

Does Holiness Matter Anymore

by Shane Idleman

This sermon emphasizes the importance of holiness and righteousness in the Christian walk, highlighting the struggle between the old sinful nature and the new nature in Christ. It stresses the need for continual spiritual renewal, resisting temptation, and living a life set apart for God. The speaker addresses the battle against lust, the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit, and the necessity of repentance and realignment in the believer's life.

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:15, Romans 7:24, Ephesians 4:22, James 4:7, 2 Timothy 2:3, Galatians 5:16, 1 Corinthians 6:18, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Psalm 101:3, Ephesians 6:14

Topics: "Holiness", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

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Transcript

God is holy. God is holy. 1 Peter.

You must be holy in everything you do just as God, who chose you to be His children, is holy. Now, this would answer a lot of questions. Obedience on this would answer a lot of questions.

If we would do this part, we would be able to answer a lot of our own questions. Should I do this? Should I marry this person? Should I go here? Right, all the should I, should I, should I. Is this God's will? I don't know. Well, here's what we do know is God's will.

Be holy. For I am holy. Be holy, be set apart.

And I hate to use this example again, but it keeps coming to mind, is often you'll have couples that are living together, right? And you know what that usually involves. We don't have to go there. They're living together and they say, well, is it God's will that we get married? We don't know what to do.

Well, you're breaking this one right here. So it's gonna be hard for Him to direct you in other areas unless you get holy and set apart for Him and begin to honor His Word. Not perfect, right? Not perfection, but

direction.

So if we could just obey this, more often than not, we would get clear direction. Be holy in everything you do. For He Himself has said, you must be holy because I am holy.

The New King James says this, as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to former lusts. Wow, the Bible's not very popular, is it? I don't like the word conform and I don't like the word obedience. Right, we want to check those two words.

We want to do whatever we want, however we want. But the Bible calls us to be obedient children and conforming ourselves away from our former lusts and following after Christ and putting on this garment of holiness. Here's what it looks like.

The former lusts, let me clarify what that is. The old man, let me clarify what that is. The old nature, Shane, I'm still not getting you, okay.

Here's what it is. When you believe and a person believes in Jesus, they are saved, they are filled with God's Spirit, they are filled with joy, the peace. Have you felt that before? The burden's been lifted and now I'm living for Christ and you're all excited.

You wake up in the morning, you're like, oh, wow, this old nature's still tugging on me, isn't it? I thought I was delivered. No, it's still there. It's still there wanting you to go, hey, remember the old Shane? Come on back to the old Shane.

Remember hitting Vegas and the nightclubs and the party scene? Remember all that? Come on, old Shane. Wait, I don't like old Shane. What's he still doing knocking on my door? So we either put on the new man and we, right here what he says, do not conform yourself.

Do not turn back to that former life and begin to embrace those things that used to be a part of your life. Now you're living for Christ. Embrace the things of God.

And that's a big misconception in the church. Again, two sides of it. One side says we don't wanna talk about obedience.

We don't wanna talk about righteousness or holy living. We don't wanna talk conforming ourselves. I don't like this stuff.

It's all about grace and mercy. Well, that's sloppy agape. Right, it's terrible.

That's not grace. That's license to sin. And we minimize.

We say, well, it's just the work of the Holy Spirit. Right, but the Holy Spirit helps us live a holy life. But then the other side is just beating people up, right? You gotta be holy.

You gotta be holy. Beating them up, you shouldn't drink, you shouldn't smoke, you shouldn't go to the movies, you shouldn't wear pants, you shouldn't do all this stuff. And we just kind of beat people.

Well, you know what I mean. You should wear pants, but women, you know, pants and different things. And we can get caught up sometimes.

So the good thing is to find the middle ground. Be holy because I am holy. Holiness, I'm glad you asked, it resembles the character and nature of God.

So what do you have on your wrist? Those people used to have, right? What would Jesus do? Holiness, it's coming out from among the world and being set apart so I can live like Christ. If I'm saved and I go back to my old life, I will be ineffective for the kingdom of God. I would be miserable.

Right, I mean, fill with the Spirit? No, I'd be quenching and grieving the Spirit. This church wouldn't be here. I'd be on my fourth marriage.

I'd be the prodigal son. And I'd probably be hung over today. But that nature's still, Shane, come back, remember? Isn't it funny how it shows you the good old days, but never the bad days? Your flesh shows you, remember the, oh, I remember, but why don't you show me the bad times? Right, why don't you show me what it costs me? Because the flesh will never do that.

The enemy will never show you that. He often shows you the enticement, not the hook in the lure. Right, you throw that lure in the water.

Oh, look at that, that looks so good. A fish bites it, what happens? He's in the boat, but it looks so good. See, that's what your flesh does.

It will always remind you of the pleasure, not the penalty. It'll always show you the gratification, not the results that can happen from making that decision. So that's why holiness is so important.

It's saying, come out from among them, come from the world, and be set apart. So you look differently in what we watch, where we go, how we act, right? We're conforming ourselves back to, towards Christ, or back to what we used to be. Think about this, if people now, if they're watching the walking dead, they're not living life through the Spirit, because these things are corrupting the mind often.

Now, if somebody watched it, I'm not gonna pull you out. I'm just saying, though, be careful what you watch, because it can draw us in, it can conform us to our old lifestyle. What about our thought life? Where do our thoughts go? Where do we go? Where do we go? Do you know that most people fall back into sin because they start to step back in the wrong direction? Nothing happened.

Step back in the right, well, nothing happened. You know, they start to go back to that, well, see, nothing happened. This is actually joyful, I remember these times.

And it says, God's nature, His character, He says, no, come back and be holy. A scripture I love is, I forgot to reference it, but it's worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

It's one thing, one thing I know for sure, is when you're living for the Lord, you're holy, you're set apart, you're falling forward, your heart's in the right direction, not perfection, you worship Him in the beauty of holiness. Worship is sweet. The Word of God comes alive.

You want to go to church. When that old man gets you back, that old nature brings you back, you don't want to go to church. You can't worship.

You can't live your life for Christ because you're in this bondage now of going back to the flesh. So the Bible says, come out from among me, be holy, be set apart. That's His character.

God is holy. And it's interesting, of all the attributes of God in the Bible, I could be wrong, but I've done studies on this before, I've looked it up many years ago, the attribute that stands out above all other attributes in the entire Bible is holiness. God is holy.

Abraham, he called Him, I'm a holy God, you will follow me. The children of Israel, come out from your sins and be holy, for I, your God, am holy. Throughout the New Testament, holiness and living.

And it's interesting because holiness is the closest you will get to Christ and His character on this side of heaven. As you allow the Holy Spirit, I don't want to put too much emphasis on works either, right, gotta do this, gotta do this. We actually surrender to the work of the Spirit.

And the Holy Spirit begins to change us and conform us into the image of Christ. And that's when we become alive, spiritually speaking. So if a person is not alive, spiritually speaking, they're dead, I would want them to examine their faith.

Have they been quenching and grieving the Holy Spirit? I guarantee you, holiness is probably not part of their life. Anytime you see somebody slide away from Christianity, whatever you want to call it, backslidden, whatever you want to call it, this is always missing. Now you have legalistic Pharisees, right, and they're just tearing everybody apart, they're acting so holy and yet they're holding on to a lot of secret sin that they don't tell people about.

But usually you'll see somebody who falls away, this aspect is gone from their life. You don't see somebody, man, Shane, I'm spending every hour in the morning with God, with worship, with prayer, with fasting, I'm living my life for God, I'm watching, being careful with what I watch, where I go, I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and I don't know what happened. I just woke up today, and I just backslid.

I got back in my, I don't know how that happened, no, it's usually a slow deterioration. That's how the devil works, he brings us back one step at a time. So our character is either going to resemble that of our Lord and Savior, or his nemesis.

Holiness or unholy, godly or ungodly, broken and humble or haughty and arrogant. Our character, our lives are going to resemble one or the other. And I think it's okay to share our struggles.

Sometimes you let people know, hey, I'm struggling with that as well. And you're transparent. Holiness affects everything, that's why repentance is a beautiful word.

So many of you, maybe people hearing this later, are getting convicted right now. Like, I'm not where I need to be, this is convicting me. There's a beautiful word called repentance.

It just means I'm changing my mind about how I see, how I've been living, and I'm going to start now making actions that glorify Christ, and I'm going to get back on track. I'm repenting. I'm turning from my current direction, and I'm turning back to God.

That's all he asks, is that we repent and get back on track. Now the common question comes up on this part of theology, why should Christians repent? We've already repented. Well, I believe there's two different kinds of repentance.

One is as a sinner coming to know their Savior, they have to repent of their sin, of their sinful nature, of who they've been, and they're turning everything over to God. They're seeing sin the way God sees it, and

they know they need him, they're repenting. But then as a believer, do you ever take your car in for realignment? Do you know what that is? No, no, no, no, no, no.

I got to realign things. It's going, I got to realign things. So that's repentance in the life of a believer, is we're realigning our heart.

We're getting our heart right, we're repenting, because the opposite of repentance is not needing to repent. So what believer in their right mind never needs to repent? It's impossible. So there's a repentance unto salvation, and there's a repentance that realigns us with God's will, and his character, and his nature.

So the third area of God and his character is God is righteous. God is righteous. I'm going to read Ephesians in just a minute, but I want to talk about this because it is different than holiness.

Righteousness is when somebody is made right. There's no guilt anymore. So when a person believes in God, they go from guilty, right, with the judge hammering down on the bench, he's hammering down, he's saying, guilty, guilty, guilty is charged.

But then when we believe, repent, and accept the gracious gift that Christ did for us on the cross, we are now not guilty. We have a right standing righteousness. We actually put on, it's called, in theological terms, it's called imputed righteousness.

So Christ's righteousness is imputed, is given to us. Isn't that an amazing concept? So now we can stand before God righteous, not being guilty because of what He did. So that's part of God's nature.

He is righteous. Throw off your old, evil nature and your former way of life. Here's another Scripture.

Boy, those people who think we don't have to do anything are really in trouble if you look at the Bible. Right, oh, that's legalism. Shane, you're getting too legalistic.

You're a moralist. Do, do, do, do, do. But what do these, these, these, these say? Right? Look at that.

Throw off your old, evil nature. That tells me it's wanting to come on. Right? You know, you're starting to slip on the jacket coat.

Here comes that sin again. Here comes, oh, no, you've thrown, no, no, you're not getting me. I'm taking those thoughts captive.

You're not taking me back into bondage. I'm throwing that jacket in the fire. And then a month later, is it cold outside? Yeah, let me put my jacket on again.

Right, let me put, and then, no, throw off this evil nature. Throw it off and get rid of the former way of life, which is rotten through and through. It's funny how these people say some of these translations are weak.

Some of these are fairly strong on a lot of these Scriptures. That's pretty to the point. Which is rotten through and through, full of lust and deception.

See, that's interesting. The old nature, I don't know exactly how it works. Nobody really does, but there's still within us this corruption, this lust, this greed, this deception, and it can either be fueled or it can be quenched.

So it's interesting. The more you fuel and feed the sin, the more you quench and grieve the Spirit. But when you feed on the things of God, you put off your former lust, and you begin to be filled with the Spirit, then guess what is quenched on this side? The old nature.

That's why many people can walk in the newness of life. The old is past, and it'll knock on the door sometimes, but we don't even answer it now. Because you've learned to put off and take off that old evil nature that is full of lust and deception.

And that's the interesting thing about lust. Lust is, many people think, just go immediately to sexual lust. But lust, biblically speaking, in the New Testament, is anything that distracts and pulls at your flesh, and pulls it away from God.

Did you know people got in trouble and rebuked in the Old Testament for lusting after meat? Don't worry, I'm not going vegetarian on you. I'm just saying, but the lust, the lust, the lust. I gotta get Carl's Jr. on the way home.

I gotta get Panda Express after that. And then I'm stopping by, what's a good one? 31 Flavors. And I'm just feeding that lust.

Or you have sexual lust, or anything that the flesh wants. It'll even lust for laziness. You ever want to just sit around the house all week? Watching things we shouldn't be watching? That's a lust of the flesh, because the flesh wants, I'm going to just tell you a little secret.

It wants to do the least amount of work, and the shortest amount of time, and get the full amount of satisfaction that it can. That's what the lust wants to do. The lust is not your friend.

It is your enemy. There's something inside of you that wants to kill you. I mean, that's pretty scary, I guess.

A bold statement, but it's true. If your flesh was left to its own devices, it would destroy you. I would not be here.

I guarantee, I would not be here. Because it wants full reign and full control. So he said, instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and your attitudes.

So this can apply to unbelievers as well. There must be a spiritual renewal. You must be born again to truly put off.

There's no way an unbeliever can put off their old nature. They're a slave to it. They're a slave to it.

You're trapped. You're a slave. You're in bondage.

You have to be freed from that. And then when a person becomes a Christian, it's funny because they often say the same thing, like Paul. Well, if I'm free to that, if I'm dead to sin, why is it still alive in me? Because see, although you're not under the bondage as a slave, the influence is not left.

The influence is not left. Many of you right now, I'm not going to list a whole bunch of things, but you know what you used to struggle with or still do maybe. It still calls your name, right? Late at night, early, whatever it is.

And you say, why isn't this gone? I thought I was free. And sometimes God delivers. Thank God for that.

But sometimes that little rascal stays around, doesn't he? I mean, I get jealous sometimes of people. I remember one guy told me, gosh, it's been 2005 or 2006, I think he said, told me this. He goes, man, brother, when I was saved, God never, I never, I never wanted to touch alcohol again.

It's like, why didn't you do that for me? Because ice cold beer sure looks good. I can't, no matter where I go. What is that? When I wasn't completely delivered, you don't ever desire chocolate anymore? I can't even walk by See's Candy.

What's wrong with me, right? So sometimes though, that just doesn't immediately leave. Sometimes there's a battle. Sometimes there's a struggle.

Sometimes sin still looks good. And I know I joke about this sometimes and people have to know their own limits, but that's one reason. Maybe it'll change, but I haven't been to Vegas since I was recommitted in my life.

Because that brought back too much stuff, right? Too much prodigal living was there. And I don't wanna go back into the same atmosphere I came from. Now, God might call me to preach here at a conference or at a church.

I don't know, I'm open for that. But I'm also cautious knowing that this flesh is ready to come back alive any chance you give it, right? Do you realize that? Most people that fall back into addictions, they start by saying just one more. It's been years, I can try that again.

I know people went back, they're in rehab today because they went back to alcohol seven years later or 14 years later or two years later or opiates or they get caught on pain meds. They've been doing great for a couple years and then there goes a shoulder injury and then gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme. And then three years later, they're still in the gimme phase.

Because that dormant addiction just needs a little spark and it'll take you again. That's Bible. That's why I give no place for the devil.

Make no provision for the flesh. That means don't plan ahead. Don't give the flesh a little because you give him an inch, he'll take a mile.

That's I think where that saying comes from. I can't prove it, but that's a Bible saying. You give the devil an inch and he'll take it all.

So there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and your attitudes and that's why it's so important that as believers, we must continually be filled with the Holy Spirit. When Paul said, don't be drunk like with wine, but be filled with the Holy Spirit, most commentators will tell you that verb, it's an active present tense verb, meaning be filled, continually, be, be, being filled. I think there's two Bs, be, be, being filled.

It's not like, oh, I filled a conversion 20 years ago. Oh, brother, you are leaky. You've leaked out.

You need to get filled again with the Holy Spirit. And that's one of the things I would encourage you to do. Try to be, not try, that's even not a good word, but fully surrender and continually be filled.

I need Him every day. I mean, I can drive to church and I don't want to preach sometimes. I say, Lord, I need You to fill me with the Holy Spirit.

If there's any pride, there's arrogance, there's wrong attitudes, there's moodiness, whatever it is, Lord, begin to remove it. I just humbled myself before You. I can't go up there and preach Your Word unless You do a redeeming work in my heart.

And then wouldn't you know it by the second song, praise God, praise God, now I'm ready to preach. Now I'm ready to preach when I've been emptied of self and God, I need You. I'm relying on You to preach Your Word.

And then you're filled with the Holy Spirit. And you stay on that filling of the Holy Spirit. You're nice to people.

You're gentle. You don't let anger get a foothold. God, areas where God has been dealing with you, don't go back to it, don't go back.

You don't go back to it. And you stay filled with the Holy Spirit. But like D.L. Moody said, we're leaky vessels.

Right, it's leaking. And you have to stay underneath the fountain of life every day. That's why worship is so important.

That's why the Word of God is so important. That's why fasting is so important because it actually starves the flesh. If you want the quickest way to starve the flesh, stop feeding it.

Think about that. Stop feeding on the things that are destroying you. I have to stop watching this stuff.

Then get rid of the computer and the TV. Oh no, Shane, I can't do that. Well, how bad do you want it? I like what A.W. Tozer said.

He said, don't come up here and cry about it. Go home and live it out. See, we all want to cry about it, but very few want to make the changes necessary.

Lot of rabbit trails this morning, I'm telling you. So again, God is righteous. Instead, there must be spiritual renewal of your thoughts and your attitudes.

You must display a new nature because you are a new person created in God's likeness. Righteous, holy, and true. So all these verses tell me there is a struggle within.

Isn't there? Please don't leave me hanging on this one. Don't you guys feel a struggle, or is it just me? Okay, amen. Even Paul said it.

Even Paul said it. Oh, wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of sin and death? That's what I feel like. I can't wait till heaven.

And my goodness, this body of sin and death. Who will deliver me? For Paul says, the things I want to do, I don't do. And the things I don't want to do, I do.

Oh, wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of sin and death? For with the mind, the mind I serve the law of Christ. I want God. I want more of Him.

But with the flesh, I serve the law. With my sinful nature, I serve the law of flesh. Who do I serve? Who do I turn to? So Paul felt the struggle, but there's no excuse to give in to it.

I've seen people excuse sin by saying, see, Paul struggled. Paul couldn't handle it. Paul gave in.

No, I don't think Paul's saying he gave in to it. He's saying, who will deliver me? For with the mind, I serve the law of Christ, that Christ will deliver me. That's the only hope, being filled with the Spirit of God and having Christ.

Now the New King James on this verse says this, that you put off, put off concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to deceitful lust, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God in true righteousness and holiness. So there is a putting on, isn't there? There's a putting off. And I don't know about you, but I've been to some good churches in my past.

I've been to not so good churches, and I don't remember a lot of holiness preaching. I mean, I read the old Methodist circuit writers, William Bramwell, Methodist circuit writer 1700s, 1800s, William Booth. I mean, maybe it's me, but I've got books this high, and I'm like, where's these messages? They didn't have the internet.

They didn't have the internet. They didn't have pornography, the click of a finger. They didn't have all this lust all around, and yet they preach the wonderful doctrine of holiness.

But now we come in where we actually need it more, in my opinion, right? It's everywhere. It's everywhere. But we avoid it, because it's uncomfortable.

It's uncomfortable. It was funny, last week, a person came, I don't think they'll be back, but they told their friend, I don't know why he gets so worked up and makes it so hard, and why can't we just love people? Like, well, yeah, of course, but don't get rid of this stuff. This is the meat.

This is, we all want the dessert. But God's, actually, God says, the way you get the dessert is to eat the meat first. The way you want the deep riches of Christ, you want the Bible to come alive, you wanna be on your face before God worshiping, then you start to live a holy life, because without holiness, no one will see the Lord.

Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. The angels cry, holy, holy, holy is our God. So where's that doctrine now? That's what the church desperately needs.

That's what the church desperately needs, is holiness. Not more Pollocks. Holiness.

Not more Facebook ads. Let me just read some biblical commands. I didn't look them all up.

Biblical commands about fighting the flesh because of righteousness, and because we're called to be holy. The Bible says, submit yourself to God, and resist the devil. Endure temptation as a good soldier.

Deny the flesh and be filled with the spirit. Do not yield to temptation or make provision for it. Crucify the flesh.

Flee sexual immorality. Don't be brought under the power of temptation. God will make a way to escape it that you may be able to bear it.

What do you do with all those verses? Candy-coating churches? Seeker-sensitive churches? What do you do with these verses? Well, that was for the New Testament time. No, it's not. We need it.

We need it. You, all of you, can go like this, click a few buttons, and you'll see what God says is an abomination. The holy in eyes, like Job says, I will not even set my eyes on things that are unworthy.

David said, do not put anything wicked before my eyes. How much more do we need this today? My God, our children are dying spiritually. Our marriages are falling apart because we're not obeying these areas of holiness.

It's powerful. I'll tell you what, the only way I truly met the resurrected Savior is because of this area. Surrendering my life, fill with the Spirit, getting back on track, removing all the things that used to pull me down, and fill with the Spirit of God.

I'll never forget. I was doing so good. It was 1999.

Sometimes I wonder if I'm too transparent for you. It was 1999. I gave my life back, and I was so full of God's Spirit.

You know when you're driving, and you're just joy unspeakable. You could pull over weeping, and God, you're so good. You're so good.

You're so good. And I was just worship music on. Right? Exchange CMT for worship music.

You know what that is, right? Country music television? Right? Come on, you all know. George Stray was playing Shania Twain, Conway Twitty. These make me want to go right back to my old lifestyle.

But this was different. I was on fire for God until that knock at the door. Not gonna answer that door.

But with the flesh, they answered the door. And there's a friend of mine with two 40 ounce Mickey's Big Mouths wanting to go to the fair. And that started, again, a cycle of defeat for many months.

Because I gave in when I knew I should have restrained. And you know that conviction, right? The alarm bells are going off. Ding, ding, ding, ding.

Stupid, stupid, stupid. But there's a choice you make. Do you obey that voice? Or do you obey the voice that's calling? And again, it reminds you, that would be fun.

Remember how much fun you used to have? Why don't you show me all the times I might have died of alcohol poisoning? Or hung over for two or three days straight? Why don't you show me those things, devil? Why don't you show me what it costs? Because the enticement is not in the penalty or the price a person pays. The enticement is in fulfilling that less for a season. What's the old saying? Sin takes you farther than you want to go.

Costs you more than you want to pay. And it keeps you longer than you want to stay. That's why this area of holiness and righteousness is one of the biggest things you can do as a Christian.

You put on the whole armor of Christ, the breastplate of righteousness. All these things, that keeps you filled with the Spirit. That keeps you from putting on the old man again and keeping the Holy Spirit filled within you.

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