

THE PURSUIT OF HOLINESS By Jerry Bridges
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Outline of Chapters 3 and 4

I. Holiness is Not an Option (Hebrews 12:14) - Chapter 3

- a. Does our salvation in the final analysis depend to some degree on our attaining some level of personal holiness?
 - i. The best Christians can never in themselves merit salvation through personal holiness.
 1. Our best works are stained and polluted with imperfection and sin.
 - ii. Scripture repeatedly refers to the obedience and righteousness of Christ on our behalf. (Rom. 5:19; 1 Pet. 3:18)
- b. Christ's active and passive obedience
 - i. Active obedience means Christ's sinless life here on earth.
 - ii. His passive obedience refers to His death on the cross through which He fully paid the penalty for our sins and placated the wrath of God toward us. (Heb. 10:5-10)
- c. Scripture speaks of both a holiness which we have in Christ before God, and a holiness which we are to strive after.
- d. The writer of Hebrews is telling us to take seriously the necessity of personal, practical holiness.
 - i. If there is not, then, at least a yearning in our hearts to live a holy life pleasing to God, we need to seriously question whether our faith in Christ is genuine.
 - ii. True salvation brings with it a desire to be made holy.
- e. The whole purpose of our salvation is that we be "holy and blameless in his sight" (Eph. 1:4).
 - i. Marshall: What a strange kind of salvation do they desire that care not for holiness. . . . They would be saved by Christ and yet be out of Christ in a fleshly state. . . . They would have their sins forgiven, not that they may walk with God in love, in time to come, but that they may practice their enmity against Him without any fear of punishment.
- f. Holiness, then, is not necessary as a condition of salvation - that would be salvation by works - but as a part of salvation that is received by faith in Christ.
 - i. The same grace that brings salvation teaches us to renounce ungodly living. We cannot receive half of God's grace. If we have experienced it at all, we will experience not only forgiveness of our sins but also freedom from sin's dominion.
- g. Holiness is required for fellowship with God.
 - i. To regard wickedness is to cherish some sin, to love it to the extent that I am not willing to part with it.
 - ii. When we are holding on to some sin, we are not pursuing holiness and we cannot have fellowship with God.
 - iii. God does not require a perfect, sinless life to have fellowship with Him, but He does require that we be serious about holiness, that we grieve sin in our lives instead of justifying it, and that we earnestly pursue holiness as a way of life.
- h. Holiness is also required for our own well-being.
 - i. God disciplines us because we need discipline.
 - ii. When God speaks to us about some sin, we need to heed and take action. To fail to deal with that sin is to risk incurring His hand of discipline.
- i. Holiness is also necessary for effective service to God.
 - i. Holiness and usefulness are linked together.
 - ii. When we indulge our sinful natures and dwell in unholiness, the Spirit of God is grieved (Eph. 4:30) and will not prosper our service.
 - iii. These are not times when we fall into temptation and immediately seek God's forgiveness and cleansing, but lives that are characterized by unholy living.
- j. Holiness also is necessary for our assurance of salvation.
 - i. True faith will always show itself by its fruits.
 - ii. The only safe evidence that we are in Christ is a holy life.

- iii. If we know nothing of holiness, we may flatter ourselves that we are Christians but we do not have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us.
- iv. Everyone who professes to be a Christian should ask: “Is there evidence of practical holiness in my life? Do I desire and strive after holiness? Do I grieve over my lack of it and earnestly seek the help of God to be holy?”
- v. It is not those who profess to know Christ who will enter heaven, but those whose lives are holy.

II. **The Holiness of Christ (2 Cor. 5:21) - Chapter 4**

- a. We need to consider the holiness of Christ in order to be firmly grounded in our security in Christ.
 - i. It is important that we understand the righteousness of Christ, and the fact that His righteousness is credited to us.
- b. Jesus lived a perfectly holy life (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Jn 3:5)
 - i. “Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?” (John 8:46)
 - 1. His enemies had nothing.
 - 2. His disciples had nothing.
- c. The holiness of Jesus was more than simply the absence of actual sin. It was also a perfect conformity to the will of His Father (Jn. 6:38; 4:34)
 - i. Perhaps His highest testimony to His positive holiness was his statement, “I always do what pleases him” (Jn. 8:29).
 - 1. Such a positive declaration must include not only His actions but also His attitudes and motives.
 - 2. Holiness has to do with more than mere acts. Our motives must be holy, that is arising from a desire to do something simply because it is the will of God.
 - 3. Jesus Christ perfectly met these standards, and He did it for us (Gal. 4:4-5).
- d. A serious view of the holiness of God – His own moral perfection and infinite hatred of sin – will leave us, as it did Isaiah, seeing with utter dismay our own lack of holiness. . . . Therefore, it is important that we receive the same assurance that Isaiah received: “See . . . your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for” (Is. 6:7).
 - i. The more we grow in holiness, the more we need assurance that the perfect righteousness of Christ is credited to us.
 - ii. A part of growing in holiness is the Holy Spirit’s making us aware of our need for holiness. As we see this need it is well for us to always keep in mind the righteousness of Jesus Christ on our behalf (2 Cor. 5:21).
- e. We need to consider Christ’s holiness:
 - i. To thwart the attacks of Satan.
 - 1. The Holy Spirit makes us more aware of our lack of holiness to stimulate us to deeper yearning and striving for holiness.
 - 2. One of Satan’s attacks is to try to convince you that you are not a genuine Christian after all.
 - 3. You, too, if you diligently pursue holiness, must often flee to the Rock of your salvation. You flee there, not to be saved again, but to confirm in your heart that you are saved through His righteousness alone.
 - ii. Because His life is meant to be an example of holiness for us.
 - 1. “I always do what pleases Him.”
 - a. Do we dare take that as our personal goal in life? Are we truly willing to scrutinize all our activities, all our goals and plans, and all of our impulsive actions in the light of this statement: “I am doing this to please God”?