

Holiness

by Michael L. Brown

Transcript

I just thought of that thinking of the great help we have at our table, but those books are there. And then there's a scholarly book, Israel's Divine Healer, which I warn you is different than the others. It has just 85,000 words in the endnotes alone, and it was reviewed in a theological German publication, and the reviewer sent me a copy of his German review in which he pointed out that it had 1,350 endnotes.

I hadn't counted them myself. Now, here's what happens. Sometimes you go to the table, and you pick up the book, and you're looking at it, wondering about it, because it's the first ever full-length study of God the Healer that's been written.

Anyway, you'll look at it, and they'll tell you at the book table, this is only for serious students of the Word. There you are with your pastor's badge. What are you going to do? Put it down? So, of course, you have to buy it at that point.

For serious students, that's not me. I don't even read the Bible. But don't feel obligated, okay? If they make that comment to you, don't feel obligated, all right? Now, one thing we often ask, how many people here from different countries, this and that, how many of you are Jewish? How many of you are here today? How many of you are here? In the balcony? Most of you in the balcony.

Great. If you're here, the Lord wants to speak to you. At the end of the session, we will not have prayer lines, okay, or time for, you know, personal counsel and ministry, as you can understand with the amount of people that come.

But the day sessions, the goal is to bring the Word to you, and if it's appropriate, to open up the altars for you to respond to God, okay? So, we'll share the Word with you. If the Lord leads us to just end with open altars, we'll share the Word with you. If you're here, you know, in ministry, internationally, and you haven't gotten prayer, and you're leaving this afternoon or something, you know, then we can pray for you.

Otherwise, you know, we'll pray for everyone that wants prayer tonight. This is a time to hear the Word and to respond, okay? I don't have a watch, so I've got something with—all right. What we'll do is we'll get into the Word for about 90 minutes.

When you think I was joking about trying to cover all this in 90 minutes, I'm very serious that 90 minutes will be short, and it'll be gone before you know it, but open your heart wide. We won't take a break at any point. Open your heart wide.

Let the Lord speak to you. And some of you, this is the very reason that you're here, so God can deposit these things in your heart. Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, we talk to you so much, and we pray to you so many times, but Lord, sometimes we don't even stop and think of the God to whom we are praying. But Lord, we come with carefulness, with reverence, your presence. We pray, Lord, that you would open your Word to us, that truth would come into our lives, that we would be changed through your Word, that it would be deposited within us.

In the name of Jesus, amen. The Lord's laid it on my heart to speak to you today about holiness, and we're gonna read some scripture to lay a foundation, but let me say right at the beginning, right at the outset, that it is not just by a spiritual experience, by a touch of the Spirit of God that we are made holy or that we live a holy life. The principle way that God makes His people holy and brings out the qualities of holiness in us is through His Word.

Now, it's His Word in conjunction with His Spirit, but the scriptures are clear that it is the Word of God that is our help to keep us holy. You'll understand what I'm saying in a minute, but I want to read some scripture to you. We'll start in Psalm 119.

Psalm 119, here and there I may translate something different than any versions you have as I'm just bringing out the sense of the Hebrew a little differently. It may be exactly according to a version that you have. Psalm 119, verse 9, how can a young man keep his way pure? By taking heed according to your word.

The psalmist asked a question, how is it that a young man can keep his life pure? Especially challenging, it seems, for a young man. What's the solution? Take heed to the Word of God. Go to John chapter 17, the great high priestly prayer of Jesus.

Jesus is praying for His disciples, first for the 12 and then for all of us who would believe through the initial message. And He prays, sanctify them in the truth or sanctify them through the truth. Your word is truth.

When He's praying that God would sanctify us, He's praying that God would separate us as holy, and He's praying that God would do it in the truth, through the truth. And He says, it's the word that is truth. It's the word that teaches us ultimately what is holy and what is not holy.

It's the word of God that empowers us to change our minds, to think holy thoughts, and to live holy lives. The word of God in conjunction with the power of the Holy Spirit, the word of God in conjunction with God's grace giving us the ability to overcome, that is the foundation of holiness. If you look in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, and I tell you honestly, this is one of those subjects where if you've read the word for years, you know the scriptures with any familiarity, and someone asks you to begin to teach on it, the question is not, can I find enough material? But how can I keep the material down to one week or one month or six months? And then as you begin to go through the material more carefully, the next question is, do I have the right to teach on it or do I need to get on my face first? 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, now remember the background here, Paul's writing to people who shortly before were idol worshippers.

They didn't know the one true God. He talks about that in 1 Thessalonians, the first chapter. They were lost sinners.

They were not Jews who had a foundation in scripture and needed to come to grips with the reality of God and his Messiah. But these were heathen. These were pagans, lost sinners.

So, Paul is laying foundations up. This is how you have to live. This is the way you have to live.

Things have changed now that you've come into new life in God. 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, finally then brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus that as you receive from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God, just as you actually do walk, that you may excel still more. For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

For this is the will of God, your sanctification, your holy separation. That is that you abstain from sexual immorality, that each of you know how to possess his own vessel and sanctification and honor. His own vessel most probably is talking about your own physical body.

That each of you know how to possess his own vessel and sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion like the Gentiles who do not know God. And that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. In other words, don't you be playing games with your neighbor's wife because God's going to be the judge of that.

For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity but to holiness. God has not called us to impurity but to holiness. And now go over with me to 1 Peter.

The book of Deuteronomy tells us in the fourth chapter that God is a consuming fire, a devouring fire. He's a jealous God, a God full of zeal for his holy purpose. He is a consuming fire.

You say, well, that's Old Testament truth. Hebrews 12.29 tells us God is a consuming fire. And when John sees into heaven, sees the throne of God, it's surrounded by fire.

See, the nature of God hasn't changed, friends. The nature of God has not changed, nor has the nature of sin changed. The blood of Jesus does not change the nature of God.

The blood of Jesus changes us so that we have access into the presence of God. But it doesn't make a cheap route for people still bound by sin, people who are still wedded to hell to suddenly have tickets to heaven. It doesn't work like that.

God's grace is not an excuse to go on in sin. God's grace gives us empowerment to overcome sin. God says in the book of Leviticus, it's a theme of Leviticus, be holy for I am holy.

You say, that's Old Testament. Now, by the way, that argument, that's Old Testament doesn't work anyway because the scriptures of Jesus and the apostles were the Old Testament. And everything written there is for edification and learning.

And faith does not do away with the law, but it establishes it. This is what's taught in the New Testament. You may have valid specific questions, how does this apply, how does that apply? But the spirit, the thrust, the ethic that's put forth, that doesn't change.

If anything, it gets intensified in the New Testament. It gets deeper in the New Testament. The standards get higher.

Leviticus says, be holy for I'm holy. You say, well, that's Old Testament. Fine, it's not a valid excuse, but that's in your mindset.

I'll help you. It's New Testament also. 1 Peter 1, verse 14, as obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts, which were yours in your ignorance.

But like the holy one who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior because it is written, you shall be holy for I am holy. And if you address as father, think of this, if you address as father, the one who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth, knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. Be holy because I'm holy.

Old Testament, New Testament hasn't changed. Then I just want us to flip back to Hebrews 12 and to read the scripture I just referred to. There's a warning.

God once spoke from the earth, Mount Sinai shook, flames, thunder. It was ferocious. It was terrifying to sinful people.

And God said in Exodus 20, literally, fear not, but God has come so that his fear may be before your faces so that you won't sin. And it's a verse. Some translations say, don't be afraid, but God has come to put his fear here before you so that you won't sin.

What it's saying is don't be afraid the wrong way. Like, oh, no, God's going to kill me just if I even blink my eye at the wrong time. Oh, no, because God's coming in flaming fire means he's angry with us, he's ready to destroy us.

No, no, no fear, don't be afraid. But God's coming flaming fire so that his fear will be before you so you don't get silly and start playing games and think how however in the world I live is okay. Hebrews 12, verse 25, God spoke from the earth, now he's speaking from heaven.

See to it that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape who turn away from him who warns from heaven. And his voice shook the earth then, but now he is promising yet once more, I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven.

And this expression yet once more denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken as of created things in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe, with godly fear for our God is a consuming fire. Now, we talk about revival.

Charles Finney said revival presupposes declension. In other words, you don't need revival unless there's been a backsliding. You don't need revival unless there's been compromise.

You don't need revival unless there's been a sickly and weakened condition. When everything is healthy and strong and vibrant and on fire and in love with Jesus and producing fruit, it doesn't need revival. When it becomes worldly, when it falls away from doctrinal purity, when it becomes mixed with sin, when it loses its focus on eternity, so on.

When it becomes ingrown, that needs revival. A lot of people have prayed for revival for years, thinking that revival just meant God adding his icing to my lovely cake, God adding his blessing to my wonderful

ministry. A little bit more, more or polluted body, and I'm talking here spiritually.

In America, we have this strange concept of holding a revival. And I often say, and sometimes weekly, we remind people you can no more hold a revival than you can hold a hurricane. Oh, we have a revival scheduled at our church the first Tuesday of next month.

Really? We've scheduled a tornado down here in Pensacola. You can't schedule a revival anymore than you'd schedule a tornado. See, by holding a revival, what we think is this, we have a special speaker who comes in for a special series of meetings, and we get all excited.

We got special music, special offering, special altar call. Everybody gets all excited. People have a good emotional experience, and then we do it again next year, maybe on the pastor's anniversary, the church's anniversary, or maybe for a special building fund rally or a special youth rally.

We hold a revival. Of course, it's a misnomer in terms of revival in history. And if holding a revival was something you could easily do, and if we know America needs revival, why don't we all just hold a revival? We have thousands of leaders that pass through these doors.

Why don't we all just agree? All of you call your friends. Between us, we know tens of thousands of leaders. Why don't we all agree that on a given day during the year, we'll hold a revival? Why don't we hold a worldwide revival? Maybe we can't get word into some of the oppressed nations, you know, behind the bamboo curtain in other parts of the world and so on, but we can get word throughout America and Europe and Australia and New Zealand, Africa, South Africa, and different parts of the world, all around.

We could just get an announcement out, we're going to hold revival, most of North America, South America. Why don't we just hold a revival? See, when I talk like that, you see the folly of it. And if we just hold a revival, you wouldn't all be flocking here.

You just hold one yourself. It's cheaper, less effort. When we talk about revival, we mean something is wrong.

Why do we need revival? Let me talk as an American to the American church, and you can make application. I've been to a good number of different nations, and I can speak into some of those situations also, having been there and ministered for weeks and weeks and sat with the leaders and heard their heart. But what's the state of the born-again church in America? The born-again church or the born-again spirit-filled church, or as I prefer to call it, the spirit-frilled church, because we have the outward frills that separate us from the others, but not much of the power.

If we were really spirit-filled, you better believe America would have been shaken a long time ago. But what's the state of that church? I would dare say that if you did a survey of born-again gospel ministers in America, only a small percentage would have at least one hour of quality prayer time a day. I'm not going to have hands raised here, I don't want to embarrass anyone, but I would dare say you'd find that.

I would dare say that you would find that throughout the body, 99% of the born-again church in America, I'm not talking about those who make empty professions and don't know the Lord, I'm talking about the believers, that probably 99% spend more time watching television than spending time with God. And that may even apply to ministers too. That the great majority of American male believers are far more moved by the sports page than the word of God.

That tugs at their heart more, their team lost, the big game went down. That has their attention more than lost souls in eternity. That the average born-again woman in America is far more concerned about outward appearance and weight and hair and those kind of things than she is about the condition of her godly character.

That if you go around and want to start finding out who's enslaved to this sin in the body and who's enslaved to that sin and how many sexual scandals have there been in this denomination, down the list, man, it's in trouble. I don't mean the church is in trouble that Jesus will not build his church. I mean that the state of the American church today is in trouble.

And then you look, have we impacted this society or has the society impacted us? How is it that so many sinful things, Hollywood with all of its sinful movies and TV with all of its sinful shows and cable with so much sinful junk and sinful music CDs and on and on and on and on? How is it that these things can thrive in America when supposedly there's so many tens of millions of born-again believers? If we just boycotted the trash, we'd put most of these people out of business. It's true. And then if I talk to people, your average believer in America, in the last six months, have you had a quality conversation with someone about Jesus? You'd be amazed to see most of the heads bow with shame.

Look, I'm not talking about how many of you have fasted 40 days so far this year. It's a good trick since we're in the 30th day, but how many of you have, you know, fast 40 days a year or how many of you average six hours in prayer or how many of you win one person to Jesus every day? I'm not talking about some extreme. That'd be wonderful if we walked in, but it's not realistic.

I'm not talking about that. Certainly not realistic for most of us. I'm just talking about basics, basics.

If I said, okay, you believe there's a real heaven, you believe there's a real hell, yes, you believe that people that you know are going to perish and be judged forever by God, yes. How does it affect your life? Have you shed tears for that, for family members that don't know Jesus? Not only do we have no tears, but we have no tears for our lack of tears. We're in a state where we desperately need revival and visitation.

And I'm going to say this point, I've written about it elsewhere, but I want to make this point and then I want to get to my notes because I haven't gotten to them yet. What we have done for years in the church is adjusted our standards by the sinking standards of the world. Standards of the world get lower, we set ours a little higher.

The next generation, they get even lower, we set ours a little higher because we compare ourselves to ourselves, that's what we're used to. So, the illustration to me that best brings this home is you think about public bathing, swimming. Last century in America, you could go to places in our country where it was illegal for there to be mixed public bathing, men and women.

Now, if some of you are nodding because you can remember back that far, God bless you. I'm amazed you're still ticking if you can remember back to the last century and rules that existed. But the fact of the matter is when you see pictures from early this century of people going to the beach, you laugh, don't you? I mean, how are they dressed? They're covered.

They got these things on, you know, long sleeves down to the ankles. You ever seen pictures of some of the great female tennis players earlier this century? I mean, their skirts are right down to their sneakers.

Then what happens is the world begins to adjust its standards a little bit.

I could almost see when they started with the bathing suits maybe coming to the knees and to the elbows that the Christians said, that's horrible. And they kept theirs to the ankles and the wrists. And then when the things started getting to the thighs and exposing the shoulders, that maybe the Christians kept them around the knees, the elbows.

And then when it got to two-piece bathing suits for women, then the Christian women wore one piece. Then when it got to bikinis, the Christian women wore two piece. Then when it got to thong bikinis, well, then the sisters would just wear a modest bikini.

Now, you'd think I'm kidding, but most Christians that live near beaches, men and women, young people, they go there and they dress virtually the same way. Oh, the sisters wear a little bit more modest one piece, a little bit more modest bikini. If someone walked into your room when you were in your underwear, you'd scream, but you'd parade around in public like that.

It's okay. Why? Because it's not as bad. Because there's a nude beach down the block.

I've wondered for years, well, maybe we can adopt a modest nude look. You know, why not? See, we set our standards based on the standards of the world, and there are things done in godly homes today, things watched by Christian, born-again believers in their homes that would have been unthinkable for our unsaved grandparents to watch. Our kids act and dress certain ways that ungodly people a few generations ago wouldn't have.

Now, I don't mean that those were the good old days, or that the world is always getting worse. No, the world has had patterns. It's hit bottom and then God will destroy.

You know, Rome hits bottom and God destroys it. Other nations hit bottom, God destroys them, brings judgment. There's revival.

It brings certain moral recovery, then it goes down again. But right now, what we're seeing in America is we've gone two generations without a national revival, without a national sweeping outpouring that affected the moral climate of the nation. We've gone more than two whole generations, and that's why there's the steady, steady decline.

And now things are done brazenly and openly that would have shocked unsaved people even last generation. To have known homosexuals or lesbians appointed to higher places in government or serving in Congress, that would have been unheard of. For a church, for the most part, to sit by while more than 30 million babies are aborted, if we told you 50 years ago that would happen, never happened.

Now, what does this have to do with holiness? Well, two things. One is it's often been said that revival is always a revival of holiness. See, if standards fall, that's where they're going to fall.

They're going to fall in the area of holiness. They'll fall in a lot of other areas. But one thing in particular you're going to see as standards get low, because the devil wants to entrap us in sin, friends.

He doesn't have new weapons. He may have new technology for his old weapons. He'll exploit every new technology that's out there, and the difference between sin today and sin 100 years ago is that it's much more available.

Things that some man never would have dreamt of going to get, he wouldn't have even known to buy certain materials. He can just hit his computer and get it on the internet right in his home. Movies that you would have had to go to some shameful place to see, now you can just flip on a switch on your cable TV and just bring it in.

It's much more available. People can pick up a phone and have some type of sensual conversation. Things are more available and out there than they've ever been before.

But the devil doesn't have any new weapons. He wants to get you to sin. And if he can chip away at your walk with God before you know it, you'll find your moral standards going down.

If he can chip away at your walk with God before you know it, you'll find yourself enslaved to little lusts of the flesh and powerless to fight off certain things that you used to live in obedient victory over before. So we talk about the need for revival, we mean the church is in a compromised state. We mean the church is in a backslidden state morally.

We mean the church has become more like the world instead of making the world like the church through the conversion power of the gospel. That's one reason that revival and holiness are going to be totally intertwined. The other reason that this is so important, that we need to stress this in the context of revival is that the message has fallen.

Very few people in a New Testament context preaching to believers preach on holiness according to Scripture, preach on the fear of God, preach on God being a consuming fire. At our minister's conference in November, I preached a message called, Whatever Happened to the Wrath of God? And I could have just looked at the words of Jesus alone, his warnings of coming wrath, his warnings of judgment. Even his warnings to believers that if they would not bear fruit, they would be cut off.

You find that in John 15. Stern warnings about the coming fire, warnings to his own Jewish people, warnings to all of us. We're going to see some of his words.

And I preached that message and lights went on for people. It was almost something new. And all it was was just recovering basic truth of the word of God.

So we need to look at this. We need to look at our own lives. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to change us, to speak honestly to us.

We don't want to withdraw from the voice of God. We don't want to step back. When God begins to put his finger in a sensitive area in our lives, don't just react to it.

Maybe that's why you're here. Maybe that's the very thing that God wants to free you from. You have to ask yourself, as I'm bringing this to you, is what I'm saying truth? Is it scripture? Is it right? Is it the Holy Spirit speaking to you? If so, the only response is, yes, Lord.

Yes, Lord. So I want to make four points. Having shared some scripture, laid some foundations, number one, holiness is beautiful.

Holiness is beautiful. Holiness is not a matter of external rules and regulations. Now, I happen to make reference to some outward things and I'm fully convinced that holiness of the heart will affect the outward life.

There's no question about that. But some of us were raised in denominations or churches where holiness was just a matter of do's and don'ts and it's a bad word to you. You hear about a holiness preacher and all you think about is legalistic condemnation and I don't blame you because that's what you heard for years.

Holiness is beautiful. One Salvation Army leader said that holiness is pure love. Holiness is light instead of darkness.

Holiness is purity instead of pollution. Holiness is perfect goodness and perfect kindness. Every good and godly attribute brought to its fullest level, that's holiness.

If you have a daughter and you're praying for the right husband for her, you want her to marry a holy man. When you're raising your kids, you want them to grow up holy. You don't want them to be liars.

You don't want them to be thieves. You don't want them to be perverts. You don't want them to be murderers.

You want them to be holy. Holiness is beautiful. When someone in the church recommends their 15-year-old daughter to babysit for your kids, you want a holy babysitter, not another holy babysitter.

And when you look at your own life, the characteristics that you want to develop, the characteristics that you know are pleasing in God's sight, like a sweet fragrance in his nostrils, they're holy characteristics. And the things that stink, the things that have a foul odor, they're unholy. I was driving through New York City one time.

I would often be in Manhattan preaching over at Times Square Church for David and Don Wilkerson, and even though I was born in New York City and raised on Long Island and didn't move to Maryland until nine years ago, so I spent most of my life in the New York Long Island area and had often been in New York, still when I come from Maryland, commute from Maryland to New York to speak there, every time I come in, it could be three, four times in a month that I'd be in, but every time I'd come in, I'd be struck by the sin of the city. That's such a big city and there's so many people and it's such an ethnic melting pot, people from all over the place. And there's just so much junk going on there.

There's been a cleaning up of the city recently. I believe that prayer has had an impact in New York. But I'd go in there and in order to get over to the parking lot where I'd leave my car before getting into the place where I'd stay and speak at the church, you go right through the porno district.

And, you know, these big showcase theaters, so-and-so appearing live, or this movie, that movie, you know, and you just obviously drive and keep your focus there and don't look all around. But as you're driving, you can't miss some of the banners, you know, the banner announcements and those kind of things. And I remember driving through there one time and there was, you know, appearing live, just this name, and it struck me that my younger daughter's best friend had that same first name.

Somewhat common name, but I hear it all the time from my dad, so-and-so on the phone, it's so-and-so for you. So that's when I hear that name, that's what I think of. When I saw that, it struck me, man, that was somebody's daughter.

You know, that thought's hit me before, but it hit me again that day, that's somebody's daughter. You know, somebody that sat on her daddy's lap, somebody the mother, you know, used to brush her hair when she was little, that's somebody's daughter. Probably stripping and doing all kinds of despicable

things in front of some lowlife crowd, that's ugly.

That's ugly. Holiness is beautiful and wholesome. Some translations speak about the beauty of holiness and it's really a debate as to whether the Hebrew actually says that or should be interpreted differently.

But whether it's an exact biblical phrase or not, it's certainly a biblical concept. The beauty of holiness. Worship God and the beauty of holiness.

I want you, over these minutes that we have together and then in the days to come, to ask the Lord to make holiness beautiful to you. When we're talking about holiness, we're talking about Christlikeness. We're talking about being like Him.

We're talking about all the things that He died for in us, getting rid of the junk and the sin and becoming what He wants us to become. See, Jesus did not die primarily to save us from hell. He died to save us from sin because it was sin that separated us from God and sin that destroyed the character and nature of who we were and brought us into rebellion against our maker and because of our sin was sending us to hell.

He did not die primarily to save us from hell but to save us from sin. When we preach, we need to make that plain to people. God created us in His own image.

That image became tainted and marred through the fall of man. Jesus recreates us within, once again, in the image of God. And we need to walk that out.

That's why He came. That's why He died. Charles Spurgeon was talking about the wrong notion of preaching salvation simply to mean salvation from hell and not salvation from sin.

And he said, it's like a thief who wants to be saved from prison but not from his thievery. Just look at some scripture with me. I want you to see why Jesus died for us.

Look in Matthew, the first chapter, verse 21, the angel speaking to Joseph. Holiness is beautiful. Matthew 1, 21, and she will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus, Yeshua.

For it is He who will save His people from what? Their sins. Go with me to Galatians chapter 1. Galatians chapter 1, verse 4. Why did Jesus die? Galatians 1, 4, He gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us out of this present evil age according to the will of our God and Father. He gave Himself for our sins to deliver us from this present evil age so that now we can live for God.

Go with me to Titus. This is what you call the easy reference system where we proceed from left to right. If you're here with a Hebrew Bible or an Arabic Bible, you're going from right to left, but we're doing this in order to make life easy this time around.

Titus chapter 2, verse 11. For the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men, instructing us. This is what the grace of God does.

Doesn't just cover over our sins or give us an excuse to keep sinning. No, that's not why Jesus came. To say, okay, you go to heaven while you remain in your rebellion.

You become a child of the Father while you still hate Him. No, it's not the gospel. Titus 2, 11, for the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires

and to live sensibly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us that He might purify us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

He came to clean us up. He came to change us. He came to make us beautiful, holy, set apart.

Go to the book of Revelation, the first chapter. We give scripture after scripture, but I just want to get these out here. The word is so rich on this.

This is not going to cross references or a concordance to pull. These are just things off the top of my head to say, let's look at 20, 50, 100. How many scriptures do you want to look at on the subject that tell us why Jesus died and God's purpose for us? It's everywhere because the problem was sin.

The problem was separation from God. The problem was we messed up. Human beings, the human race, individually, corporately, we messed up.

We rebelled. We became slaves of the devil. We worshiped him as God instead of worshiping the one true God.

Jesus came to make us right with his father, to deal with the sin problem. We need to preach that. Pastors, missionaries, evangelists, teachers, we need to get the message out.

We need to look and ask, are we preaching a biblical message or are we just telling people how to be saved from hell? As one man said, save from the hell without instead of save from the hell within. Someone is saved from sin and comes into right relationship with God, they will also be saved from the hell without. Revelation 1, verse 4, John, to the seven churches that are in Asia, grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, from the seven spirits who are before his throne, from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth, to him who loves us and released us from our sins by his blood and has made us to be a kingdom, priest to his God and father, to him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever, amen.

Holiness is beautiful and we should want to be holy in word and deed. We should want to be holy in the thoughts of our heart. We should want to be holy in the things that our hands touch.

We should want to be holy in everything that we say and do. First point, holiness is beautiful. Don't just think about the church where you, you know, you got saved and if men had hair that touched the ear, they weren't holy.

By the way, the reason I don't have a watch on is not because I belong to a holiness denomination that says it's a sin to wear watches. We moved into our house, I put it somewhere and I can't find it. That's why.

And you should have known that I'm not part of that group because if so, I wouldn't have been wearing a wedding ring. That's the environment some of you came from. That's what holiness is all about.

And just one request now, I very rarely have to do, in fact, I've never had to do this. Those of you that are coming in, please come. Otherwise, no in and out activity, walking in and out.

And if you came expecting a fun teaching, I told you it was going to be holiness last night, friends. Oh, come on, don't worry about that, thanks. I'm just helping those who thought, oh, I thought that we were going to get like everybody was going to get prayed for and get zapped.

Friends, this is the way to really get zapped. It says in Romans 12 that we should present our bodies as living sacrifices. You put that body on the altar, it's not yours anymore.

That animal went to the altar, never came back to see his family again. The man or woman who takes up his cross was never going to see this world again. They were dying.

The life we live is a brand new life to God. Holiness is beautiful. One more scripture I want to read on that, Ephesians 4. It's funny, some of us have a problem if someone reads a lot of scripture because we want to hear what the person has to say.

And then when we're done hearing what the person has to say, we say, well, that wasn't the word. Sometimes someone will come over to my house and they've got a real urgent matter and they say, Mike, has God shown you anything about this? My wife and I will be sitting with them. Mike, has God shown you anything about this? And I'll say, well, he hasn't, but I'll give you my opinion.

My wife will say, who cares about your opinion? In other words, that's not why they're here. There are other times your opinion may have value, but they want to know, did God show you anything? No, God didn't show you anything, but I have an idea. Have a thought.

Ephesians 4, verse 17, this I say therefore and affirm together with the Lord that you walk no longer as the Gentiles also walk in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart. Now, this is an ugly picture, an ugly picture. I was thinking as Steve was preaching the other day about some of the sins of the human race.

I've never been into a gay bar, but I thought, oh, what an ugly picture, especially for me as a male. You know, you're so revulsed, but oh, think of guys going in there and picking one another up and then going out and having perverse sexual relations, ugly. That's how all sin is.

It's all ugly, ugly, ugly, ugly, and holiness is beautiful. Being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart, and they haven't become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. That's the way some of us used to live.

That's the way the world lives without God. Ugly. But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard him and have been taught in him, just as truth is in Jesus.

And in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which is in the likeness of God, the likeness God has created in righteousness and holiness and truth. That's beautiful. That's who we want to be.

That's how we want to be. Holiness is beautiful. Number two, we don't have to dwell on this a lot, but it's so important.

God is holy. In fact, you define holiness by starting with God and working your way out to human life. God is so holy that just seeing him overcomes you.

Think of that. Have you ever been around a human being that was so holy? I don't mean they acted as if they were so holy. You know, when they walked into McDonald's, you know, they walked in with their Bible like that, and they made sure they left their pastor's badge on.

But you have holy burgers here. I'm not talking about some put-on holiness. You know, and then when the order's a little late, the guy starts criticizing McDonald's and is going to write a letter to Ronald McDonald, you know.

I mean, people that really are close to Jesus, and when you're around them, first thing you want to do is almost just start confessing sin. You know, sister, you know, I'm such a gossip. I didn't ask you about gossip.

I didn't say anything to you. Brother, my mind is just filled with filthy thoughts because they're holy. It's rare that you meet somebody like that, but there are people like that.

Smith Wigglesworth sometimes would get onto a train, sit down with strangers, just sit down in the train compartment, and someone would look at him and say, you convict me of sin. It's holiness. I love to tell the account when he was in Wellington, New Zealand in 1922, and there was a prayer meeting with some of the ministers before he was going to speak, and he began to pray.

One after another prayed, then he began to pray and got caught up with the glory. And these men, one by one, couldn't stand it, and they ran out of the room because the presence of God was there. So holy and so intense, Wigglesworth was caught up with his best friend, but they couldn't take it.

You know, I first ministered in Finland, ministered over there about four times, but the first time over there was my first time in a Finnish sauna. We call it sauna, but their word, Finnish sauna. And I'd go in there with a couple other men, and I remember my interpreter said to me in one hotel, have you ever been in a sauna? I said, well, no, never, never been in a Finnish sauna.

He said, well, let's go in. Now, he didn't want to make it too hot because he knew I was a wimpy American, never been in it. But man, we're sitting there, I said, so this is like enjoyable to you? I'm thinking this is either great preparation for summer ministry in India or just in case you end up in hell, one of the two, this is... I mean, it was hot, and then, you know, sweat starts dripping into your eyes.

I said, so this is, you find this very relaxing, huh? I'm sitting there like that trying to... And then, you know, they got these heated rocks in there, and you get, you know, there's water, and you take the water and throw it on the rocks, and the thing just steams all the more. I said, I have to cover my eyes. I remember one time that these guys just kept pouring it on.

I got to enjoy it if I could do it on my own terms, you know? But I was with these guys, and the higher you're sitting, the hotter it gets. And finally, the only thing I could do was just go down and sit on the steps. And they start, you know, they were brothers.

They start just kind of mocking me, ridiculing me a little bit. Come on, be a man, get up here. And one of them said, just raise your hand.

Man, I raised my hand because that's where they were sitting, that level. I felt like I was on fire. And I think of that, you know, that physical illustration, think of Wigglesworth being caught up in the glory of God, and that hot, holy presence.

It got too hot for those, and they ran out. One guy heard about it, said, I would not have left. I would have stayed right there in the presence of God and the glory of God.

In fact, I tell that story in the Holy Fire Book, I mentioned that, about the holy presence of God. I would have stayed. And they have another prayer meeting, and this time the guy is there, and the same thing happens.

Wigglesworth begins to pray and gets caught up with God, and the guys can't take it. And one by one, they leave until this one guy, he's just going to prove that he can stick it out, this other minister. Finally got too hot for him, and he ran out.

By the way, I'm going to interrupt this message to just give you a Finnish sauna story. There was a Finnish evangelist who was really preaching hard and really stirring the people up and really going after the religious complacency. It was years ago.

And after the meeting, they decided that they were going to kind of trick him and make the sauna because, you know, they knew everybody after the meeting, the end of the night, would go into the sauna. But they were going to make it so hot, it would be unbearable. They were kind of ready for it, but they knew when he came in, he wouldn't be able to take it.

Well, obviously, this guy was pretty thick-skinned, and he went in there, and he made it hotter and hotter. And finally, they couldn't take it. And as they all ran out, he said, hell's going to be a lot hotter than this.

With that, let me have a drink of cold water. Isaiah the prophet, was he already prophesying? Was he already in ministry used by God? It comes in the sixth chapter of his book. Did he have years of ministry before that? That's what Isaiah 1 through 5 is about.

Then he has an encounter with God, or was this his calling? No way to say for sure. But when he comes in the presence of God, he's undone. He comes into the temple, not God's heavenly temple, he comes into the earthly temple to worship, and he sees God.

Some of us, if we met God in church, would be stunned. What are you doing here? We'd be blown away. We'd be blown away if the fire fell.

We'd be blown away if God just swept through the place. He has an encounter with God. He's undone.

I'm just seeing God completely undone. He hears the seraphim. Kadosh, kadosh, kadosh, Adonai Tzva'ot.

Holy, holy, holy, the Lord of hosts. V'lochol ha'aretz k'vodot, filling the whole earth with his glory. He's undone.

The pillar's shaking. What does he say? I'm finished. I'm undone.

I'm a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. And my eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts. God is holy.

There is no blemish in him. There is no imperfection in him. His anger is perfect anger.

His love is perfect love. His justice is perfect justice. You can't bribe him.

You can't fool him. Have you ever done something that inside you know is wrong, in your mind you know it's wrong, and no one else knows it, and then it strikes you? I'm not fooling God. God sees.

God sees my thoughts just the way I see the palm of my hand, except he sees it even more accurately. A.W. Tozer said, in God's sight, ideas, thoughts, are like things. Since our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, Tozer wondered, is this temple filled with unclean bats and birds, ugly creatures flying around, polluting the place? What goes on in this temple? God is holy, and he's never changed, and he never will change.

We say again what I said earlier, the blood of Jesus does not change the holiness of God. The blood of Jesus does not diminish the holiness of God. The blood of Jesus does not lessen the justice and wrath of God.

All that remains unchanged. The blood of Jesus changes us so that we can come into the presence of a holy God. God is holy.

It means totally separated from sin. It means nothing sinful, nothing dark in him. If he destroys, it is good and right.

If he brings judgment, it is good and right. God never has to say, I'm sorry. I made a mistake.

I apologize. Next time, I'll get it better. Never.

When we talk about human beings being holy, we mean separated from sin, separated to God. And a question I'd like to ask is really in that context, and I don't mean legalistic bondage. I don't mean someone tells you a perfectly innocent joke and you begin to smile and laugh and think, ooh, I don't know if God was smiling at that moment.

I mean, you can get yourself hung up, friends. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about a general walk before God.

In light of who God is and in light of the fact that we are his children and called into fellowship with him and that our sin cost Jesus his life, how holy is too holy? Let me give you something else to think about. Coming down to the south here, one of the things that threw me, and I knew it was here, but being in the midst of it still throws me, throws my wife. Everybody you talk to is a Christian.

Everyone you meet goes to church here, goes to church there, knows the terminology. You know, in New York, you talk to someone about being saved, saved from what? You know, what are you talking about, buddy? You know, Jesus has set me free. Congratulations, man.

Get out of my face. You know, Maryland, where we live, Maryland had more churches and seen on the blocks than New York did still. You, when you talk to, you go into a restaurant, you bow your head in prayer, you see somebody else praying.

Could it be a believer? Mormon maybe? They don't have blonde hair, probably not a Mormon. I mean, that's really what you think. Could it be another believer here? Here, you go and open a bank account.

This person's a Christian. The teller's a Christian. That one's a believer.

Go to a restaurant. This one's a Christian. This one's a believer.

This one. But then you start to talk to them about their lives. In fact, they don't know God at all, but they know the terminology.

Start to talk to them about the Word of God. You find out their life is a total mess and it's just all third person. It's out there somewhere.

They've been in church all their lives. And down here, especially, you'll have a lot of people who teach, once you're saved, you're saved, period. Now, I'm not going to get into a whole doctrinal teaching here, but for those of you who may come from that background and may say, well, Jesus has promised that we are his sheep and that he'll keep us and that we will not slip out of the Father's hand and he who began the good work in us will bring it to completion in the day of Christ and so on, and can quote many verses to that effect.

Let me ask you a question. Can you quote me a single verse anywhere in the Bible that says, sin however you want, live however you want, and no matter what sinful condition you die in, you will go to heaven? You find that for me anywhere in Scripture. It's one thing if you say, but I believe in Jesus keeping power, and I sure do.

I don't worry for a split second about my salvation and I don't worry about losing it. I know God's keeping power and I love him, I want to serve him. I don't think about the possibility of me losing my salvation because I fear God.

I'm not looking to play games and see how far I can go before I fall off the cliff. But if you say, but I believe that Jesus will keep me to the end, then that means he will keep you from sin, Frank. If what you believe is true, that if you're saved, you're saved, you can't lose it, the proof will be that you end up living a holy life and end up in heaven because his hand is not going to embrace sin and corruption.

If his hand can't keep you from a sinful lifestyle, I don't mean from slipping and falling, thinking a wrong thought, saying a wrong word. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. We are not yet perfect.

But if our lifestyle has not turned from darkness to light, if the characteristic of our life is not freedom from sin and separation to God, we're in trouble, friends. And the Bible is full of warnings. Let no one deceive you.

Let no one deceive you. You can find it in 1 Corinthians 6. You can find it in Galatians 6. You can find it in Ephesians 5. You can find it in Colossians 3. Don't be deceived. Let no one deceive you with empty words.

The adulterer, the drunkard, the pervert, the greedy person. Listen, they will not enter God's heavenly kingdom, period. Doesn't say they'll lose their reward.

They will not make it. The wicked will not make it, period. Why? Because God is holy.

Because God is holy and he requires holiness. That's point number three. Number one, holiness is beautiful.

Number two, God is holy. Number three, holiness is required. We're going to get specific before we're through here.

Holiness is required. You don't have to turn there. But in Exodus 25, God tells the children of Israel that he wants offerings brought so that they can make him a sanctuary.

Everyone knows the phrase that speaking of the Shekhinah glory of God, the Shekhinah glory, in Hebrew, it's Shekhinah. Shekhinah is from the root Shekham, which means to dwell. Normally, I don't mention the Hebrew word for this, is that, but because you all know Shekhinah, Shekhinah.

I tell you, the Hebrew word for a neighbor is a Shekhin, someone who lives next door. Shekhinah, to dwell in the midst. And God says, if you will make for me a holy place, a sanctuary, v'shekhinati v'tocham, then I will dwell in their midst.

V'asuli mikdash, have them make for me a sanctuary v'shekhinati v'tocham. And I will dwell in their midst. My Shekhinah, my presence will be there if you make a holy place for me.

Now, here's how you're to make it. Follow the specifications. Do everything according to the pattern shown you on the map and keep out the sin and keep out the defilement and keep out the pollution if you want me to dwell in your midst.

God writes to those who have been made holy through the blood of Jesus. In other words, we have been taken out of our sin and set apart to God, and then He says, now be holy. You've been taken out of your sin, you've been set apart to God, now live it out.

The proof of the new birth is the new life. See, it's not a contradiction. It's not a contradiction.

It's not a matter of, well, the Bible says I'm already holy through the blood of Jesus. How can you tell me to be holy? That's like telling a 30-year-old man, be a man. Be a man.

It's like telling, you were born a man, now be a man. What does it say in Hebrews 12, 14? As much as it lies in us to follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. Holiness is required.

Why did God's presence depart from the earthly tabernacle and the earthly temple in the times of Israel? Because of sin? Because they polluted the place? See, right at the beginning, when everything was pure, sin was instantly crushed. Just like in the early church, Ananias and Sapphira, instantly crushed. If God came in that holy presence today, we'd have born again, spirit-filled preachers dropping dead in pulpits around America.

Just like that. And as God's holy presence comes back more and more and more into his church, it's going to bring holy and reverent fear. We talk about Ananias and Sapphira, that's Acts 5, Acts 12, Herod is smitten by the angel of the Lord for his pride.

Acts 13, Simon the sorcerer, smitten with blindness. Elimus, smitten temporarily with blindness for his sin. You read the words of Jesus in the book of Revelation where he tells the church in Thyatira in the second chapter of Revelation, if they don't repent, I'll kill your children.

Jesus speaking. Jesus, who's coming according to 2 Thessalonians 2 and flaming fire, 1 and 2, and flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God. Jesus.

See, in times of revival, the stakes get higher. You say, man, does that mean if I go out of here and lie to God, I might drop dead? How about if you don't try it and find out? How about if you don't experiment? I mean, you can experiment if you want. Give us your name and address, and we'll track you.

I would recommend walking in holy fear. Well, I believe that no matter how I live, once I'm saved, I'm saved. You want to test that out, friend? You want to write us a letter from hell, tell us you were wrong? If you're saved, what are you saved from? I mean, if you're saved, you're transformed, you're born anew.

Where is it? That's what we need to tell people, not get caught up on the doctrinal argument, I'm happy to prove what I believe scripturally and to back it up. But if you're saved, what does it mean to be saved? What did Jesus do for you? Where's the proof? Where's the evidence? Where's the new birth? Where's the new life? Where's the change? Where's the transformation? You read in the book of Leviticus, and some years ago when I was reading these things, I was just staggered by them, staggered afresh. It's when I wrote some of the opening chapters in the book, *Whatever Happened to the Power of God*.

I'm just reading about God's holiness, Leviticus, and the raising up of Aaron, and his four sons as high priests and priests in Israel. And the details of their appointment as priests is just almost laborious reading unless you appreciate what it's about. And they did everything as the Lord commanded Moses.

The Lord commanded Moses over, and over, and over, and over, and over, and over. And then they have a seven-day waiting period. And then on the eighth day, sacrifices, offerings as the Lord commanded Moses, the Lord commanded Moses, the Lord commanded Moses.

And then they go, and they offer up their sacrifices, and they bless the people. And fire comes out from the presence of the Lord, shoots out from the presence of the Lord, and consumes Aaron's sacrifices. And the Hebrew continues, and there's no break.

And you can even see from the context, it was the same day. There are indications in the text it was the same day. Aaron's two oldest sons, Nadav and Abihu, they just get excited by the moment.

It's possible they had a little to drink. You can get that from some other passages. We don't know, but we know that they offered up unauthorized fire, unauthorized incense, contrary to what the Lord commanded.

And the fire comes out from the presence of the Lord and kills Aaron's sons. First consumes the sacrifices, then consumes the sons. Having God in your midst is heavy duty, friends.

He's holy. He requires holiness. He requires holiness.

You may be familiar with the passage that I quoted from Hebrews 12.14, without holiness, no one will see the Lord. We read other passages that 1 Thessalonians 4, for example, that God's will is our holiness, sanctification. And Jesus said, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my Father, which is in heaven.

And Paul writes, and this is the will of God, your holiness. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to put those verses together, do you? And friends, this isn't heavy. This is what it's about.

This is what we're saved for. This is what we're saved to. So we can walk in the beauty of holiness and please our God and touch a dying, dark world with his light.

I want you to turn with me to Hebrews 12 for a minute and hear the rest of the passage because I'm about to get to the punchline here, the point four, and you need to have ears to hear this. And I can't tell you how critical it is for us as leaders to lead the way, how critical it is for us to lead the way in our public life and in our private life, to lead the way not just by what we say, not just by what we do, but by who we are. Hebrews 12, 14, pursue peace with all men and holiness without which no one will see the Lord, see to it that no one comes short of the grace of God.

Friends, that should tell you right there that the grace of God is not an excuse for sin because you can come short of the grace of God. Grace of God changes us and empowers us to live above sin. It washes our sins away even though we don't deserve it, gives us the full benefit of the blood of Jesus, and empowers us to live for God.

That's why Paul writes, sin shall not have dominion over you because you're not under law but under grace. He didn't say sin will not condemn you. He said it won't have dominion over you.

It won't mask you anymore because you've been changed. Grace gives you the power to do what the law requires. See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God, that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble and by it many be defiled, that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau who sold his own birthright for a single meal.

Pursue holiness, sanctification, be set apart to God. Without it, you won't see him. Jesus said, blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.

Can we make a biblical deduction based on other scripture? The blessedness there Jesus is talking about is truly happy. That would be a good way actually to translate the Greek there or the Hebrew or Aramaic concept behind it. Truly happy are those who are pure in heart for they shall see God.

Truly unhappy are those who are impure in heart because they will not see God. Holiness is required. A couple more scripture and I'm going to bring this home to bear.

You say, you mean you haven't brought it home to bear yet? Not yet. Psalm 15, everyone has different methods of preparation. God has gifted and called each of us differently.

Each of us has a different store of truth and knowledge and information and experience in us. When I minister, I primarily prepare my heart in prayer and pray for the meeting and allow God to lay themes on my heart. But I don't have to study the scripture about a given subject if I'm going to preach or teach on it.

Every one of us is different in our background. But I say that again just to say these are verses that I'm just giving you as relevant as we're looking point by point by point just out of my head. These are verses that are relevant.

This is not an exhaustive study. If we did an exhaustive study, it would take months and months and months. This is such a foundational biblical subject.

These are critically important verses that we can't get away from. Psalm 15, O Lord, who may abide in thy tent, who may dwell on thy holy hill? I would dare say that if you can't dwell in God's presence here, you won't be able to dwell in his presence in the world to come. If you're not at home in his presence here, how are you going to be at home in his presence there? If you flee from the light here, how is it that you'll embrace the light there? It's been said by some that heaven would be the worst hell to a sinner.

To be in the presence of a holy God would be worse than the fire of hell itself. It's also been said that there's fire in heaven, there's fire in hell. The difference is that the pure in heart are not burned by the flames.

Psalm 15, O Lord, who may abide in thy tent, who may dwell in thy holy hill? He who walks with integrity and works righteousness and speaks truth in his heart, he does not slander with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend. And whose eyes are reprobate is despised, but who honors those who fear the Lord. He swears to his own hurt and does not change, he does not put out his money and interest, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.

He who does these things will never be shaken. That's the one that dwells in the presence of God. The one with righteous conduct.

You say, this is salvation by works. No, our works prove the reality of our salvation. John the Baptist says, bring forth fruit worthy of repentance.

Paul said it was his life message. His life message, he talks about it in Acts 26. He said, I preach that people should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.

A repentant person is going to live differently. It may take them a little while to get a lot of things cleaned up. You know, God dealt with me about heroin.

That was the big thing in my life. You know, the great obstacle, other drugs I could say I wouldn't do again, but that was the big one. When God dealt with my heart and revealed the depth of his love for me and the ugliness of my sin, I turned from that and said, Lord, I'll never put a needle in my arm again.

But it was two days after that before I said, Lord, I'll never get high again in any way. And then it was some weeks after that before I realized that my profanity was displeasing in God's sight. And I would dare say, as of yesterday, God was working on me in other areas of my life, and the same with you.

We're growing. You see, we're not who we were. We have to be able to say, unless we were raised in the Lord and have walked with him all the days of our lives, we have to be able to say, I am not who I was.

Paul is blatant on that. This is what some of you were, but now you've been transformed. Psalm 24, verse 1, spoke about this some last week.

The earth is the Lord's and all that contains the world and those who dwell in it, for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers. Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood or to an idol and is not sworn deceitfully, he shall receive a blessing from the Lord in righteousness or favor from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of those who seek and who seek thy face, O Jacob.

Who's going to go into the holy place? The one with clean hands and a pure heart. Holiness is required. Required for what? It's required for fellowship with God.

It's required for the favor of God, and it's required for assurance of salvation. Because the person who's living in unholiness reads all the warnings, don't be deceived. If you live like this, you don't make it in.

He has no assurance. The person who's impure in heart reads that the pure in heart will see God. He has no assurance.

The people who are living in unholiness, blatantly knowing it, someone's living in an affair, someone else, violent, rapist, someone else, a bank robber, someone else, pathological liar, they read without holiness, no one will see the Lord. They don't have assurance of salvation, and they've got no proof of it either, friends. It's one thing to say, man, I can't believe it.

That guy just asked me a question, and I lied to him. Instead of telling him the truth, I lie, I can't believe I did it. God, I'm so sorry.

I'll call him on the phone right now and set it straight. That's not a liar. Lord, I can't believe.

Where did that lustful thought come from? And I let it sit there for 10 seconds. God, I'm sorry. You turn from it.

That's uncharacteristic. That's not a sexually immoral person. Those who live in sin, those who are dominated by it, those who are characterized by it have no proof of the new birth and have no assurance of salvation.

If you don't believe that, after all the scripture we gave you and other verses I referenced that you can look up, just read through 1 John, friends. You get down on your knees and you read through 1 John and have it out with the Word of God and the Spirit of God. Holiness is beautiful.

God is holy. Holiness is required and holiness is costly. Holiness is costly.

Let's hear what Jesus himself has to say about this in Matthew, the 5th chapter, repeated almost exactly in Mark, the 9th chapter. See, the problem with those who say, well, that's just Old Testament is there's a whole lot of that Old Testament in the New. What do you think would happen as Paul's preaching in the book of Acts, quoting from the Hebrew Bible and say, yeah, that's just Old Testament.

Jesus says, as it is written here, that's just Old Testament. Paul writes to Timothy, all scripture is inspired by God. Hey, Paul, the only scripture we have is Old Testament.

I think you get my point here. Verse 27 of Matthew 5, you've heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery, but I say to you that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if your right eye makes you stumble, if it causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it from you, for it's better for you that one of the parts of your body perish than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

If your right hand makes you stumble, if it causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it from you, for it's better for you that one of the parts of your body perish than for your whole body to go into hell. Now, go over to Mark the 9th chapter. Now, obviously, Jesus is not actually telling me to cut out my right eye or to cut off my right hand, but he's using an extreme figure of speech to get the point across.

An extreme figure of speech. And we don't want to downplay the severity of the image. See, what we do is we say, he doesn't really want me to cut off my right hand, he doesn't really want me to gouge out my eye, and we miss the whole verse.

Instead of saying, well, what is he saying? Mark chapter 9, verse 43. Of course, the whole context is important. If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off.

It is better for you to enter life crippled than having your two hands to go into hell into the unquenchable fire. Some manuscripts keep repeating verse 48, we'll just read through until we get to it. If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off.

It is better for you to enter life lame than having your two feet to be cast into hell, and if your eye causes you to stumble, cast it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than having two eyes to be cast into hell where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched for everyone will be salted with fire. Everyone will be salted with fire.

Here's Isaiah in the presence of God, undone. What does God do? One of the angels, one of the seraphs comes with a coal from the altar of God and with tongues touches the coal to the prophet's lips. You know that beautiful song, take me into the holy of holies, take me in by the blood of the lamb.

Whenever we sing that song, I always pray for mercy as we sing, for mercy on the congregants because a lot of the people, maybe a husband and wife, were just ripping into each other, calling each other idiots and jerks right before they pulled up. Maybe one of the men about to sing that song has been looking lustfully at the young lady next to him. Who knows what's been going on? And we kind of throw our heads back with that blissful smile, raise our hands in kind of the, you know, the slightly tilted posture.

Take the coal, touch my lips, here I stand. Tell you what, next time I have a barbecue at my house, you come over and you pray that same prayer. I'll take one of the earthly, you stand there with that sweet smile before I come with that coal right off the fire and touch it to your lips.

That's not a prayer you pray lightly. Touch my lips with fire, with a burning coal? There's a purging that you go through. Now listen, hear me carefully.

If there's one thing that the Lord laid on my heart last night and this morning as I prayed and meditated on these things, it's this. How many of us were in the world, were doing sinful things before we got saved? Raise your hands. It wasn't just from your earliest days you've always loved Jesus.

Raise your hands again, all of mine. Most all of you here can relate on one level or another to what I'm saying, but when you were confronted with the gospel, you realized that it meant a radical life change. If you heard it right, if you understood right.

I wanted to be a rock drummer. I wanted to play drums in a rock band. I was 16 years old.

I had my long hair. I was in a little band then. We were good for our age.

I'd gotten a couple of, you know, awards for musical skill and so on, and my plan was to be a decadent, sinful rock drummer. Drugs, immorality, that was my goal, to live like that. You know, the rock idols were really idols for me.

I wanted to emulate that lifestyle. Now, when God starts dealing with my heart, I understand something now. You know, I didn't have to be a theologian or a biblical scholar to know this.

If I was going to follow Jesus, I couldn't have my lifestyle. I couldn't be some sinful rock star. Couldn't do it.

If I had been a very religious Jew, I wasn't very religious. If I'd been very religious, I probably wouldn't have gone into drugs and everything the way I did. But if I had been a very religious Jew, and I thought of the cost of following Jesus, it would have cost me everything.

I would have been ostracized by my family. I would have been pronounced dead. I could have even been physically harmed.

I wouldn't be able to marry within that context anymore. Let's say I had a future. Maybe I was going to be a rabbi, and I couldn't have done that.

We realize different areas, God required of us, some people, whether it was stealing, whatever it was, and God dealt with you. If you're going to follow Him, it's your sin or the Savior. We got saved, and at some point, we understood what it cost, and we took up the cross to follow Jesus.

But somehow, now that we are walking with Him, we forget that holiness is still costly. We thought we have made the lifestyle choices that we had to make so as to live for God, and now we don't have to make them anymore, the radical, difficult ones, because we're already living for Him. We still may have to chop off our right hand for Him.

What am I saying? I'll give you an example. Let's say you're a beach lover. You love to be on the beach.

You just love to be out there in the waves and in the water. And there are no secluded beaches near you. And when you want to go swimming or you want to go to the pool in your neighborhood, there are people clad in every imaginable kind of outfit, barely clad at all, almost nude, strutting around.

You say, by the way, I have no problem with lust while I'm there, friend. It's not because you're holy, it's because you're hard. It's not because you're deep, it's because you're dull.

The person into hardcore pornography is not stimulated by softcore pornography. The person at the nudist colony is not stimulated by the human body. Is it because they're holy? Boy, where are the shouting amens over that point? Someone says, I go to the beach, man, I'm weak.

Something's the matter with me. I go there and I come back troubled with lustful thoughts. You're not weak, you're stupid.

And that applies especially to men, although women can have those problems. Ladies, if you dare go around semi-clad on the beach, if you're younger and you do it, God have mercy on you because you're being a stumbling block and you're causing people to sin. That's a dangerous place to be in.

God never created you to be an object of sexual temptation or fantasy or desire for the opposite sex. There's a wholesome, loving relationship between husband and wife that's fulfilling and blessed. But how dare we parade around like the world.

You say, but man, I love the beach. You have to give it up. You have to give it up.

But, what but? What's the big deal? I was thinking the other day about email. And I'm a computer-oriented person because I'm an author and so many different areas in my life I'm working on. I'm writing all the time.

Got home last night and I've got a private office line in my house and then just the line for the family. And I'm sitting there at the computer about 2.30 in the morning and the phone rings. Who in the world is calling me at 2.30 in the morning? The phone rings.

And I'm sitting there writing, working on a book. The phone rings. It's my wife.

Go to sleep. Now, I do have to admit I was tired. And I did respond favorably to the suggestion not to stop writing and not to listen to my wife but for the sake of this morning session so I wouldn't be wiped out.

So, she had a word of wisdom for me there. But, you know, I'm at the computer all the time and I've got friends around the world and I'm emailing them and they're emailing me and, you know, it's a very handy thing. You don't have to print a letter out.

You don't have to send posts. You don't have to wait days. You don't even have to send the fax out.

Just there, it's done. No expensive long-distance call. You can email around the world.

It's very convenient. But, you know, also when you're at the computer a lot, you know, virtually every computer you get now is going to have internet access. And before you know it, the devil can tempt anybody.

Don't think you're untemptable. 1 Corinthians 10, 12, the Him who thinks he stands takes heed lest he fall. You got to be careful.

You got to put up barriers to keep you from sin. Look at Proverbs tells about avoiding lust is to turn the other way. Avoid the thing.

Turn the other way. Make choices. I stayed in hotels and when I go there, you know, when they're setting things up, I've said to them, I want to stay in a hotel without a television.

Let me tell you something. I'd like to have the TV there because I may just want to catch some news or I may be absolutely exhausted from several days of ministry and want to catch a little sports. But there's so much junk that comes in and hotel TVs that I don't want to have the possibility of temptation of flipping it on.

So I make a certain decision. I've stayed in people's homes when I'd much rather stay in a hotel for the privacy I can have. I've stayed in people's homes just to be in a totally separate environment where that junk isn't there.

You hear what I'm saying? In other words, it's not my preference, but it's a choice for the purpose of holiness. And I thought, you know, email could be like a right hand to me. If I had a problem with getting on the internet and, you know, all the time or once a month or, you know, I'd end up watching some junk, you know, or finding some sinful pictures or some perverse stuff that's out there.

Then the only solution, I thought, what if it meant not being around a computer? Cut off your right hand. If I had that problem, how do you deal with it? Cut off your right hand. See, it may cost you something, but you know, you know, listen, if I talk about sexual sin, we convict half of the born-again ministers in America.

We talk about compromised lifestyle, you know. You know the things in character. You know the things in thought life.

You know the things that you watch, that you take in, that you say that are displeasing to God. There's no excuse for friends. It's ugly, it's polluting, and we got to nail it to the cross.

And we've got to say, Lord, make me holy as you are holy. Or pray the prayer of Robert Murray McShane from last century. Make me as holy as a saved sinner can be.

Lord, as a saved performer said, make me as holy as can be. Holiness is costly. You may have to make certain choices.

The Lord specifically laid this on my heart, somebody here. Pastor, you may have a secretary that is like your right hand. She does things for you without which you couldn't even function in ministry.

But you find yourself physically drawn to her, and you see that she's leaning on you emotionally. Maybe she was engaged to be married, and the marriage broke off, and now you see her leaning on...and you start to see something coming to your friends. If you can't put up walls between you and her, then it's better that you write out all the memos yourself.

Better that you pay her salary for a few months and send her out and hire some man that you don't even like. You need to make choices. I'm almost done, but I want to underscore this by saying something I often mention.

I hate to mention it. It hurts to mention it, but I need to say it. From 71 to 87, before we moved to Maryland, there were four different men that were either my pastor or fellow worker in a senior position with me or ministry head over me, four different people that I related to in a senior way.

Even if it was a fellow worker, still that person was technically the pastor or the head. Four different people, three out of the four, all of them prayerful people, all of them devoted men, all of them with excellent leadership qualities in different areas. They were all, you know, very distinct.

Three out of the four destroyed their ministries through adultery. Friends, we need to get serious. Let me tell you one other thing about revival, then I'm going to close.

Devil's coming after you. The attack will be there, friend. God starts moving and the devil will pick up old sins and old temptations, and things you thought you were free from for years, he'll come after you.

And the one way to keep moving forward is keep the devil on the run. Don't wait to counterattack after he's just clubbed you and pulled you down. Don't wait till you're lying there in your shame, wishing things were different, and you go on the offense.

Young people, set your standards high. Set your standards high. Set them in such a way that you know God can smile on them and bless them.

Be holy, the Lord says, because I'm holy. Friends, I say it's about time for holiness. Would you all stand to your feet with me, please? If God is dealing with you, listen to me.

We're going to pray together. I'm not going to be talking to people who are laying hands on people now. I'd need to say that three or four times because somehow it doesn't always sink in.

If God is dealing with you, you know what it's about, friend. I may have been saying A, and the Holy Spirit was speaking B to you. God's dealing with you, and you need to respond.

We're going to pray together, and then these altars are going to be open. You get up here, and you pour out your heart to God. You get up here, and you talk to him.

He knows exactly what it's about, and he'll meet you. He'll change you. There are many a time in my life when I would have needed to respond to this very message because God was dealing with me, or there was an area where I was concerned about, or I saw something slipping or something wrong.

Friends, by the power of God, you can live a holy life. You can live a holy life by the power of God. You can do it.

The devil is a tempter. The devil is out to destroy. I know the battles in the flesh the same as you.

That's why I try and put up more walls and barriers and protection. That's why I try to be sensitive to correction coming from any source. That's why I try and be sensitive.

My wife tells me, you know, I haven't been acting right, or I've been short-tempered or something. Instead of reacting, I try to hear it. That's unholy.

That's ungodly. That's wrong. None of us are above the correction of the Lord, and God corrects those whom he loves.

God disciplines his children. The discipline may not be pleasant. Those of you who have been in blatant, willful sin, you're going to need to sit down with other leadership and get it right.

If it means you've got to step out from what you're doing for a while for the purpose of restoration, it's better to do it, better to cut out that right hand and pluck out that right eye. Again, don't go out of here and literally start chopping hands and plucking eyes. But what I'm talking about is even more costly in many cases.

It's time for holiness. It's time for us to radiate holiness, and it's time for us to know no matter where we are, the blood of Jesus has lost its power. The strength of the Holy Spirit is there.

The Word of God will be our guiding light and our path. God can and will keep us holy. You may be in a battle.

You may have really slipped up. Every one of us has slipped up. Every one of us knows the truth of the battle, and if you walk with God, you can testify, I can live holy.

I can live holy. That can be the characteristic of my life. By the grace of God, by the help of God, you can do it.

Just like He took some of you out of the incredible mess you were in and changed you. You can do it, friends. We're going to pray together.

If God's dealing with you, the altars are open. I'll be just staying and praying in general for a little while, but the altars are open. At some point in the afternoon, they need to clear the building for the custodians to get in and get things ready for tonight, but you'll have time to respond.

Our book table will be open for a bit, so there's no rush. The service is not until 7 tonight. You can do without food for a little while.

Let God deal with you. Father, may the sword of your spirit cut into us today and do surgery. Remove everything unclean, everything that defiles.

As you spoke to us, Lord, through your servant Paul, having therefore these promises that you will dwell in our midst and be our God, having therefore these promises, let us purify ourselves from everything that defiles, perfecting holiness in your fear. May that be our walk. May that be our testimony.

May your spirit come and remove the crud and the junk, fortify our hearts and minds. In Jesus' name, amen. If God's dealing with you, you need to spend some time at the altar.

The altars are open. Don't leave until you know you've got what you need. Thank you, Jesus.

Those that want to just stay and sit, that's perfectly fine. The Lord's spoken to you clearly about something. Write it down before you lose it.

Tell someone that you need to, but these altars are open. You're among friends. You can pour your heart out.

Jesus. Jesus. Jesus.

He cleanses, friends. He washes. There's no condemnation here.

There is no condemnation here. Only a call from a holy father to say, behold. Jesus.

Close your eyes. Seek his face. He'll meet you.

He'll touch you. Jesus. Jesus.

The night meetings are conducted a certain way. The altar ministry a certain way. Day sessions are conducted differently.

You just deal with the Lord. Jesus. Jesus.

He's near to the brokenhearted. Never forget that. He's near to those who are contrite in spirit.

Jesus. Lord Jesus. Talk to him honestly.

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