every relationship of humanity; and the more man is conscious of His true character, the more he senses an authority to which he is responsible. In fact, as holiness becomes the controlling ideal and principle of life, it brings to man the sense of accountability and responsibility to God, which is one of the most important basic concepts necessary for true and holy living.

2. Holiness Gives Man a Concept of Righteousness

Holiness as an ideal sets up very definite standards of right and wrong. It does not lend itself to the prevalent disposition of this age to eliminate the sharp distinctions between the black of sin and the white of righteousness and to live on in the haze of gray. Holiness coming out of the character of God is pure and righteous, originating in a Character who approves the right and abhors the wrong; therefore it gives

man the proper criterion whereby to judge truths and actions of every relationship. Holiness gives man a clear concept of the true, the right, the pure, and the honest. It is not a question of what the neighbors say or of what society today approves, but of how this matter under consideration appears when it is placed under the brilliant light of God's holiness. Much confusion has been brought here as individuals have attempted to force upon others their viewpoints regarding changing customs of the generations. The final answer is not what any individual thinks but what man's conscience and spirit say as he stands in the presence of God's holiness.

3. Holiness as an Ideal Gives Value to Man

As man is considered without taking holiness into proper consideration, he cannot be understood for his real worth. A holy God made man free from sin so that he could have fellowship with his Maker. God made man in the divine image, and regardless of how far into sin man may go, there is still a depth of his nature crying out for the living God. He may not understand this or know what it is; yet there is the emptiness of the spirit of man calling for the only Spirit who is able to understand and explain. If man were a product of an evolutionary process without the direct touch of God in creation, then he would lack something that could feel kindred fellowship to God himself. Holiness as an ideal sets man up as a spirit immortal to live forever. The immaterial part of man will never die, and holiness provides the only atmosphere which will enable man to seek and reach the higher levels. Holiness reveals the true value of man, and man must possess holiness to develop and reveal his worth to his generation.

4. Holiness Presents an Ideal of Morals

Holiness is purity in God; it is also purity in man. Holiness as a second work of grace completes the plan of operation to purify man's motive nature so that his whole nature is pure in thought, purpose, and affection. Holiness has never countenanced laxity in morals or immodesty of thought, attitude, or dress. Holiness always exalts the pure, the chaste, and the clean. This is true today as well as yesterday; and it will be true tomorrow, for God's ideals and laws never change.

This generation needs to bring its moral laxity into the presence of the pure light of the holiness of God in order to judge itself properly. Reactionaries make fun of blue laws and the antiquity of the Bible; but, regardless of the radicals and shallow-minded people, holiness is still the source of the ideal of morals for every generation.

Holiness is the source of ideals and standards for relationships of one with another. It gives ideals regarding death and gives ideals for after death. In fact, every good ideal and standard of humanity comes forth from the character of God. For every problem that man has had or may have God has placed within His revealed truth, the Bible, a principle for solving that problem. That is His ideal for the particular occasion. The more man understands the Holy Bible, the higher his standards become and the more in harmony he brings himself with God's ideal as exemplified in His own character. Man should be careful to incorporate these ideals in his life, for it is more important than the sign that was posted in one place on a bad road which said, "Choose your rut carefully, for you will have to stay in it for the next 20 miles." Man should be very careful to choose all of his ideals in the light of the great ideal of holiness, for he will not only live in them the next twenty miles, but they will make or break him for life and life hereafter.

Holiness As A Foundation

Holiness is the only foundation which can give a man a solid footing in moral values and character and at the same time give him the basis upon which he can build an enduring and useful character.

1. Man Needs a Spiritual Foundation

The material foundations of earth will pass away with the use thereof. There is something about man which is more than material. Man is made up of more than the physical. The process of change is forever active in the physical and the material. Within this changing nature there is a spiritual part of man. This is the vital, dynamic, controlling part of man's being and life. Unless man selects a foundation upon which to build this spiritual life, he will find himself coming up short in the time of crisis. He will find himself without security and stability in the moment when he needs these the most. So while consideration for the material sphere of mankind is important, the contemplation of the foundation upon which the spiritual should be built is of more importance. It is that upon which the life is built; it is that which will regulate the destiny of man; it is that which will determine how and where the individual will spend eternity.

People today are the victims of fear, superstitions, and wrong philosophies. Life is real and may be filled with disappointments, sorrows, adversities, and failures as well as opposites. Man must have a foundation that is stable, secure, and enduring. He must find a foundation which gives him that stability of purpose, location, and sense of destiny in all the changes of life. This is found only in a spiritual foundation.

Man is a creature of two worlds -- this world and the one to come. People have sneeringly criticized the Christians in some ages as being otherworldly. Little did they recognize that in their derision they had revealed their own ignorance, for all people have a relation to another world. Time is not the only controlling factor in life; eternity has a definite and powerful relationship.

Man has his beginning in time, but he exists forever in eternity. There is no end to man except the beginning. He lives on and on and on. To live rightfully in time he must find that connecting link between time and eternity which will give him a sense of security and stability in contemplation of it. He must find that which will be constructive to his character in eternity as well as in time. He must take time to locate a foundation which standeth sure when the angel shall announce that time shall be no more. Again this is found only in the immaterial and the spiritual realm.

2. Holiness Provides This Enduring Foundation

Holiness, being the essence of God's moral nature, is as eternal as God himself. In this sense holiness is eternal; it never began and it will never end. It is not something which was provided merely for time; it is the atmosphere and essence of God's eternity.

This consciousness of God's presence and character brings man first of all to the contemplation of life in its entirety. He looks at it as existing both in time and in eternity. He recognizes that there is a part of him which will not cease to be when the event of death ends time for him. Seeing this, he recognizes that God, being eternal and almighty, has made it possible through His love and compassion for each individual member of Adam's race to come into proper relationship with God and become a "partaker of his holiness." He becomes very conscious that there is a foundation in God which standeth sure regardless of time or eternity. It dawns upon him that the whole plan of salvation is God's method and procedure whereby man can find a spiritual foundation upon which to build a life. Jesus Christ, the Saviour, gives to a helpless and hopeless world a way out of distress, fear, and damnation. There is no other way. Paul recognized this and stated emphatically to the Corinthians, "For other foundation can no man lay than that

is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 3:11).

3. Holiness Is the Foundation Man Needs to View Life Correctly

It is the only foundation in the universe which will bring man to recognize really basic values in his life. Sin and evil are intrinsically deceptive in their characteristics. Man, being possessed of a sinful disposition from birth, has a conflict throughout all his life trying to avert the deceptiveness of sin which causes him to grope in unreality. Sin blinds a man's vision to things as they really are. It colors his entire outlook. Man must come in contact with something which will bring him face-to-face with reality in order for him to live in contentment, to be of service to his generation, and to face death courageously.

God wants man to be delivered from this realm of unreality, and, in His requirements that man must meet in order to become a "partaker of his holiness," He has arranged a process which brings man face-to-face with reality. This has been called conviction by the Christians of all ages. It is by the operation of the Spirit of God upon man's inner life that the coloring is removed from the vision. The things of life are stripped of their deceptive coverings and man is brought to see himself, his deeds, and his relationships in true reality. In other words, he begins to look at people and things as God does. He sees his deeds in the light of the purity and holiness of God. He no longer makes his decisions regarding them according to what may be the accepted standards of society about him, but he judges everything in the light of its relationship to God.

This view of the holiness of God brings man face-to-face with the realization that there is a connection between the created and the creator -- that man is not an individual who is not responsible to anyone for his selfish indulgences, but that he must finally give an account to a holy God for his unholy acts. Thus, in the first step in God's dealing with man, holiness becomes the criterion as well as the foundation for man's evaluation and removal from the world of unreality.

4. Holiness Provides a Foundation for Harmonious Living

As the Spirit of God directs man along the pathway of righteousness, the individual will be aware of the fact that there can be no security unless peace is made with the past. He recognizes that the commandment of the Bible, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," is a necessity to relieve man of the fear of the past. This requirement is not just arbitrary with God for His own satisfaction; it is an absolute necessity if man would find himself on a foundation which gives security, stability, and comfort in all of life's vicissitudes. Hidden sin in man mars his relationship with God. It creates fear in the mind of man, upsets his mental equilibrium, which, in turn, creates poisons within man's physical constitution and produces a variety of diseases. Doctors everywhere will testify that mental tenseness and condemnation will mar and upset man's physical welfare. Thus God's requirement for man, "Be ye holy; for I am holy," is not only the natural emanation of His character; it is also the statement of an all-wise God given to His creation for the purpose of bringing them to that place where they can be at peace with themselves in relation to their past. This requirement brings man to the place where he makes the proper adjustment for a substantial spiritual foundation, resulting in proper relationship with God and man. He brings himself into harmony with the laws, principles, and character of the eternal God. This removes the conflict he has had with the laws of his Creator.

Holiness is more than this; it is not merely negative in its reaction in the individual life, but the Spirit of God in the process of liberating man brings him face-to-face with a decision which must be made either for or against God. As man makes this decision in harmony with the character and laws of Deity, he places

within his own life a purpose that is solid, substantial, and definite in its direction and desire. This definite purpose is one of the most important factors in all of life, for man is a free moral agent. He cannot disregard his own sovereignty nor the sovereignty of his Maker. He was made by God to live in harmony with the laws of God; and when he voluntarily, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, makes the choice to shape his life by such a purpose, he brings himself to that vital decision that hereafter the choices and decisions of life shall be made in view of God, His will, purpose, and desires. This brings man into vital contact with the spiritual foundation of the universe. This cannot be found outside of the holiness of God, for man will do one of two things: he will either choose to indulge himself in the satisfaction of his self-life, or he will decide to bring that self-life into alignment and harmony with divine will. As he does this he places himself upon the living Foundation -- Jesus Christ himself -- and finds solidity, stability, and security for his life.

5. Holiness Is the Foundation of Personal Christian Experience

Man will benefit greatly from the coming of this sense of harmony into his life, but holiness is more than that. It is more than simply a mental decision on man's part. It is the impartation to his moral nature of the love of God. It is the touch of Deity upon the motive life of man's own nature; it is the new birth, so that the individual can say with the Apostle Paul, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17). Paul also uses the expression "in Christ" many times. This goes a step farther than just a foundation. Christ becomes the Cornerstone of a man's inner life whereby He binds the believer to himself until there is a consciousness in man that his life is no longer controlled according to the things of the world but "the love of Christ constraineth" him.

Also this brings a person into a relationship with two worlds; for Jesus Christ said to His disciples, "I give unto you eternal life." The Christian is a citizen of a higher world even while he fulfills his obligations of citizenship in this country. The Holy Spirit is the member of the Godhead who performs this operation in the individual life, and He goes a step farther in giving man security and stability by witnessing to the individual that he has been accepted as a child of God. This is what Paul had reference to when he said: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:15-17).

This consciousness within man's own being gives him the sense of belonging to the Divine, the assurance that his life has come into harmony with the laws of God, the knowledge that holiness is begun in his life since he is a partaker of the divine nature, and he is aware that the love of God has become the controlling factor in his heart and life.

6. Holiness Is the Foundation for Purity of Motives

All of these steps must become realities in order to bring man to a proper relationship to "the foundation" which "standeth sure." Yet there is a further step which God has provided which is absolutely essential for man to take to be located properly on the foundation of God. If the man has been born again and has become a partaker of God's holiness, there still remains in his motive nature an inclination and bent to selfishness. This has been called "inherited sin," "inbred sin," "carnal nature," and many other names. In essence, it is corruption in the self-life, which not only contaminates the ego of man but also brings a conflict in his moral nature between selfish desires and the full will and purpose of the Divine. God's

requirement, "Be ye holy," is brought into consideration here. Is man going on with this conflict in his self-life or is there a way whereby he can be so securely rooted upon the foundation of holiness that this conflict may be removed? The Spirit of God is faithful in showing man the dangers of this principle of selfishness in the heart and in bringing man to a definite, conscious decision in which the very depth of his being, the redeemed self, is brought into the full light of the character of God. He must make a decision regarding these claims of the self-life which are presenting themselves either regularly or irregularly. He must choose whether he shall endeavor to live in this discord of internal conflict or whether he so desires the will of God that he is willing to place all of his abilities, his talents, his possessions -- every phase of the self-life -- in the hands of God and live only and fully for Him. This is called "consecration" or "death to self" and is accomplished under the guidance of the Spirit, who directs the penitent believer into full harmony with the Divine.

This abandonment to God has been known to the Church through the ages as sanctification -- a second definite work of grace -- and is the step in God's program which brings man into purposeful relationship with God's foundation. This is not a static condition in which man loses his moral sovereignty, but a state of full moral freedom -- the result of being completely in harmony with God's moral character. It is a contact of the human with the Divine, with a definite, complete promise and purpose from man to live only for Him regardless of what others may say or do. This places man on the foundation of God. This foundation is holiness, and it provides that stabilizing and secure footing for a life that can be brought into harmony with all divine plans and precepts. Holiness is the only foundation that can give strength and security and hope to mankind.

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