

God's Passion for Holiness

by Steve Gallagher

God is not satisfied with our superficial success and prosperity, but desires a deeper consecration and commitment to Himself.

Duration: 39:13

Scripture: Job 1:1, Psalm 119:9, Matthew 6:33, 2 Corinthians 12:7, Hebrews 12:14, 1 Peter 1:15-16

Topics: "Holiness"

Description

In this sermon, Steve Gallagher emphasizes the importance of holiness in the lives of believers. He challenges the congregation to examine their homes and remove any worldly influences, such as television, magazines, and internet usage, that hinder their walk with God. Gallagher reminds the listeners that this call to holiness is personal and urges them to separate themselves from the ways of the world. He references the story of Job to illustrate God's desire for a deeper level of understanding and surrender in the lives of believers.

Transcript

The following message, entitled, God's Passion for Holiness, was presented by Steve Gallagher at Glad Tidings Assembly of God in Reading, Pennsylvania. Additional resources are available on our website at purelifeministries.org or by calling 1-888-PURE-LIFE. A couple of years ago I was eating lunch with Otis Stanley, who's the district superintendent or superintendent of the Southern New England district of the assemblies.

And he asked me a question, and his question was, actually asked me to come and speak to the pastors in that district on the subject of, why do our men keep falling in sexual sin? And as I started praying this past week about these services and just seeking the Lord about, what do you want me to share? Thursday morning, in my prayer time, that question rose up in my heart, just kind of out of the clear blue. Why do our men keep falling into sexual sin? And the answer to that that came to me is that we as a church, as a body, are not walking in the level of consecration that we should be. And because of the weakness of our commitment level to God, it has given room for sin of all kinds to pop up and flourish even within the church.

And of course that may not be so real to you as it is to me, but from what I understand and from my experience, I think that this is true. Some of the leading church people are saying that 20% of Christian men are in sexual sin. So we're not talking about a problem out there somewhere.

We're talking about a problem within our ranks. And I suppose that in some sense, our consecration level is going to affect people's lives. And I guess what came to me Thursday morning was that the reason we're not walking in a deeper consecration with God is because we have been so distracted by the things of this world.

We've basically filled our lives with other things that have crowded God out. And, you know, in a sense, we've become satisfied with very little of God. Whatever your level is, whether you're a godly dear saint like Nana here, or you're a young teenage girl like this girl over here, wherever you are, whatever, God isn't satisfied.

He wants more for you. And just to prove that, I'm going to look at three stories. Open to the book of Job, would you? We're going to look at three stories in the Word.

Now, church is going on to, you said, two or three o'clock, is that right? We might as well. Might as well just go ahead and do the whole thing now, since we're going to have a snowstorm tonight. I'll just ease into tonight's message.

Job chapter one. There was a man in the land of, I can't figure out, is this us or ooze? Where's our theological expert? Rob? Us. Okay, we've got the official word on it.

There was a man in the land of us whose name was Job, and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil. Man, what an awesome thing. I mean, can you imagine? Think of the Word of God, which is going to endure forever, had that spoken about you in it.

What a memorial. Wouldn't that be something? This man was so upright and so concerned about walking with God, and that his walk with God, and his sons and daughters, that they walked with God in uprightness of heart. He was so concerned about that, that it says in verse five that when his kids would get together and have a feast or something, he would sacrifice unto the Lord, just at the possibility that maybe one of them had had a bad thought or something.

I mean, this guy was, you know, he was into it. He was serious about his walk with God. Now, we all know the story here.

The scene shifts from earth to heaven, and just imagine this pristine, glorious, majestic scene in heaven, the throne room of God, and there is the Lord, the lowly one, our King, full of love and selflessness. I mean, that number three is only describing what Jesus is like. And in comes slithering, this filthy, vile, disgusting, disgusting, filled with so much pride and arrogance that he's insane.

This filthy thing, Satan. Yeah, be careful. And then there's this, you know, this conversation happens, and the Lord says in, you know, in a certain degree of parental pride, have you noticed my servant, Job? And Satan, you know how he is, he launches into an attack.

Well, sure, sure he'll obey you, because look at how you're blessing him. You've put a hedge all around him. And he, you know, yeah, he'll obey you because you're blessing him, giving him prosperity, but you take that away from him.

Let me put my hand against him, and he'll curse you to your face. And dear ones, this is the accusation, and this is what the Lord has to face in your life, that the enemy is there saying this to God. He's saying, oh yeah, these Christians, these American Christians, sure, they'll go to church, they'll go to a nice church

like this and sing some songs, because they're getting everything their way.

But you let me take some things away from them. Let me bring some suffering into their life. Let me take some of that prosperity, and they will curse you.

And Jesus has to face that. Well, anyway, so we know what happens. A Sabine cattle wrestling team rushes in and takes all his, you know, cattle or something, and fire decimates his sheep, you know, he's got all these thousands of sheep.

They're wiped out, and the aberrant tornado, you know, bounces on his house and wipes out all his kids. Everything he's got is just wiped out in one afternoon. And then, if that's not bad enough, then he has these angry red boils break out all over him.

And look at how he responded, verse 20. Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. Worshiped.

And when I, when we're talking about worship, we're not talking about, this is the day, this is, no, we're talking about something deep. This man walked with God, you understand? He walked with God, but God was not satisfied with him. He walked with God, but God was not satisfied.

And if you read through this whole book of Job, what you'll find is, you know, these other guys come, and they sit around, and they start talking about, you know, Job's problems, and everyone's spouting off their opinions. And you see, if you read what Job said, some of the things he said, he was a godly man, but there was pride in there. And he thought that he was somewhere that he wasn't, really.

And he had this, you know, this kind of spiritual pride about his walk with the Lord, self-righteousness. And so then in chapter 38, look at that, I turn right to it. Then all of a sudden, God shows up.

Be careful about what you say. You know, I'll tell you something, we're awfully quick to spout off our opinions, aren't we? All of a sudden, God shows up, and this is what he says to Job. Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now gird up your loins like a man, and I will ask you, and you instruct me.

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. And then he just pounds away for two chapters, you know, just pounding away at Job, and finally in chapter 40, he stops. And Job is probably just quaking, you know.

And Job says, behold, I am insignificant. What can I reply to you? I lay my hand on my mouth, you know. And well, God kind of was getting something through to him, but he still wasn't done.

He wasn't getting it, you know. So God launches into him again, and another two chapters of this pounding oration. And finally, finally, Job is humbled.

Finally, God is able to accomplish in him what he wishes to accomplish. And look what he says in chapter 42, verse 5. He says, I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you. Therefore, I retract and I repent in dust and ashes.

Now, a superficial person reads the rest of that chapter and gets down to the end, and God restores all Job's fortunes and stuff, and they sigh this big relief, you know. Oh, man, you know, I sure am glad God restored his fortunes to him. But dear ones, I mean, he enjoyed, you know, that prosperity for what,

another 10 years, 20 years, maybe.

But what God did inside him, he has been enjoying for 4,000 years and is going to enjoy off into an endless eternity for what God accomplished inside him. All right, pastor, well, I have to people in the whole congregation that believes me. I know what you're thinking.

I know what you're thinking. I move in the prophetic realm. Just kidding.

I shouldn't make jokes about that. You're thinking, well, Job's insignificant. Who's Job after all? I mean, you know, it's just this little story God put in there, and he's not like an important biblical figure.

So, you know, you're not making any, proving anything here. Okay, well, let's move back a few books to the book of 1 Samuel chapter 18, and let's look at the life of David. David is certainly one of the most prominent figures in the Old Testament.

Wouldn't you all agree with me on that? Well, we're up to three people now. That's good. David lived to be 70 years old, but I want to cut into his life when he was 20 years old.

By this time, David had been secretly anointed king by Samuel. By this time, he had slain a wild bear and a hungry lion. He had killed Goliath with a slingshot.

He had been responsible for the death of thousands of Philistines. In fact, the girls would sing songs about him every time he'd come back into town, and by this time, he'd already penned a number of the Psalms. Things could not have looked more promising for a young man in Israel at that time than they looked for David, but God wasn't satisfied.

God wanted something more in this young man's life. Let's look here at verse 10. We'll just read a couple of verses.

Now, it came about on the next day that an evil spirit from... What? Did your translation say from God? It came about on the next day that an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul, and he raved in the midst of the house while David was playing the harp with his hand, as usual, and a spear was in Saul's hand. Saul hurled the spear, for he thought, I'll pin David to the wall, but David escaped from his presence twice. And after this, David spent the next 13 years of his life on the lam, running for his life, living in caves, living out in the wilderness, in the Judean foothills, just, you know, and then on top of that, he had all, every dirtbag in all Israel came down and joined him, you know, so he has to have all, he's got these 400 men, you know, imagine a bunch of hell's angels or something, and I mean, that's what it was like, and he's, so he's living in these holes in the rocks and stuff for 13 years.

Now we get, you know, as Pastor mentioned, we have a live-in program, kind of like the Teen Challenge program, and it's six months long, and we get guys come in there and, you know, they complain about six months, how can I leave my life for six months? Well, let me tell you, most of their wives are happy for them to come to visit with us for a while, take them for a year or two, you know, by the time they get to that point, and, you know, and I say, don't whine to me, David was out there for 26 live-in programs. I mean, how much is it worth to us for God to do a work in our lives, dear ones? What does it mean to us? How real is the eternal kingdom of God to us? How much does it mean anything to us? Now the superficial success-is-everything person would immediately think, now wait a minute, all of Israel was praying for Saul to be, you know, taken out of the set, and for David to be installed, installed as king. Everyone knew what happened.

They knew that God had called David to be the king of Israel, and Saul, this lunatic, this madman, the guy was an idiot. That's okay to use that word, I think. He was, he was an idiot, you know, he was a madman.

And you know something, dear ones, I mean, we are so attuned to the success-is-everything mentality in America, we don't understand that the, that these standards and the principles that run the kingdom of heaven are not the same. God is not impressed with the size of our building, of how many people, God is not impressed with how many radio stations may carry, you know, your preaching or how many books you have on the bestseller. He's not impressed with any of that.

He's impressed with what's in a man's heart. That's what God's after, is trying to accomplish something in a man's heart. And you know, I mean, this meant so much to the Lord that He allowed His people, His kingdom on earth, Israel, to be run into the ground by this idiot, Saul.

I shouldn't use that word, I suppose, that's probably not good. But it meant so much to Him that He let His kingdom be run into the ground because He was wanting to accomplish something in David's life. It meant everything to Him.

Success is not everything. And you know, I said it in the first service, that this church, I mean, I want to say this in the right way, because it's not about man either, but this church, the buildings here, I mean, this is all wonderful, and you know, it's a wonderful church, it really is. But what God is doing here in this man's heart is more important than all these buildings.

Because what God can accomplish in the leader's hearts, and not just Pastor Brian, but Pastor Rob, and Ron, and Clark, and all the other folks, what He can accomplish in them, it makes them vessels for His power to move into the congregation. It's not about the building, it's about you, and what God is accomplishing inside you. And that first comes by what He's accomplishing in these men.

Bless them with 13 years in the wilderness. No, I'm just kidding. But you know, the superficial perspective is, we want everything to go smooth, we want everything to, you know, just prosper, and everything to, and there's a place for that, and God will bless, and you know, I'm not saying that it's some horrible thing, but I'm saying that the emphasis should not be on that, it should be on the inward life with God, and what God is wanting to accomplish in us.

And because of what He did in the life of David, for 3,000 years, people who have a heart after God, who have a hunger to know the Lord in a real way, can turn to the book of Psalms and find someone who has battled that thing through. You know what I mean? Aren't you grateful for what God did in David's life? Yes, amen. We're up to 15 now.

Alright, this is my last shot at it. I know what you're thinking now, you're thinking, well, these are Old Testament people, we're not in the Old Testament anymore. Okay, move to 2 Corinthians, chapter 12.

Everyone's impressed with Paul, so let's talk about Paul's life. When Paul wrote the book of 2 Corinthians, it was approximately 55 AD, give or take, and by this time, Paul had established himself as one of the most promising young religious leaders in the land. I mean, he was a student of Gamaliel, and to compare it would be like Billy Graham gathering a small group of young guys around him, you know, maybe five, ten guys, or David Wilkerson, or whoever, you know, and just really pouring his life into them one-on-one for several years.

But not only that, but then he had that tremendous experience with God on the Damascus Road, and then he spent ten years in obscurity, being trained by God, and then he was called by a word of prophecy, and to get the right setting, this was the hottest church around at the time, in Antioch, it'd be like being in Brooklyn Tabernacle, or David Wilkerson's church, or something, and all of a sudden, a word of prophecy goes forth, and I want you to take the word of God to the whole Gentile world. I mean, that's what happened, really, and by this time, he had established churches through his two journeys in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, and Ephesus, and if that wasn't enough, he had been taken up into the third heavens, we're told, and he saw things that were inexpressible. It was such a powerful, awesome experience, and God said, you can't tell people what I'm showing you, but God wasn't satisfied.

God wasn't satisfied with this man. What? What does it take? You know, well, dear ones, God's ways are not our ways. We think, I'm telling you, in America, success is everything, success, success, success, and that's all we think of, but success in the kingdom of God is what happens inside a man's heart.

Let's read some verses here. 2 Corinthians 12, we'll start with verse 7. Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, this is why, because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, to keep me from exalting myself, keep him from exalting himself, he was turning the whole world upside down for God. Who cares about a little bit of pride? God cares.

God cares. See, again, this is our problem so often, is that we rush people into leadership, or it's an athlete, you know, so therefore, they should be a Christian superstar, or whatever, you know, and we throw them in. I remember reading a story about some guy in this area, somewhere, who was an abortionist, so before you know it, he's out on the circuit, and I read this story about this man's life.

They used him, whoever it was, and had him all over the country on, you know, talk shows and everything. The guy hardly even knows God, and he's suddenly a leader in the church, and he backslid, and he was backsliding the whole time he was doing it, from what I understand. Something's not right in our thinking, but anyway, because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself.

In other words, God was more concerned about Paul's walk with him, about what he had in God, than necessarily all that work he was doing. In fact, you know, he ended up leaving him in prison for a while, and I mean, just lost, I mean, just forgotten in a prison cell. You remember Joseph? Same thing.

There was given me. Oh, I tell you, the thing I love about the Lord is you can't outgive him. He's so giving, isn't he? He's just got such a generous, bounding heart.

Don't you love it when God gives you things? There was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan. What? That's bad doctrine, brother. Well, I know, but there it is.

A messenger of Satan, given to him by God. Why? Because God was accomplishing a deep work inside this brother's heart. A messenger of Satan to torment him, to keep him from exalting himself.

Now, it's sheer conjecture, and I could very easily be wrong. Some people have said that that was, you know, eye problems and stuff. I don't think that's the case.

It's a messenger of Satan. And what I think of, and I opinion, is that it was something like some foul spirit of perversion and lust or something. And here you've got a godly man walking a holy life with God, and

you have some filthy spirit coming in and plaguing his mind with these horrible thoughts.

That will humble you. That will humble you. Now, I could be wrong.

You know, don't get too, you know, stuck on that, but it's possible. And it says this, concerning this, I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. Now, when he's talking about three prayer times, we're not talking about, Lord, could you please take this evil spirit away from me? Oh, no.

No, this man was probably, I mean, it was like probably an eight-hour prayer time, all day pleading with God, you know, walking back and forth. Please, God, please take this thing away from me. Please, God, I want to walk in holiness.

I want a pure thought life. God, I don't want anything to plague me in this way. He was pleading with God three different times.

And you know what the Lord said? No. Sometimes God's that way, you know. He said, my grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.

Power is perfected in weakness. That's backwards. What is that? Power is perfected in weakness? No, you don't understand.

We need, we need strong leaders. We need men with tremendous preaching abilities. We need men who have charismatic personalities and can make you weep and cry at the same time.

We need men who can, who know how to pull at your heartstrings and get you to an altar. We need men who know how to intellectually stir your mind and make you think of things. We need men full of abilities.

No, dear ones, we don't. We need weak vessels that are emptied of self that the Holy Spirit can fill and speak through. That's what we need in the church of Jesus Christ.

And that's what Paul was. You know what his enemies said about this man? You know what they said? That his presence, his personal presence was unimpressive and his speech was contemptible. In other words, when this guy walked in the room, he wasn't one of those guys that you felt his presence.

That's a powerful man. He wasn't one of these guys that just walked in full of confidence. No, no.

The apostle Paul, when people just saw him in the flesh. You see, if you're walking with God, you'll discern who is really walking with God. You'll see past the flash.

You'll see past personal magnetism and all that stuff. You'll see past that and you'll see a person's heart. And when he showed up, his presence was unimpressive.

His speech contemptible. In other words, he was awkward socially. You know, he's one of those guys that didn't exactly say things right and he wasn't smooth and just didn't have a real way with people and stuff.

You know what I'm talking about. He wasn't like that. He was unimpressive, contemptible speech.

He didn't even know how to talk. He said in 1 Corinthians, when he showed up at the church of Corinth, these people who are so carnal and so worldly minded and so impressed with flash and show. He said, I didn't show up with persuasive words of wisdom.

I showed up in weakness and in much trembling. Didn't he? Isn't that what he said? That your faith would not rest upon men but upon the power of God. Weakness, dear ones, weakness, human weakness, which makes a way for the power of God.

The whole notion that our gifts and our abilities, God needs them, is the worst bunch of nonsense imaginable. Our gifts get in the way of God moving, if anything. Now I'm totally off my subject.

I don't know what I'm talking about. My grace is sufficient for you for power is perfected in weakness. And listen to what this brother's response was.

This was a very humble man. Paul was not some dynamic leader like we think of and like we like to put on, you know, make into superstars and stuff. That wasn't Paul.

He was a very lowly, humble man. And this is what he said, his response to the Lord. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses.

In other words, he would clearly say it. Listen, it's true. It's true.

I don't know how to even talk. And it's true, I'm not very impressive. I know that.

He was a humble man. But I'll tell you something, when he came into town, the presence of God showed up. The superficial perspective when hardship comes, dear ones, I've heard it so many times.

That's the devil attacking, brother. Well, yeah, maybe. But you know something? More often than not, the devil is just an agent of God in a certain way.

Listen, the enemy has to have the permission of God to sift you. Our God is a sovereign God. We make him too small.

We're not talking about, you know, God and devil. No, the devil is a flea. And the Lord allows him to wreck havoc sometimes in certain controlled ways.

Why? Because he's purifying unto himself a people who understand what it means to walk in holiness. We need to go deeper, brothers and sisters. I was handed a written, well, this was a word that was given here last August, and I'm going to read it.

Now, I want you to understand something before I read this. That, you know, I'm not claiming to be, you know, whatever, but I do know this. I know God put this in my hand, and it wasn't by accident.

And I know that he wants to say something to you today. You know, just forget about me. I have nothing to do with it.

But I want to read this word that was given in this church, August 24th of the year 2000. Whoever this person was, maybe you're, I guess you're probably here, whoever got this, whatever, it's not important who the person was. Lord, what is the greatest need of our church? He showed me our sanctuary, dimly lit and empty.

This, quote, emptiness was a state of being. He said, there is no goal here. I said, but Lord, we're the best goal-oriented, well-structured church I've ever seen.

He said, yes, but who has made it the goal to strive after me, to know me, to lay hold of me? Yes, you've attained a level of worship, but this is not the end. This is the level of entrance. My people are not longing for me to come, to commune, to set with them, to dwell amongst them.

And they quoted Psalm 63, my soul followeth hard after thee. Who longs after me? Yes, we need fellowship. Yes, we need to learn the word.

But who strives to lay hold of me? Obedience is important, but do you know the one you obey? Who are they who lay hold of me, saith the Lord? And this is what I want to say to you, dear ones, and what I want to ask you. I don't claim to be, you know, anything. This is between you and the Lord.

I have nothing to do with it, but this is what the Lord laid on my heart. So I have to ask you, what did you do with this? God spoke. This isn't a TV show or a performance or something.

God spoke. How did you respond to this? Oh, that was a nice little word today. Oh, what's, what the game is today? My dear brothers and sisters, listen to me.

Some of us need to go home and have a real house cleansing. Some of us need to rip the television out of the house and throw it out on the front yard because you can't handle, and I couldn't handle, that's why I haven't had a TV for 16 years. And the spirit of the world has saturated your home through it.

Some of us need to do a house cleaning with magazines and catalogs. Some of us need to get off the internet. What does your walk with God mean to you, dear ones? What does it mean to you? Are you satisfied? I'm not trying to beat on you, dear ones.

This is a call from God to you personally. It's not to the person next to you. It's to you.

The Lord is calling you. Please, please get away. Separate yourself.

Come out from her, my people. Please come out from her. This world is fading away, dear ones.

Don't go with it. God is trying to sanctify unto himself a people who understand what holiness is, and time is running out. Time for you is running out.

You're no longer going to be able to keep one foot in this world and love the things of this world and call yourself Christian. I'm not preaching. I'm giving you what the Lord has laid on my heart.

That's all. And you have to decide if you're going to take this thing with God seriously. God's after your heart, and he's not playing games.

He's not playing games with you, dear ones. He loves you, but it's not the sappy grace thing that's been put forth. It's a love of fire, a jealous love who will share his love with no one.

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