

Holiness

by Stewart Custer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing and worshiping God's holiness, and living a life of service to Him with all one's heart and everything.

Duration: 43:18

Scripture: Isaiah 35:3-5, Romans 6:17-20

Topics: "Godly Living", "Christian Holiness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the nature of God and the nature that believers should strive for. The sermon begins by reminding listeners that God sees everything, even what happens behind closed doors. The speaker emphasizes the importance of running the race of life with patience and perseverance, acknowledging the challenges and adversaries that believers face. The sermon highlights the need for reverential worship and holiness in serving God, emphasizing that believers were once slaves to sin but have been set free by the blood of Jesus. The ultimate goal is to reach Jesus and live a life that is pleasing to Him.

Transcript

At the beginning of a year, it is well to consider some of the major doctrines of the faith to remind ourselves of where we are going and why. Holiness is one of the attributes of God that is transcendent. It fills the universe because of His presence.

We need to remind ourselves of such an aspect of the nature of God. Holiness, many have said, is the dominant attribute of Deity. Above all things, He is holy, and He is all-wise and He is all-knowing.

Yes, we understand that His attributes are universal, but holiness is emphasized in scripture the way no other attribute of God is. And it is a reminder that we are dealing with a God who is sovereign and who is infinitely holy, and we are not. That is one of the things that is very convicting to every believer who desires to serve and please God.

God is absolute holiness, and we are certainly not absolute in any regard. Certainly not in holiness. I would like us to go through some passages of scripture to help remind us of what God's nature is and what our nature ought to be.

In Exodus, chapter 15, we have a description of the great song of Moses, the victory song after the Lord had led them through the Red Sea and delivered them from the armies of Pharaoh. That was a marvelous victory, an absolute supernatural act of God. Most people have in their minds a picture of that terrain which is not correct.

When you are standing on the shores of the Red Sea, I have stood there, and I know what it looks like. And you look across toward Saudi Arabia on the far side. The sea is miles across.

You don't get across it by a running jump. And it's deep. You can see the big tankers and liners going past out there.

That water is quite ample for them, the container ships and so on. Huge vessels heading for Eilat and then out with the things that they get from there. And I've watched them go by and considered to myself, well, when that water went back on both sides, most Americans are thinking in their mind, you know, the Israelites are looking at maybe 20 feet of water on each side, which would be scary.

You're thinking of 50 to 100 feet on each side. And you are looking at that wall of water on each side. That would be a very different sensation than going through a stream somewhere.

By faith, Israel went across the Red Sea. God led them safely. Now, they were pursued by Pharaoh, and Pharaoh had no such regard for Jehovah God.

He had fought Jehovah God. He had argued against him. He had done his best to crush Jehovah's people.

And he looked at that scene and he saw the waters and he saw the Israelites going across. And his thought was, I'm better than they are. I'll pursue them.

But when he got in, Jehovah God said, that's far enough. And the water came back. And yes, the Israelites on the far side saw the bodies washed up on the shore, the chariots floating in the water.

That was something that generation could never forget. But now in this chapter, they sing to celebrate a miraculous act of God, delivering them from one of the great empires in the world. They had no strength against it all.

But God did. He was not intimidated by Pharaoh or his whole army. God held them all in the hollow of his hand.

Friends, we must recognize the God that we serve, his might, his power, his authority, and recognize that we are following, not just in a little pathway, we are following forever. We are committed to him. We are going to be following his directions for endless ages, for he is the Lord of the universe.

And when the Israelites were delivered, they sang. In Exodus chapter 15, Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and Spake saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

The Lord is my strength and song. He has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will prepare him in habitation.

My Father is God, and I will exalt him. The Lord is a man of war. The Lord Jehovah is his name.

Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea. His chosen captains are drowned in the Red Sea. A song of victory, of triumph, that came totally from God.

The Israelites did not fight. They had no weapons to respond to all those chariots, armor, spears, and such that Pharaoh's army was armed with. But they did not have to worry, because the Lord was their protection.

Now, if you will drop down to verse 11. They sing in this song of Moses, Who is like unto thee, O Lord among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Who is like unto the Lord Jehovah? Absolutely no one. There are no gods in Egypt that could compare to Jehovah.

Pharaoh had a whole pile of them. They didn't do him any good at all. The Israelites had one God, Jehovah God, and he reigns over heaven and earth, and none of the idols of Egypt had any effect on that at all.

They were blocks of stone and couldn't do a thing for the Egyptians. But the Lord Jehovah was the living God who could sustain his people and deliver them with miraculous powers, and they celebrate his greatness. Glorious in holiness.

Now, that is our theme this morning, friends. Jehovah God is glorious in holiness. There is not one stain upon his character.

There is not one sin that could ever be laid against his charge. His justice is perfect. He gives retribution for those who violate justice.

He is absolutely holy. Now, there's a problem in that, as well as a great comfort. We are not holy like that.

By his grace, he has imparted his holiness to us, and we praise and thank God for that. But our holiness is rather defective. It certainly is not what it ought to be, even in our own sight.

But when we think of how perfect God is, what must he think of our low level of holiness? That's not a comforting thought, but it is a thought that we must ponder, because if God is glorious in holiness, if his holiness is intimidating to those like Pharaoh, what about us? We are following along behind, and we are sometimes unholy in practice and thought when we ought to be a whole lot better. And we haven't yet come to grips with that. And we won't succeed in that battle until the Lord speaks the word and we are made perfectly holy.

That day will come. But it is not here now, that's for sure. In Psalm 29, David sings unto the Lord, Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, Give unto the Lord glory and strength.

Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. This raises the whole subject to a different level.

Here is the sweet psalmist of Israel exhorting us all to worship and praise the Lord God. And we feel the challenge of that. That certainly isn't a suitable exhortation he gives us.

We ought to be worshiping God, but to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Do we really think of that? Now, there are some times that people stand in a congregation singing glorious hymns while on the one hand they're thinking about a business deal for Monday or in the case of the housewife for how the roast is coming back at home. Will it be ready when we get there? You know, there are distractions in this

world, and to each he has his own problems that he deals with.

But here is worshipping the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Do we really leave everything else behind us when we are singing the hymns of praise and sitting here listening to the word of God? Or do these things come crowding in upon us? Things that are important in their own place and which we will have to deal with during the week sometime. But are we proceeding to deal with them now? That's a thought that we must all ponder.

For when we are worshipping God, we need to focus, we need to concentrate our attention on who he is and what kind of a person he is. He is holy, absolutely holy. He is well worth our concentrating all our thought and attention and purpose upon, for he is the Lord of the universe, and he is here in the presence of his people as we worship and praise him.

Friends, we must not forget who he is and his character of absolutely holy, and we need the beauty of holiness upon us. We need it desperately because we are traveling with that holy God. We are going toward a location where one hundred percent of the population is holy.

Friends, we must think of that before we get there. We are not going on a picnic. We are not going on an adventure.

We are going toward the presence of God, glorious in holiness, perfect in holiness. And we need to think about that here and now. In chapter 30 of the Psalms, verse 4, David says, Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

I wonder if we've ever done that. We thank God for a great many blessings. We thank God for answers to prayer.

We thank God for his goodness and his love and his kindness. But for the holiness, what if God were not holy? What if the ruler of the universe was not absolutely holy and we were at his disposal to use however he cared to use us and throw us away, perhaps? That would be a completely different universe with a completely different ending. And we need to be thinking of this, that his nature is absolute holiness.

He is perfect. We are traveling toward a destination that does not have a single flaw in it. It is absolutely holy and perfect.

And the angelic choirs that are singing the praises of God are holy beings. And all the unholiness is going to be confined to a small area in the universe forever, where it will be totally under control. And we need to think about these things.

We need to think about the greatness of God, his plan for the universe, the power with which he can accomplish this, and the fact that he is glorious in holiness. And that's where we're going. He is the person we are going to see face to face.

We are going to be in the presence of those holy angels who reflect his holiness. That is our destination. Do we ever think about that? Does that influence our actions and our words and our manner of living? It needs to.

In Isaiah, chapter 35, the prophet speaks about the great kingdom reign, the so-called millennium that will be upon the face of the earth, when the desert shall blossom as the rose, and the glory of Lebanon will be

restored. In verse 3 of chapter 35, he says, Strengthen ye the weak hands, confirm the feeble knees, say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not. Yes, he's encouraging all of us, as well as his contemporary people, for strength of heart.

And he describes then the millennial blessings in verse 5. The eyes of the blind shall be opened. The ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. The lame man shall leap as a hart.

The tongue of the dumb shall sing. For in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert. God is going to transform the earth into a beautiful, fruitful place, like Eden once again.

And the debilitating diseases and crippling conditions of mankind will be gone. God will bless his people with health and unusual blessing. In verse 8, And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness.

The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those. The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. So there will be a pathway to God in the millennium that is not here in this age.

It will be a pathway of holiness. The whole earth is going to be blessed with the presence of God. His presence is going to be restored in the millennial temple in Jerusalem.

God will again dwell in the midst of his people, and it will be a holy worship upon earth, as in this day as it is not. A condition much more blessed than any that we have in our present dispensation. God is planning it.

The prophet describes it. And it is the way of holiness. Friends, there is a sense in which every last one of us is presently on a way of holiness.

We are traveling toward the presence of God. We are approaching his holiness. That way leads to absolute holiness.

And we must ponder that. We are not living our lives in a vacuum, just going forward blindly. If you know the Lord Jesus as your Savior, you are going toward him.

You are traveling in a way of holiness, learning how to be separate from the contaminating world, learning how to choose wisely what his will is, and walking ever closer toward him. And we have to ask ourselves, is that really what I am doing? Or isn't it? In the millennium, there will be a literal way. Now there is a very real way, but it is not geographic.

It is spiritual. In Romans chapter 6, moving now from the old dispensation to the present dispensation, Paul says, But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became slaves, literally, of righteousness.

I speak after the manner of men, because of the way of infirmity of your flesh. For as ye have yielded your members slaves to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now yield your members slaves to righteousness unto holiness. Here is the great project for believers in the present dispensation.

We are not to be slaves of sin. We are not to be bound in degradation in this world. We have been set free.

The blood of Christ applied to our hearts has delivered us from the guilt of sin. Now he has put our steps upon the way of righteousness, the way of salvation, and we are traveling toward him in this world. With that glorious doctrine, he very clearly speaks about being slaves to righteousness unto holiness.

We know very well that Christianity is not slavery in the old sense, human bondage. No, it is becoming more like God. It is coming closer to his attributes of holiness, righteousness, love, kindness, all those virtues that we see have a rather low level.

But we are now slaves of righteousness unto holiness. Now, a slave did not decide what he was going to do in the ancient world. Paul was writing to Romans, and slavery was a way of life in Rome.

There were slaves in most every household, and they had a hard life. The master told them, you get up early, and you clean things up, and you make breakfast, and I will be up at a certain time. The slave did not argue about it.

That was his job. He got up and he did it. And when he was through, he did not take a vacation.

There were other things for him to do, a long list. He was doing this, that, and the other. And at the end of the day, it would be nice to lie down and rest for a while.

There is supper. Fix that and get ready. Now, that was the societal background for what Paul is saying here.

We are slaves of righteousness unto holiness. To the Romans, that was a definite, challenging thought. To us, it has all been watered down.

Slavery has been abolished. There is no such thing now. We are free people.

But in the ancient world, they understood exactly what that word meant. The individual was not free to do what he wanted. He did what the master wanted.

Today, I am not sure any of us understand that adequately. We live our lives, and we pray, and we try to serve God, and we try to be diligent in what we are doing. But the idea of slavery, you get up early and do what I want you to do.

All day long, you do what I want you to do, not what you want to do. When you get tired at it, you do some more. That was the institution.

And the readers of Romans in that first century would have had that context in their minds. Serving God is not a part-time job. Serving God is with all your heart, and everything that is within you, for every breath you take the rest of your life.

There are very few believers who have ever thought of that. Serving God is something you opt to do, and you do when the feeling is upon you, and you do as the occasions arise, and so on. But to be a slave? That is the word used there.

Your members are slaves to righteousness unto holiness. Friends, we live in a wicked and perverse generation, unholy in the extreme. And we are summoned to holiness in the midst of all the wickedness.

And we feel bad when the world reproaches us. We feel bad when they sneer at us because we're Christians. This is odd, considering who our master is, the Lord of the universe, who holds the entire world in the hollow of his hand, and we get intimidated by the world.

Friends, we need to reorganize our thinking and recognize what the scripture actually says. It says we are slaves of God. He has the right to tell us what to do, how to serve, where to serve, how long to serve.

It's all in his hand. And that service must be in righteousness unto holiness. He will accept nothing else, for he is absolutely holy.

Friends, we need to think carefully about our service for God, and how we treat God. For he is Lord of all, a great king, and we are slaves unto holiness. There are a lot of things that we could dispense with that would detract from holiness.

And we must ponder that very clearly. Our Lord is supremely holy. His servants need that holiness desperately.

One day they will stand before him face to face. God is infinitely loving, and we praise him for that. But God is infinitely holy, and sometimes we conveniently forget that.

But the attributes of God are infinite. He is perfect in every category. And we praise him for his great love.

Do we ever praise him for his holiness? And when we do, do we really align ourselves with his holiness and put ourselves on his side of each issue? I'm afraid we don't think of that very often. We're living in a wicked world, and let's confess, it's all too congenial. We don't find it awfully difficult to live here, but the idea of absolute holiness is a very difficult thought.

But God is holy, and the angelic choirs standing about him are crying out, holy, holy, holy. They're not crying out love. Friends, we must recognize the awesome reverential worship that he deserves and that we are so slow to give.

And, yes, praise God that he is a loving Heavenly Father. Praise God that he loves us enough to die for us. But we must never forget that he is holy, and our service should be in holiness.

In verse 20, when you were slaves of sin, you were free from righteousness. What fruit had you then those things were of your now ashamed? Yes, we used to be slaves of sin. We didn't have a choice.

We served it. But God broke those chains. The blood of the Lord Jesus Christ set us free from that slavery.

Now we can serve God. But my, we don't think about it in the same category of slavery. We used to be slaves to sin.

We lived that way. Now we don't like that thought at all. It distresses us.

We want to serve God. But slavery? That's not a good American custom. That's an antique idea that hopefully died long ago.

But the scripture is filled with it. We are slaves of God. We're here doing what he wants, not what we want.

If we're doing what we want, we are sorry slaves in the eyes of the ancient world. And we never think about it. In verse 22, now being made free from sin, become slaves to God.

You have your fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life. The holiness is never going to depart from you. It's going to be made perfect in the next world.

Not a single flaw and the end everlasting life. You'll be in the presence of God forever. And he is infinitely holy.

You will be holy also. That's his goal. That's where we're going.

Friends, we must recognize very carefully that the pathway through this world is an unholy surrounding. The contamination of the world, the contamination of sin that is everywhere, dragging us down, pulling us away from God. We've got to recognize this and be on our guard and walk that way of holiness and live in the presence of God and serve him with a single minded purpose.

We haven't attained that yet. That's what we're aiming for. And sometimes we rarely think of.

And this must change for the better. In Second Corinthians, chapter seven, the Apostle Paul speaks to believers and he refers in the preceding chapter, the last verse to God's promise that I will be a father unto you and you shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty, a blessed promise, one that we can cherish. But now Paul draws a conclusion from that in chapter seven, having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Now, friends, that doesn't come to mind often for the believer. He's busy doing things here, there and yonder, engaging in what could be called entertainment and other practices, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. That's the phrase.

Well, we know we aren't perfect. We'll all confess that. But here's a process that's going on.

Perfecting it means you're getting closer and closer. You're not there, but you're making progress. We need to think back.

Am I really making progress? Perfecting holiness in the fear or reverence for God? Does God really overshadow our lives? Is his presence, that holy presence of the almighty creator, does that really affect what we are doing and our speech and our conduct? Is that really a controlling factor for us? Yes. According to this, it should be. For he is the Lord Almighty.

We are in the hollow of his hand. He holds us in life. When he decides we are here long enough, we're gone.

That is not our choice. It's his. Absolutely holy.

Friends, we should not be satisfied with a low level of holiness. We should not be satisfied with the contamination of the world rubbing off on us every day. We should instead be thinking about the nature of God and what kind of holiness he really has.

And therefore, what kind of life we ought to be living in chapter 12 of Hebrews. The writer of the Hebrews exhorts us in verse one, wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of

witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us. Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

All right, think of that now. We've got witnesses. In this world, we tend to think, oh, what we're doing is hidden from everybody's eyes.

We go home and shut the door and who knows what we're doing in our house. According to this, we're encompassed with witnesses, heavenly witnesses can see exactly what's going on, which is a disturbing thought. But God sees and we all know that theoretically he's omniscient.

He knows everything. But it's so easy to forget, but God doesn't forget. And run with patience the race that is set before us.

Yes, we have a hard life before us, struggling with adversaries, running a race. That's not easy. If you're running, if you're a professional runner, you're exhausted.

Runners don't go at an easy pace. They're not just trotting along, clipping daisies. If they intend to win, they're straining every muscle.

They're attempting to do something that is very difficult to do, beat everybody else in the race. Is that the way we're living the Christian life? I don't get that impression. But that is the image.

And the main thing, the runner is looking at the goal. The runner is heading for that tape. Nothing else matters.

He wants to break that tape, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Now, there is the strength. There is the empowerment looking at that goal.

This is where we're going. He is the reason we're running to break that tape, to reach him. That is what we're doing.

Now, that's a wholly different idea of the Christian life. It is not a saunter through pleasant meadows. It's running a race, a race that demands the best that is within you and more.

We need grace. We need his strength. We need his ability to concentrate on what we're doing and to live for him with all that is within us, to break that tape, to reach the goal that he has planned for us.

That's holiness, to be like him. That's the grand goal. Friends, we are rarely thinking of that goal.

We are traveling laxadaisically sometimes. We should be running. We should be concentrating on that tape, the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In verse 10, our fathers verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. That's why it's the goal, friends. He wants us just as holy as he is.

We are not going to work that one up. It is something achieved by grace, a gift of God. But that is the goal, that we come to his presence because we belong there.

And the holiness of his presence is not something foreign, but part of the nature of the God we have been serving and running the race for and toward, that we might be like him, for we shall see him as he is,

shining in the splendor of absolute holiness. Think of that. That is why Isaiah saw that scene and cried out, woe is me.

He didn't match up and he knew it. Friends, we've got to know that ourselves. We don't match up.

He is absolute. And we are so ridden, filled with flaws and errors and sin, whereas he has nothing but holiness and we are traveling toward him. That means we need to turn our backs upon sin, turn our backs upon things that would displease him and run with patience the race.

We haven't done too well so far, but the race is not over. There is more to go. And he is summoning us.

We are running through this wicked world, not toward it. We are going away from it. We are traveling toward him.

And we are looking for that day when we shall see him face to face. Absolute holiness. That is our goal.

My friends, we must be serious about the Christian life. It is not a pastime for odd moments. It's the meaning of life.

It's why we're here, to become holy as he is holy, that we may experience the holy love of the infinite God and hear his words. Well done, good and faithful slave. Every head bowed.

Oh, Lord, forgive us that we forget why we are here and we forget how to serve. Help us, Lord, by thy grace to think of thy word and thy holiness and love and majesty and to serve thee with diligence. Help us, O Lord, to recognize that we are strangers in this wicked world, just traveling through it.

Keep us from the contamination, O Lord. Help us to walk with thee. Help us to serve thee with single-minded devotion.

Bring us to thy presence by the grace of the Lord Jesus, by his almighty power, and make us what we ought to be for his sake. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/16/SID16054.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/stewart-custer/holiness/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net