

Holiness Required

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- [0 : 00] Let's turn in our Bibles to the chapter of God's Word which we read. The letter to the Hebrews chapter 12.
- And as God would help me, I'd like to concentrate on verse 14. Hebrews chapter 12 verse 14.
- Strive for peace with everyone and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. Particularly that last phrase in verse 14. Holiness without which no one will see the Lord. Without holiness, one can be forgiven. Without holiness, one can be converted.
- [1 : 05] Without holiness, one can be regenerated and born again in an instant. But without holiness, no one can enter the gates of heaven.
- The Bible states categorically with regard to heaven. There shall by no means enter anything that defiles.
- Therefore we ask, how then do sinners arrive in heaven? How can we possibly get there?
- And of course the answer is, Forgiven sinners are first made holy before they enter heaven.
- It is a long, slow, dark, hard process.
- [2 : 09] Not completed until death. You can be forgiven in an instant. But you cannot be made holy in an instant.
- And you cannot enter heaven until you are made holy. And we are not made holy completely, finally, perfectly until death.
- That used to cause me great problems. I've got a title to heaven. I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm going to heaven. But I can't enter it until I'm made holy.
- I think the best example, the best illustration I can give of that is, Is having, getting an entry ticket, Say for the World Cup or for the Olympics or something.
- You've got your ticket. You've got your entry ticket. You have a right to go. And you arrive at the stadium. And there's this narrow style.
- [3 : 16] You've got your ticket. You've paid. You've got a right to go in. But you can't go in because the gate is too narrow. You're too wide to get in.
- You have too much baggage. You have to lose. You have to part with your baggage. You have to lose some of your weight to get through the narrow style, the narrow gate.
- You've got the title. You've got the ticket. The style will swing open when you pop it in. But you're not fit to enter heaven. That's an illustration to teachers.
- You believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Your sins are instantly forgiven. You have a title to heaven and a right to enter the gates of heaven.
- But until you're made holy, you can't go through the narrow gate. So we have to ask now, what therefore is holiness?
- [4 : 21] Without holiness, we cannot get into heaven. What is holiness? God alone is holy.

Only God is holy. So holiness is being like God. But then you rightly ask, look, God is invisible.

How can we become like him? Someone who is invisible. We can't see him. What's the answer? What's the explanation to that? And that, of course, is his son, Jesus Christ, came to earth.

And we have a record of that. Jesus Christ said, he who has seen me has seen the Father.

If you want to know what God is like, have a good, long, hard look at Jesus.

[5 : 30] Jesus is God. He's the understandable version of God, if you like. He's the God we can identify most with.

That's why he took a human nature. There is such a gulf between God in heaven and we on earth. We need something in between to identify with.

Christ is the one we identify with. To be holy is therefore to be Christ-like.

Both in behavior and in disposition. Behavior and attitude. Behavior and spirit, if you like.

There's no verse in the Bible, actually, which says that we are predestined to be in heaven. That's not the way the Bible spells it out.

[6 : 34] What the Bible says is we are predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ. That's what we are predestined to be.

Our forgiveness, our conversion, our salvation is the first stepping stone in that process of becoming like Jesus.

So we ask, well, what is Jesus like? Well, Jesus not only always did what his father wanted, but he always delighted in what his father wanted.

Isn't that something? There's one thing to do what God wants. There's another thing to delight in what God wants.

Do you want to be like Christ? Do you want to be holy? You have to delight in doing God's will.

[7 : 50] That was Jesus. He always did what his father wanted, and he always delighted in what his father wanted him to do.

He always had his father in his mind. He always kept his eye on his father to see what his father was doing.

I remember being challenged in John chapter 5 at the pool of Bethesda when he healed that man that was there for 38 years.

He just healed him and then he went away. And you say, well, Jesus, could you not stay another half hour and heal a lot more?

What was his response? What did he go on to say? My eye is on what my father is doing. If he's doing nothing, I can do nothing.

[8 : 54] My eye is on my father. If he works, I work. I can't do anything without him working through me, as it were, on earth.

There's a lesson there, surely, for us all. What was Jesus like? He always agreed with his father.

He didn't really obey his commands. He submitted to his will. I'm sure you are all familiar with the Gethsemane when he wept, when he sweat, as it were, drops of blood.

Not my will, but your will. You see, we're talking here about how to be holy. We're talking here about how to be Christ-like.

Christ didn't simply obey his father's commands. As we said already, he delighted in them. He submitted to his father's will.

[10 : 02] Not my will, but your will. You see, I can be keeping all the commandments. I can be keeping all the commandments.

And then God gives me cancer. I'm not a happy bunny. I'm not being holy. I have to submit.

It's not just obeying commands. It's submitting to his will. He does all things well.

Can I submit to this adversity he's asking me to go through? If I want to be holy, I have to agree with what God does.

I have to agree with his providence. Doesn't that challenge us? Doesn't it challenge us all?

[11 : 06] Do we agree with what God has done? If we're going to be Christ-like, we have to agree with the father. What was Jesus like?

He was humble. He was humble. And what does that mean? Being humble doesn't mean you think meanly of yourself. Being humble means you don't think of yourself at all.

You think of what God wants. You think of what others want. Jesus said, learn of me. I am meek and lowly in heart.

You have to be humble like me. Learn of me how to be humble. Don't think of yourself. Think of others. Think of what God wants.

Are we going to be Christ-like? We have to be humble. If someone has talents and gifts, that should make them humble, not proud.

[12 : 12] Because if they have talents and gifts, where did they get them from? They got them from God. My friend, you can have gifts.

You can have talents. But you cannot have them unless God gives them to you. We're talking about trying to be Christ-like.

Christ was always full of faith. He was always full of faith. And that is why Christ was never worried.

He was always responsible. He was always keen to do what his father wanted. But he never worried. He never worried. What would be Christ-like? He was always full of confidence that his father was in complete control and organizing and arranging and doing everything.

He was never worried. He wasn't nervous. Jesus was never in a crisis. He was never panicky.

[13 : 28] He was never rushed. He did do things swiftly and quickly. But he was never rushed off his feet, as it were. There's a prophecy about Christ.

That he would not fail, nor be discouraged. Nor be discouraged. Are we discouraged? I fight with that.

I fight with that. I fight with that. I wrestle with that. Discouragement. It's not right. It's not right to be discouraged if we're going to be Christ-like.

He will not fail, nor be discouraged. I get disappointed. I get disappointed. Do you? Christ actually didn't get disappointed.

Do you remember, do you remember in Matthew chapter 11, the first, what we might call, the first evangelistic outreach services?

[14 : 36] They were in Capernaum, Chorazin, Bethsaida. He sent them out, and they came back deflated.

They weren't accepted. They weren't received. They weren't listened to. They were disappointed. They were disappointed.

disappointed. They were gutted. They were gutted. They were disillusioned.

They couldn't understand it. Do you remember what Jesus said? It's in Matthew 11, verse 25. What would you say if you organized a Christianity, explored an outreach service, and you went round every house and point, and you came back to the elders and had a guest service?

No one turns up. What would you say? What would you do? What did Jesus do? How did Jesus encourage the disappointed disciples?

[15 : 50] What did he say? What's the first thing he said? What did he say? I thank you, Father. I thank you, Father, that you hid these things from the wise and prudent in order to reveal them to babes.

University professors, doctors of philosophy, dismiss what the church may say in order that the rank and file of human society might believe and be saved.

So how did, if we're trying to be Christ-like, we have to study Jesus. How did Jesus encourage the disciples when they were gutted?

There's another occasion when they were gutted. And that was when Jesus said, I'm going to leave you. I'm going to be crucified.

And I'm going to go away and you're going to be left here without me. They were gutted. It seems they were totally dependent upon the physical presence of Jesus.

[17 : 15] How did he encourage them? How did he encourage discouraged people? If we're to be Christ-like, we're to learn how to encourage people who are discouraged.

What basically was his message? You know it. In John chapter 14, we have it very often at funerals. Continue believing in God.

You believe in God? Why are you gutted? Is God not in control? Is God not sympathetic? Does God not know what he's doing?

Do you believe in God? Do you believe in God? Believe in me when my bodily presence is not with you. The same way you believe in God, the Father, who doesn't have a body at all and never visited you in earth.

Why are you so disappointed about my physical body not sitting beside you and eating a meal with you? The Father never did that.

[18 : 27] Continue believing. You see, we're looking at this point. Jesus was full of faith and you and I have to be full of faith to continue believing in God.

When everything seems to go wrong. When we can't understand what God's doing. This congregation doesn't need to be reminded of a year today, do you?

Do you understand what God's doing? Did you know? What do we learn from this? How should we respond?

How should we react? Christians can be confused and disturbed and they are confused and they are disturbed but that should never lead to skepticism about God.

What's God doing? It should never lead to that. Never let what happens outside to affect your belief in God.

[19 : 33] Continue believing in God is the encouragement Christ gave to his disciples. Now when we're disturbed when we're confused as to what God is doing and why he allows this and why he allows that remember always remember two things.

Remember first that God is under no obligation to reveal anything to us. God is not up there just for our convenience when we've got a problem.

He's not under any obligation to reveal anything to us. He's sovereign and he's also wise. He's also very wise.

We don't judge him. He judges us. We'll never be asked to believe anything that contradicts his word.

But we will be asked to go beyond what he has revealed. If God has not revealed the explanation and the answers of a confusing providence that's his right.

[20 : 57] That's his sovereign right. That's his prerogative. He has that right. And if he hasn't revealed it, then we've been asked to go beyond what he has revealed, but never to contradict his word.

So remember, he's under no obligation. If we humble ourselves before him, he may, if it's for our good. And only God knows if it's for our good.

But the other thing, it's very important to remember, when we're confused and saddened and in darkness about providences that happen, always remember this, never let what you do not understand influence or affect what you do understand.

never let what you don't know affect what you do know. Why do what you don't know affect what you do know?

We know things for certain. We know things for sure from the word. Meditate on these things. They'll strengthen and encourage you.

[22 : 18] we know that salvation depends on faith in Christ, not on how well we perform afterwards.

Our salvation depends on what Christ accomplished at the cross. Our salvation depends on what Jesus did, not on what we do. We know that.

Let nothing disturb that. let nothing affect your knowledge that your salvation and my salvation depends on us trusting Christ when he was on that cross, bearing away the sin of every believer.

Let nothing affect that. Let nothing influence that. Never let what you don't know affect what you do know. eternal life by definition by definition cannot be lost.

Otherwise it's not eternal. If you can lose eternal life, it's not eternal life. Simple. times of distress, times of disturbance, times of darkness, times of confusion, they're actually times for exercising faith.

[24 : 00] not for abandoning faith. They're ideal opportunities to put God to the test. They're times for trusting him.

God in his wisdom has chosen what should or should not be revealed so that we trust him more.

so that we trust him more. The bottom line in Christianity is always faith in God.

It's always faith in God. And when we're down, depressed, discouraged, that's the opportunity for exercising faith.

God gives us these providences sometimes so that we exercise our faith and increase our faith.

[25 : 09] So holiness is being like Jesus. Now how does one become like Jesus?

We'll try to describe what Jesus was like what we're to emulate. Now how do we come like well as we said at the beginning you must first be forgiven.

We sang Psalm 130 for a reason. The process of sanctification the process of becoming like Jesus cannot commence until you're first forgiven.

Psalm 130 verse 4 But yet with thee forgiveness is that or in order that feared thou mayest be.

You can't begin to worship God. You can't begin to fear him right. You can't begin to respect him properly until you first tasted forgiveness.

[26 : 27] forgiveness. That's important. The process cannot commence until you're first forgiven. The process is lifelong as we said already.

Blessed be God forgiveness salvation conversion whatever you want to call it blessed be God instant.

Repent and believe in Christ you have instant forgiveness from God. But holiness sanctification being like Jesus a lifelong process and only at death are you made perfect in holiness.

Having been forgiven we become Christ-like by living a holy life of faith in Christ.

The previous chapter chapter 11 of Hebrews is called the roll call of faith. How often we read by faith by faith and what we read there in the previous chapter by faith they endure the people of God the Old Testament saints they endured torture they faced lions they were slain by the sword you see faith doesn't mean you have no problems there are people who think well if you have faith you see a problem coming to you if you have faith and you pray hard enough the problem will disappear the problem won't happen it's not what I read in Hebrews 11 yes you read by faith they escaped the edge of the sword but two verses further down you read by faith they were slain by the sword

[28 : 33] God in his sovereignty may allow us escape death and torture and all that but by faith you may be called to endure it faith is not for dodging problems faith is for enduring problems going through problems so that in the midst of the problem you see this is awful but I'm still for Christ I'm still following him I'm still pleasing the father I'm not giving up on him the one thing Satan wants to do the one thing is get you to give up that's the one thing he wants notice the word pursue or strive after whatever version you have strive after holiness you see it will not come naturally it doesn't come naturally it's a struggle therefore it's a struggle it implies change implies difficult choices and listen you can only be made holy through three things that begin with the letter

T you you can be forgiven instantly but you can only be made holy first through time okay time secondly you can only be made holy through toil you can't snap your finger and be holy you can't just make a quick prayer and become holy it takes time and it takes toil through much tribulation we enter the kingdom if you're struggling with becoming christ-like you're probably doing everything right the third T time toil and I'm sorry tears tears we're made holy through tears our time is up growth and development is not a smooth curve steps and stairs don't get discouraged don't get discouraged you can't see your own growth you know that growth is very often silent silent do you hear the grass growing do you hear the trees growing growth is silent you can be growing and not realise you're growing growth is imperceptible at time only through periods of time you realise oh the grass has grown

I close with just two things if you are a Christian you have no reason for discouragement Christ was not discouraged Jesus you say but I'm getting discouraged about my slow sanctification but listen 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 13 says Christ has become our sanctification have you got Christ have you got Christ you've got sanctification he has become our sanctification he perfects your our poor paltry efforts he perfects them he's become our sanctification it's done in him he was sanctified on our behalf for us if we believe in him my last word if you're here today and you're not a

Christian forget about becoming holy until you repent and trust Christ you can't be holy it's impossible for you our righteousness are filthy rags so do not concentrate on if you're not a Christian don't concentrate on being holy concentrate on getting Christ concentrate on trusting him with your salvation concentrate on believing on him because he is our righteousness he is our sanctification and redemption may God the Holy Spirit make his word effectual to every one of us let's bow our heads in prayer