

Being Holy

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald emphasizes the importance of personal holiness and Christlikeness in the life of a believer.

Duration: 42:17

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:13

Topics: "Holiness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker expresses disappointment in hearing about Christians who compromise their faith and engage in shady associations. He gives an example of prisoners who claim to be saved and do well in prison, but then go on to exploit their testimonies for personal gain. The speaker emphasizes that God's goal is to make believers more like Jesus, not through physical means like dieting, but through spiritual transformation. He uses the analogy of a sculptor chiseling away at a block of granite to reveal a lion, explaining that God is chipping away everything in our lives that doesn't resemble Jesus. The sermon concludes by urging listeners to confess and forsake sin immediately, as God is working in their lives towards the goal of holiness.

Transcript

Please turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 1. I'd like to read beginning at verse 13 through the end of the chapter. 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 13 through the end of the chapter. Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance, but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently, being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the word of God which

liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass.

The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. Verse 15, But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.

For it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy. The highest description of character is found in the word Christlike. There is no greater compliment or tribute that you could pay to a person than to say he or she is Christlike.

There is no ambition that comes close to that. Christlikeness is the ultimate honor. I like what Henry Drummond said, he said, To become like Christ is the only thing in the world worth caring for.

The thing before which every ambition of man is folly, and all lower achievement vain. And that is true. There is no greater ambition than to have someone say of you, of me, that person is really Christlike.

It must be great to be extremely gifted. It must be great to be able to get up and preach the word of God in such a way that hearts are bowed and stirred beneath the influence of the word. It must be wonderful.

But it's not as wonderful as being Christlike. It's possible to be very gifted in the assembly and a perfect grouch at home. There's a difference between gift and grace.

Gift is a sovereign bestowment of God. But grace is something that we develop in our lives by the Spirit of God. Paul makes that distinction very clearly in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, doesn't he? The folks in Corinth were proud of their gifts.

They were displaying their gifts. Much of it for self. For self edification.

Self importance. Paul is pointing out that you could speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but if you don't have love. And love really stands there for personal grace.

It amounts to nothing. In the early history of the church, one day a Christian was being taken out to his martyrdom. As he was led out, another believer rushed up to him and said, Oh dear brother, he said, I have an apology to make to you.

Before you die, he said, I have wronged you. And I have come to apologize to you. And the martyr swept him aside with his hand and went on to his martyrdom.

And his name has never been listed among the heroes of the early Christian martyrs. That is exactly what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13. Though I give my body to be burned and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.

I used to wonder, how could a person give his body to be burned and have not love? But it's possible, isn't it? The martyr went to his death for the name of Christ. But he didn't show love in the closing moments of his life. So I say, well, it must be wonderful to be extremely gifted, but we must never, we must never emphasize gift above personal grace.

It must be wonderful to be a great personal worker, to be able to deal with souls and see them come to the feet of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. But I want to tell you there are a lot of people today rushing around in a frenzy of personal evangelism and their lives don't back up what they're saying. They're a poor

advertisement of it all.

And I'd like to suggest it might be a very good thing for people like that to declare a moratorium on personal evangelism. They've got their priorities wrong. Jesus said, follow me and I will make you fishers of men.

What does it mean to follow me? It means to live as he lived. It means to become Christ-like and he'll take care of the rest. That's interesting, isn't it? It doesn't say take a 12-lesson course in personal evangelism and I will make you fishers of men.

He says you take care of the character and people will be drawn to the Savior. Follow me and I will make you fishers of men. We've been counseling our interns lately.

We go over them with them at the very beginning of the year. We sit them down. We say, look, what are your goals? And they have to sit with us and tell us what their goals are.

So far, not one of them has said to me, my goal is to become like Jesus. Too bad, isn't it? They want to have effective quiet times. They want to be effective on the campus when they go and witness for the Lord Jesus.

They want to be effective in their home and all the rest. But so far, no one has said, I want to be like Jesus. And yet, that's God's great purpose in our lives.

That we might be conformed to his Son. And when we say conformed, we don't mean physical likeness. We mean moral likeness and spiritual likeness.

One day, all believers are going to be perfectly conformed to the Lord Jesus morally. When we see him, we shall be like him. One look and we'll be changed into his likeness.

But it's more glory for God if we're becoming more like him down here. That's God's purpose. That's how all things are working together for good to those who love God.

What could come out of that tragedy, that sadness that I've just been through? That we might be conformed to the image of his Son. And God is working everything in the lives of his people toward that great aim. Carol Nahal gave two good illustrations of the process that I can't get away from.

She told about a lady who was a little bit overweight. And the lady decided to go to a weight reduction salon. And she was going to be put on a strict diet.

When she went to this weight reduction salon, the first thing that the manager did was go to a full-length mirror and draw an outline of the lady on the mirror as she wanted to be. As she wanted to be. And every week she would come up and she would stand before the outline.

She had been dieting. She had cut out dessert. She had cut out sugar.

She had cut out white flour. And she would stand, but she was still bulging over in spots as far as the outline was concerned. But finally one day, she stood before the mirror and she perfectly conformed to the outline.

They all gave her a rousing ovation. That's it. That's exactly what God is trying to do with us.

Not through dieting. Through spiritual means to make us more and more like Jesus. The other illustrations she gave us I thought was very good.

She told about a sculptor who had taken a great huge block of granite and he had chiseled away on it until it was a perfect lion emerged. And a friend came to him and said, how did you ever get a lion out of that block of granite? And he said, it was easy. He said, I just chipped away everything that didn't look like a lion.

That's exactly what the Lord is trying to do with us. He's trying to chip away everything in our lives that doesn't look like Jesus. I think that's beautiful.

But you and I have to cooperate. God wants to make me Christ-like, but I tell you this, he won't do it without my cooperation. In this, as in so many aspects of the Christian life, there is a mysterious merging of the divine and the human.

We can sow and we can water, but God gives the increase. We have to fight the good fight of faith, but only God can give the victory. And so it is with personal holiness.

God wants me to be holy, very intent on my being holy, but he won't do it without my cooperation. And one of the worst hindrances to the Christian faith today is the lives of professing Christian people. James Spinks said it years ago, he said, more evil is done to the cause of Christianity by its adherents than by its opponents.

Think of that. More evil is done to the cause of Christianity by its adherents than by its opponents, for the world often contrasts a Christian profession with his practice. They argue rightly that if Christianity is what we claim it to be, it ought to make a difference in the life.

And Hudson Taylor said somewhat the same thing. He said the inconsistencies of Christian people who, while professing to believe their Bibles, lived as if there were no such book, had been one of the strongest arguments of my skeptical companions. When his skeptical companions argued against him about the Christian faith, they would always bring up the lives of professing Christian people.

This is one of the great problems in the church today. To hear people talk, you'd think there was a great evangelical revival going on in the United States. There's certainly a lot of activity.

But the truth of the matter is that many of us are very poor role models of the Savior. I was over in Alameda recently, and there was a little pickup truck there outside the building I went into. And on the back of the pickup truck, there were two stickers on the bumper.

In the back bumper, two stickers. On the left-hand side, it said, I love Jesus. Nice, isn't it? The sticker on the right side said in mock Italiano, You break-a my car, I break-a your face.

Somehow or other, they didn't fit together. I love Jesus. You break-a my car, I break-a your face.

What do people think? Well, I'm glad to tell you that somebody spoke to the owner of the pickup truck, and the light dawned. And he removed one of the stickers. A Christian businessman had been on the radio.

He had spoken on the radio Sunday night, and one of the girls in his office had heard it. And so they came to work Monday morning, and things went very bad. It was not good at all.

And the girl got the benefit of his temper. And as she was going out the office, another girl was coming into the office, and she said, Yep, there it is. Come to Jesus on Sunday night, and go to blank on Monday morning.

Poor role model of Jesus. That draws me up short. How's my temper? Is my temper under control? I don't know many things that give a worse personification of the Savior than the display of temper.

I think of the famous actors and actresses in the United States who are talked into becoming born again. Pardon me if I say it that way. And they make no clean break with their former lifestyle.

They carry on just as they've always carried on. Sometimes star in low-rated movies. It's very obvious Christ has not made a difference in their life.

They're extolled, they're exalted, and all the rest, Christian movie actors and actresses. I think of many prominent, quote, Christian musicians with their theatrical performances, their suggestive body language, in many cases the questionable lyrics that they use, and music that apes the world. Is this Christianity? This is what is being pawned off of the world today as Christianity.

Dear friends, it's a parody. It's a caricature. And all in the name of Jesus.

I want to tell you that much of the publicity today about Christian people and prominent in public life is a ridiculous imitation. God wants us to be conformed to the image of his Son. Some years ago, a gangster professed to be saved in New York.

And it made all the headlines. I'm sure many of you read all about it. But, after his so-called conversion, he continued to carry on his underworld activities.

And somebody confronted him about it. And he said, when I professed faith in Christ, nobody told me it had to make a change in my life. He said, after all, you have Christian cowboys, you have Christian football players, you have Christian politicians, why not a Christian gangster? And since then, he has abandoned the Christian faith.

But his name was heralded far and wide as the great new Christian. I think of Christian TV celebrities with their expensive coiffures dripping with jewelry, costly clothing, made up like Jezebel. What a picture of our penniless friend from Nazareth.

Is that what I'm to think Jesus was like? No wonder the world turns away in disgust. I think of many radio and TV preachers that they talk about money more than they talk about Jesus. They live in sumptuous homes, drive around in expensive cars and even planes until some clever reporter comes along and exposes the fraud.

No wonder the world says all the church wants is your money. Poor role models of the Lord Jesus. I think of Christian politicians.

I don't think that we have to doubt that many politicians profess religion because of the tremendous power of the evangelical vote in the United States today. But how disappointing to hear their earthy language, to know of some of the compromises that they make along the way, and to learn about their shadowy associations. And all, I say, in the name of Jesus.

I think of Christian prisoners, men who profess to be saved in prison and seem to do very brightly in prison. And then their friends intercede for them and the judge looks down on them and he said, well, I still think you're a con man, but I'll let you go. But they go.

And some Christian organization comes along and gets them and puts them on the circuit. They travel over the United States giving their testimony and collecting money and the next thing you know they tube out. But you never hear of them again.

We had a very vivid illustration of that this past week in California. And I just think of the lives of Christian people in general. The things that we do for money, the compromises we make, the way we fudge, the way we hedge.

Voltaire said when it comes to money, all men are of the same religion. And I can see that this would break the heart of Christ as he looks down and sees people whom he wants to be his representatives on earth, representing him and giving a very poor representation. I'll tell you very frankly, the evangelical world in the United States needs a thorough house cleaning.

But thank God that's not the whole story. I thank God for men and for women who do show Christ to the world. Some years ago we introduced a young fellow into our program, our training program in California.

When we accepted him we knew that he had had melanoma, a very severe form of cancer, and we accepted him just the same. And in December of the year he was with us, it recurred. And we were able to keep him at home all the time.

He never did have to go to the hospital. What really touched my heart was one day the visiting nurse came. And after being with Rob for a while she went out to the kitchen and she said to his wife, Rob makes me think of Jesus.

She wasn't even a saved person. That's lovely. Rob makes me think of Jesus.

I'll tell you dear friend, I couldn't wish for anything better to be said of me. Rob makes me think of Jesus. I'll tell you dear friend, I couldn't wish for anything better to be said of me under that tribute that was paid to him.

He was one of the most Christ-like fellows I'd ever known. I said to him one day, Rob, what's your favorite verse? He had only memorized 1,200 verses in the four years he was saved, thanks to his association with the Navigators. And the verses that God gave him to memorize were marvelous because they were the verses that stood him in good stead during this time.

I said to him, Rob, what's your favorite verse? You know what he said? He said, but none of these things move me. Neither count I my life dear unto myself that I might finish my course with joy in the ministry that I received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And I'll tell you, his room was a little anti-room of heaven.

I don't mind saying that. An anti-room of heaven. When you were there, you thought, there's so much about Rob that makes me think of Jesus.

But he wasn't the only one. There have been many others in the history of the world as well. R.C. Chapman, one of the men in the early days of the Brethren movement, he said, since so many preach

Christ and so few live Christ, I will make it my aim to live Christ.

And Darby said of Chapman, he lives, but I preach. Had a tremendous testimony for the Lord. The testimony of a Christ-like life.

Another man, William Arnett. It was said of him, his preaching was good. His writing was better, but his life was best of all.

Wouldn't you like that said of you? His life, best of all. I don't know if any of you have read the story of Sadhu Sundar Singh. A Sikh who had been converted to God when he was about 15 years of age and really was apostolic in his ministry for the Lord Jesus.

One day he came to a house and he knocked on the door and the maid came to the door and she saw him and she spoke to him and she rushed back to her mistress. And she says, ma'am, I think Christ has come to the door. And in another home, Sadhu Sundar Singh was down on the hearth rug playing with the children.

That night before they went to bed, they said, mother, could Jesus put us to bed tonight? That's wonderful, isn't it? His whole bearing, his whole demeanor made them think of Jesus. Some of you have heard of Robert Murray McChane. He wrote some of the hymns that we sing.

When this passing world is done, when is sunk yon glaring sun, when I stand with Christ on high, gazing o'er life's history, then, Lord, shall I fully know, not till then how much I owe. He died at the age of 29 in Scotland and he had left a deep mark on that entire country. Somebody said of him, his holiness was noticeable even before he spoke a word.

He spent a night in the home of a minister in the north of Scotland and the minister said, that is the most Jesus-like man I've ever seen. The most Jesus-like man I've ever seen. He spent hours in holy communion inside the veil, in rapturous praise and adoration.

He would come forth from God's presence to leave the fragrance of Christ as he went from house to house in visitation. As he walked the streets of his parish, people were startled to see the look of Jesus on his face. Richard Hillary, a pilot, tells a story on himself.

He had a co-pilot who was a Christian whose name was Peter Pease and Richard Hillary was very upset by the Christianity of Peter Pease. He decided to attack him mercilessly and tear the very fabric of his faith to pieces. And his chance came.

One day he glared at his victim and he snarled and he said, your religion is a fake, a hereditary hangover, a useful social adjunct and nothing more. And poor Peter opened his mouth and stammered out a few feeble protests and then he lapsed into silence, utterly crushed by his opponent's flood of words. But Hillary said, I knew I had lost the argument.

He said, there was one fact I could not explain, Peter's character. He said it and his faith were bound together and they played havoc with logic. The power of a Christ-like life.

He lost the argument, but he won it. He won it. Hillary couldn't explain his character, the union of his faith and his character.

He said it played havoc with logic. And that is why J.H. Jowett wrote, men may more than match you in subtlety of argument, in intellectual argument you may suffer an easy defeat, but the argument of a redeemed life is unassailable. That's true.

The argument of a redeemed life is unassailable. We read that in the book of Acts. Seeing the man who was healed standing there, they could say nothing against it.

Isn't that right? The argument of a Christ-like life. How do we get there? Well, I think the word of God sets before us certain steps to holiness and I'd just like to go over some of them with you quickly now. How can I become more Christ-like? And God knows I want this.

First of all, I would suggest confess and forsake sin as soon as you're conscious it has come into your life. Waste no time. Rush to the throne of grace and confess it before the Lord.

That keeps you clean. But people have a problem with what is confession. To me, confession is dragging the sin out and calling it by its wretched name in the presence of God.

This is not confession. One lady said, If I have done anything wrong, I am willing to be forgiven. That's not confession.

Watch out for any of these iffy confessions. True confession has no ifs, ands, and buts attached. I have done something wrong.

Lord, it's this and I want to confess it before you just now. This is not confession. A man confessed that he had stolen a length of rope.

He neglected to say that there was a cow at the other end of it. That confession was not complete, was it? It was withholding the truth without telling a lie, I suppose. But God is not fooled by that.

True confession is earnest. It's honest. It's complete before God.

God hates the attitude of hiding our sins. The second thing, I think, is to yield ourselves to the Lord moment by moment. Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2. I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice If confession keeps you clean, constant yielding to the Lord keeps you available.

That's what we should be. We should be available to the Lord at any time, any day, anywhere, anything, just waiting to hear His instruction for that day. The third thing is to read, memorize, meditate on, study, and obey the Word of God.

We mentioned that this afternoon, didn't we? The importance of the Word of God. And I think of those words that I mentioned, probably the one we neglect the most is meditate. The holiest people I've ever known were people who spent time meditating on the Word in the presence of the Lord.

If I had time, I could tell you some very, very interesting stories of men who, through meditation, were so close to God that He could reveal secrets to them that nobody else knew. I don't mean additional revelations to the Word of God, but the secret of the Lord is still with them that fear Him. Four, pray without ceasing.

Pray without ceasing. A step to holiness. Say, what do I pray? Pray that God will keep you from sin.

Pray that He will keep you from sin even if you want to do it. Pray that He will make you as holy as it is possible for a man to be on this side of heaven. Pray that the temptation to sin and the opportunity to sin will never coincide in your life.

Because sometimes we have the temptation, sometimes we have the opportunity. It's bad when they both come at the same time. I'm always amazed at the Lord when He taught the disciples what we call the Lord's Prayer, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

And people struggle with that. They say, God would never lead you into temptation. No.

But I know what it says to me. It says, Lord, if I'm left to my own, I'm sunk. If you don't keep me, I won't be kept.

Keep me by your mighty power. I think the longer we live, the more we see the problem in life about us today, the more agony prayer is in this regard. Not just enough to pray a rote prayer.

We come to the place where we have to agonize before the Lord. Five, maintain regular fellowship with other Christians. There's a sanctifying influence in being with other Christians.

How much we owe to our brothers and sisters in Christ, to their example to us, to their encouragement to us. We need it. We need their fellowship.

Six, keep busy for the Lord. There's safety in a life poured out for the Lord Jesus. Some of the worst times of temptation in life are times of idleness.

Satan still finds things for idle hands to do, doesn't he? I think the times when we're most idle and perhaps most well-fed are the times of greatest temptation. So now one of the scriptures says, whatever your hands find to do, do it with all your might. When did David fall into his deepest sin? The time when kings went to war, David lounged.

The story became one of adultery and murder. He didn't keep busy for the Lord. This is a discipline, but it's one of the greatest disciplines in life.

I know that some dear people are allergic to work. They think work was part of the curse in the Garden of Eden. Work is not a curse.

Work is a blessing from God. We're going to be working all through heaven, did you know that? His servants shall serve him. And he will come forth and serve them too.

Us, his servants. Work is one of the greatest blessings. It's the toil and perspiration of work that were part of the curse in the Garden of Eden.

Seven, discipline the body. We talked about that this afternoon, didn't we? 1 Corinthians 9, 27. The body is always there craving its appetite.

And really, if we're going to mean business with God, it probably will mean saying no 10,000 times a week. God wants men and women with spine, with spiritual spine, who can swim against the tide. Stand up against temptation, say no.

After King Louis XVI had been put to death in France, there was a witch who tried to get a hold of his son and teach him vile language. And the son said, I will not do it. I will not speak those filthy words.

I'm a son of a king. I will not say it. Good for us to remember that we're children of royalty.

And it should affect all our lives. Number nine, be willing to take drastic action like Joseph did. Like Joseph did.

To put a few healthy miles between himself and the temptation. I must hurry. Ten, avoid petty familiarities or objects that arouse the passions.

Jude says, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Eleven, avoid anything that lowers your resistance to sin. I believe that God has built in a resistance to sin in every human life, saved and unsaved.

But drugs, alcohol, things like that, they lower the resistance. And men will do, while under the influence of those things, what they wouldn't ordinarily do. We must avoid them.

Reckon yourself to be dead to sin, Romans 6.11. What does that mean? It means respond to temptation just the way a corpse would. Ever talk to a corpse? Didn't get much answer, did you? That's exactly the way I should be when sin comes knocking at my door. Corpse-like.

Don't get any response from me. And finally, in the moment of fierce temptation, call on the name of the Lord. The name of the Lord is a strong tower.

The righteous runneth into it and is saved. The name of the Lord stands for the Lord himself, doesn't it? Whenever you get the name, it stands for the person. The name of the Lord is a strong tower.

Peter found that out when he began to sink beneath the water. Lord, save me! The Lord saved him. The only times I sin are when I don't call on the name of the Lord.

Good thing to remember in that moment of fierce temptation, when the waves seem to be engulfing you, you can always look up and say, Lord, I need you. You'll never fail. Praise the Lord.

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