

A Holy People

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[0 : 0 0] Well, I did a quick study this week, just a quick search. If you did a more thorough one, you may find the answer to be different than this. But in a quick search this week, I discovered that the word holy is recorded in the Bible, both Old and New Testament, somewhere around 700 times.

That's a lot of times. It's also a big book, and lots of words are used lots of times. But it may surprise you that if you were to compare that and do a quick search between the word holy and maybe the words love, or grace, or mercy, or salvation, or good, holiness blows them out of the water.

I mean, for the most part, it doesn't even come close. Where holy is mentioned some 700 times, some of those words that we might expect to actually be mentioned over and over and over might be mentioned 200, 300 times in the Old and New Testament.

I found that to be actually quite surprising. But it goes to show us the importance that God places on his own holiness, and then also living lives that are holy and righteous in his sight.

There's two ways that the various forms of holy are used in the Bible. The first is in describing God.

[1 : 2 8] We're told in Revelation chapter 4 and verse 8 that the throne of God is surrounded by creatures who continuously say out in praise to God, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come.

We just sang a song that's rooted in Revelation chapter 4. And when we come to this word in the Bible, we find it very often being used to describe God in this way.

When the Bible says that God is holy, what it means is that he is absolutely perfect, righteous, and glorious in all that he is and in all that he does.

One author put it this way, that the holiness of God refers to the unparalleled majesty of his incomparable being and his blameless, faultless, unblemished moral purity.

So when we come to this word and we see it in relation to God, we're thinking of the perfection of God, the highness of God, that he is absolutely incomprehensibly perfect and righteous in everything that he is and in everything that he does.

[2 : 5 6] But holy in the Bible can also refer to people and things. And when it's used in this way, it really means to be set apart or devoted to God's purposes and God's glory.

Now that's the definition we really want to wrap our brides around now. So let me say it again. To be holy in the Bible when it's not describing God, when it's being used in one of these other ways, it really is referring to something that is set apart, that is devoted to God's glory and to God's purpose.

For example, Exodus chapter 31 and verse 15 says that the weekly Sabbath day for Israel was holy to the Lord, meaning that Israel was to devote the weekly Sabbath to God's purpose and glory through rest and worship.

To use that Sabbath day for any other thing other than God's glory in rest and worship was a sacrilegious sin because that day was set apart, devoted to God's glory and God's purpose.

When we study on through the Old Testament, we find that the various instruments used in the tabernacle and in the temple were made holy to the Lord, meaning that the basins that the priest would use for their various duties were not to be used for any other thing.

[4 : 30] Those basins in and of themselves were set apart to this particular purpose in God's plan and God's glory and God's purpose. We see that the other thing, certain animals are set apart and made holy, devoted to the worship of God.

And to use those things for any other purpose, as Israel did at times do, invited the wrath of God. Well, the Bible also says that we are to be holy, devoted to God's purpose and God's glory.

So in the beginning, Adam and Eve were holy beings, not in the sense that God is holy because that would make them God and they weren't God, but they were holy beings created by God and they were created to glorify him.

They were created to enjoy him as their creator. But of course, they fell short of God's purpose and glory, according to Romans 3, when they disobeyed God's instructions and they sinned in rebellion against God.

And what was first devoted to God's glory was then devoted to God's wrath. Do you see the exchange now? Adam and Eve in their innocence are devoted for the purpose to live their lives, to glorify their Lord and enjoy their creator.

[6 : 00] But because of their rebellion and because of their sin, they then and of themselves became devoted to God's wrath. And it is only in God's grace and mercy that his wrath was not poured out on them in that moment.

A testament to the goodness of God even amidst his wrath. But this is why the gospel of Jesus is so necessary. Because as the son of God, Jesus was perfectly holy.

He fulfilled all the demands of the law. And on the cross, he was devoted to God's wrath on our behalf so that all who trust in him will be given his righteousness.

So there's another exchange that takes place. It's the exchange that the Old Testament anticipates that is ultimately revealed in the person of Jesus. You see, it's because of our sin that each one of us is devoted to God's eternal wrath.

But it is through Christ alone that we can once again be devoted to God's glory and purpose. So are you following me?

[7 : 18] We are created for God's glory, but our sin falls short of the glory of God. Therefore, we are now devoted to God's wrath. And the fact that you have any life to live at all is a testament to God's graciousness even to those who are in rebellion against him.

But God in his own love sends his only son who was perfectly holy to suffer his wrath so that we now can be made holy again through him and through him alone.

You see, this is where 1 Peter's discussion of holiness comes into view for us. Since we have been united together on account of our union with Christ, we are called together to be God's holy people.

In fact, flip back just a page, perhaps in your Bibles, to 1 Peter 2, verse number 9. Peter says, you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. And what is the end of that mercy that we have been shown?

[8 : 47] That God has his people that are a holy nation that are to proclaim the excellencies of his glory fulfilling the original purpose of Adam and Eve in creation so he saves us and redeems us and calls us together so that then we may reflect his purpose and his glory in the way that we live.

So now that we have received the righteousness of Christ through his cross, we are called as his people to live in total devotion to the glory and purposes of God.

But then as we study Peter's instructions for holiness, we need to remember that the purpose of this letter was to encourage and challenge Christians who were facing intense suffering for their faith.

And it is in this context of suffering that Peter flavors these instructions here in chapter four relating to our holiness.

In fact, in the case of these Christians to which he's writing, it was their holiness that actually caused them to face such hardship.

[10 : 04] So if we could summarize the point of these verses and the point of the message today, it would be this. God calls us to holiness to pursue holiness even when it produces suffering.

And it is his gospel that provides us with the hope that is necessary as we suffer on account of our new life in Christ. Okay, do you have that?

That's the summary. That's the big picture of what we want to accomplish as we work through these verses. God calls us to pursue holiness even when it means that we're going to suffer. And then his gospel comforts us as we inevitably face the suffering that comes along with a holy life.

So let's work through it together. Number one, I want you to see our call to holiness. Our call to holiness. Verse one, since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking.

Notice that our call here is grounded in the gospel of Jesus. That Christ suffered in the flesh. But what does Christ's suffering have to do with how we live our lives?

[11 : 22] And for that answer, we look back just a few verses. If you'll go to chapter three and verse 18, Peter writes, for Christ also suffered for what?

Once for sins. The righteous for the unrighteous. That he might bring us to God being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.

So first, Jesus suffered and died to pay for our sins. The righteous one absorbs the wrath of God set against the unrighteous ones.

We understand the Bible's teaching here. Death is the result of sin. But Jesus, as the perfectly sinless son of God, had no sin for which he had to pay.

That's why Peter, in that great sermon on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2.24 says, God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

[12 : 30] Why was it not possible for Jesus to be held by death? Because Jesus had no sin for which he had to pay. Therefore, death had no claim on Jesus.

The death that he died, he died for the sins of his people. Those who have, according to Ephesians 2, been redeemed by the blood of the cross.

So then, when we consider Christ's suffering concerning our holiness, we do so because our devotion to sin and to self was the very reason that he suffered.

You see, this is the thing, this is why the gospel focus is so necessary. And when we don't focus on the gospel and everything that we do, Christians can so easily lose sight of this.

Why does it matter how I live my life? Because the sinfulness of your life is the very reason that Christ came to die. He didn't come just to make us feel better about stuff.

[13 : 34] He didn't come just as a superior example of how to go through living in morality and in good works. That was not his purpose.

His purpose was to come and die for our sin. Why then would we feel it's okay to continue on in the very sin that put him on the cross?

Paul refers to this in Romans chapter 6. For the death that he died, he died to sin once for all.

But the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

[14 : 50] Why does our holiness matter? Why does Peter lead off with for just like Christ suffered in the flesh? Because our holiness has everything to do with Christ's suffering. It has everything to do with the gospel.

But it's not just that that Peter's getting at here. Jesus' suffering also sets an example for our holiness. Jesus pursued the will and the glory and the purpose of God knowing full well that it would ultimately lead to intense suffering and death.

That's why Peter writes here that we are to arm ourselves with the same way of thinking. In other words, he's saying you need to have the mind of Christ in this who pursued God's purpose, who pursued God's will, who pursued God's glory knowing that it would lead to the cross.

So, church, have this same mind when it comes to your own holiness. Our call to holiness begins with looking to Christ and living in conformity to him.

A total transformation of thought that is produced by the Spirit through the gospel. Here's why we say it's a total transformation of thought.

[16 : 15] because before the gospel comes in and transforms our lives, the power of God, who do we live for? Well, me. My life is characterized by what makes me happy.

My life is primarily characterized by self-preservation and self-advancement. But when we come to the gospel and we examine who Christ was and what Christ did, we find that that was not his pursuit.

His pursuit was not self-advancement and self-fulfillment in the sense that we would pursue those things. He actually pursued God's purpose, the glory of the Father, even though it meant his own suffering.

And when we come to Christ and the Spirit moves in and transforms our lives, he transforms our minds. You see, this is how we deal with the reality of man's will as we begin to understand theology.

That before Christ, our desires are set wholly on ourselves. But it is through the work of the Spirit that our desires are transformed and we then pursue the desires of God.

[17 : 37] Paul talks about this to the Romans as well. Romans chapter 12. Do not be conformed to this world. Be transformed by what? The renewing of your mind.

That by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. And then Peter goes on to describe what kind of holy life is produced by this transformation of the mind.

Look again at verse 1. For whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. Now that's a weird statement and it can be confusing so let's make sure that we understand it appropriately here.

So remember, suffering in the context of this passage is hardship that comes from our faithfulness to God in the gospel. Okay?

Ceased from sin does not refer to sinless perfection but to that transformation of mind that pursues God's will over our own.

[18 : 42] Okay? Are you with me? So the pursuit here, the ceasing from sin is not that we reach and attain a level of sinless perfection. This is just that disposition of the mind where our primary desire is to please the Lord rather than simply to please ourselves.

And the one who has suffered is the one who has suffered on account of their faithfulness to Christ and the gospel. So Peter's point is that those who suffer for Christ's sake show, excuse me, show that their desires for sin and self-preservation have been eclipsed.

It's not that they always go away but they've been eclipsed by a desire to love and obey God. So he's really working backwards here. He begins with the suffering when maybe if we just reverse it we say well actually this transformation and putting away of sin is actually what results in the suffering here.

David Helm helps, he says he is simply affirming that those who suffer for the gospel do by their very willingness to suffer demonstrate that they are done with sin.

Everyone who suffers for Jesus will first be resolved somewhere along the line to cease from sinning. Well then Peter takes it a step further and he goes on to explain the manner in which a Christian ceases from sin.

[20 : 14] Look with me at verse 2. So as to live for the rest of the time no longer for human passions but for the will of God. For the time that has passed suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do living in sensuality and passions and drunkenness and orgies and drinking parties and lawless idolatry.

So our call to holiness demands that we live the remainder of our days devoted to God's glory and purposes rather than our own. It's fairly simple there isn't it? God's desire for his people is then that we abandon human passions to pursue his will.

And looking through Peter's letter helps us understand the distinction between human passions and the will of God. In fact flip back just a page to chapter 1.

1 Peter chapter 1 look with me at verse 14 set your eyes there if you can. He says as obedient children do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance but as he who called you is holy you also be holy in all your conduct since it is written you shall be holy for I am holy.

Okay so he's setting a distinction here. What are human passions? The things we live for in the past before Christ what is it to pursue the will of God? To live holy in all your conduct.

[21 : 46] Look at chapter 2 now. Chapter 2 set your eyes on verse 11. Beloved I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul.

Now what is God's will? Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable so that when they speak against you as evildoers they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Again the distinction there are the passions of the flesh and then there's the will of God and the will of God in chapter 2 is to keep your conduct honorable. It is to have good works and good deeds that glorify God.

And the call to this holy life is then set in contrast to the sins that characterize the lives of unbelievers back in chapter 4. And it's amazing when Peter gives this list here it's amazing how close of a parallel Peter's first century list is to the modern party culture in which we live.

Did you notice that? Of course this is not an exhaustive list of sins. He's dealing with specific things in these churches which would have existed in what is modern day Turkey. The theme of the list is an unrestrained party life consumed with immoral sex and inebriating substances.

[23 : 16] half of the words listed here are used specifically in connection to festive processions and holidays in their culture.

Meaning that these Christians were regularly tempted during cultural celebrations to let down their guard against sin and live in the unholiness that so characterized the pagan world around them.

Now we can so easily see this. You need only look through a few reels on your Facebook feed to find out that our culture is consumed with these very things.

They're consumed with lives that are obsessed with sexual immorality. They are consumed with drunkenness with this party style of life and when the cultural holidays come along it's exacerbated even further isn't it?

And if we're not careful Christians can very easily get sucked into this. Where most of the time we are able to withstand but then there come certain seasons of life, certain groups of people, certain celebrations or causes that suck us back in even if momentarily and briefly into a life that is not characterized by God's glory and purpose and will for us but it is sucked into a life that so characterizes the pagan culture in which we live.

[24 : 40] Peter says that this is not the way to holiness. He says look to Christ who has suffered for these very sins and arm yourselves with the same way of thinking so that even when your family gathers together for Thanksgiving and Christmas this year you will not give in to the flood of debauchery.

He says pursue holiness. holiness. Loved ones. Our temptations are no different than theirs.

But our call is the same. Our call is to abandon the sinful practices of our past to pursue God's will for moral conduct and good works.

But this commitment to holiness is only possible as we fix our eyes on the love and example of Christ. You see when we try to do these things in our own power we inevitably fail.

And you know what I mean when I say that. How many times have you been tempted and rather than go to the Lord, rather than set your mind on the gospel and what Christ has done, you try to give yourself the very best pep talk that you can possibly give.

[25 : 52] Don't do it Jared, don't do it Jared, don't do it Jared, don't do it Jared. And then you fail and you fall. You see, the key to this is not pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps so to speak.

The key to this is that gospel focus that we started with so many weeks ago. Let me prove it to you from 2nd Corinthians chapter 5. I think this is actually on the screen for you to see. Paul says that it is the love of Christ in the gospel that controls us because we have concluded this, that one has died for all, therefore all have died.

Those who are in Christ have died to sin. And he died for all so that those who live, those believers, might no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

You see, what is the key to pursuing holiness in our lives? The key to pursuing holiness is to fix our eyes on Christ, to fix our eyes on the gospel, to preach it to ourselves day by day by day by day by day.

Knowing that in those moments when we do fall, we immediately bring ourselves back to that same gospel that reminds us of our own forgiveness and the mercy of God.

[27 : 11] So we see our call to holiness, now we see our conflict with the world. Our conflict with the world. Look at verse 4. With respect to this, they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery.

I love that phrase. Throw that into a sentence at Thanksgiving this year. And then they malign you. So here Peter introduces a disturbing reality.

It is a reality that our holiness will set us in conflict with the world around us. And there's a progression to the response that we receive from unbelievers when we abandon sinful passions.

We pursue God's will. First, they're shocked. Did you see that in the text there? Look again at verse 3, or excuse me, verse 4. With respect to this, the fact that you are not doing these things, with respect to this, they are surprised.

They're shocked by our transformation. If you came to Christ at a later point in life, then you know probably better than anyone what this shock is like. The first time that you didn't go with those friends to that place to do that thing.

[28 : 26] And they said, you're really serious about this Jesus thing now, aren't you? Do you remember that the looks that you received the first time that you stood up against some type of moral evil in our world? Maybe you'll get one of those looks at Thanksgiving this year.

Sinners are so entrenched in their sins that they are aghast when someone does not indulge with them. Their first hit was surprise. Oh, why wouldn't you do this?

You've always done this. Surely we've all experienced the bewildered looks of unbelievers who find out that we don't want to be drunk, that we don't want to have illicit sex, that we don't want to behave sensually in our lives.

to the world, we are the epitome of weirdos. We are. But eventually, this shock turns to offense.

Peter says we must expect that the unbelieving world will be utterly offended by our holiness to the point that they will insult, slander, even persecute us, which would be the definition of maligning here.

[29 : 40] and then when we start to understand the context of these churches to which Peter is writing, this carries itself all the way along to the point of death. Their very lives were in danger because they wouldn't go along with what the world wanted to go along with.

Again, David Helm is helpful. He says, surprise evokes misunderstanding. Misunderstanding evokes a sense of being judged. And when the world feels that it's been judged by our way of life, those who are of it will condemn you as a life hater.

Stick in the mud. Hear one of those. In his book, *The Holiness of God*, R.C. Sproul tells the story of Billy Graham being invited to play golf with President Ford and two PGA professionals.

And after the round, a friend of one of the professionals asked what it was like to play with Graham and Ford. And the man is said to have erupted in a litany of curses that ended with, I don't need Billy Graham stuffing religion down my throat.

And he continued on to the practice tee and after having some time to cool down, his friend approached him again and said, Billy was a little rough on you out there, wasn't he? To which the professional responds, no, he didn't even mention religion.

[31 : 06] I just had a bad round. And R.C. Sproul writes in connection with that, astonishing. Billy Graham is so identified with the religion, so associated with the things of God, that his very presence is enough to smother the wicked man who flees when no man pursues.

Luther was right. The pagan does tremble at the rustling of a leaf. He feels the hound of heaven breathing down his neck. He feels crowded by holiness, even if it's only made present by an imperfect, partially sanctified human vessel.

Have you ever felt the indignance of an unbeliever who's just offended by the way you're living your life, not even merely by the words that you've said to them?

This is the kind of thing Peter says we should expect. Peter's point is that like Jesus, we are to pursue holiness, even when it is sure to bring this kind of suffering.

We're never commanded to invite the world's hate, but we are surely to expect it. And still, our call in holiness is not lessened by our cultural circumstances.

[32 : 27] And here's what I mean. There will never be a time where we stand before God and he says, I'm going to give you a pass on that sin because your wife would have hated you had you not gone along with that thing.

That will never happen. This confronts that popular notion that says God's primary concern is for our personal happiness.

That's not true. God is far more concerned with your personal holiness than your selfish pursuits of happiness that are tainted in mind by our sinful condition.

He demands we follow Christ and that we follow his example even when it comes at great personal cost. And that cost will be different for each of us. So we see the call to holiness, then we see the conflict with the world, and finally, we see our comfort through the conflict.

Our comfort through the conflict. Look at verse 5. But they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

[33 : 41] Now hang with me, we're almost there. In the midst of this kind of suffering, Peter offers two forms of comfort. First, we are comforted by God's judgment of sinners who might malign us.

We need to understand this the right way, though. Notice what he says. They will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. Two ways to think about this. First, we recognize that all who are wicked will give an account of their lives to God.

And in the call to our own holiness, so will we. So remember, we have a judge. We will all stand before him, the righteous and the wicked alike.

But then when we come to this point of comfort, I think he's saying this in terms of what we see so very often in the Psalms. For instance, in Psalm 31, O Lord, let me not be put to shame, for I call upon you.

Let the wicked be put to shame. Let them go silently to shield or death. Let the lying lips be mute, which speak instantly against the righteous in pride and contempt.

[34 : 51] If you read through the Psalms, you'll find lots of statements like this, where the psalmist actually calls on God to pour out his wrath on his enemies. And we are conflicted about passages like that.

We come to him and we think, am I supposed to pray that way? Am I actually supposed to pray? Is it right for me to pray for their destruction? And we need to understand, I think, the perspective of the psalmist here.

Our comfort doesn't come in the destruction of the wicked. Not even God is delighted in their destruction. We learn that in Ezekiel 33. What brings us comfort is the eventual triumph of God's righteousness.

That he will triumph over all sin. He will triumph over all wickedness. He will not be defeated. They will not have the last laugh.

And it's not that we desire for them to go to hell. Our thoughts toward those who persecute us should be a desire for their salvation. But we can take comfort in the fact that God will triumph over this world.

[35 : 57] And those who continue in their wickedness. So when you do face that suffering and you do face that persecution on account of your relationship to Christ and his gospel, you can at least take comfort in the fact that God will win.

And he will judge. That's reason enough for me to continue in holiness. And it's reason enough for me in the gospel to pray for their conversion. But it's also comforting to me to know that they will not defeat him and his righteousness and his purpose.

I think we can take comfort in that. But the second form of comfort is found in the gospel itself. And we have in here in verse 6 another confusing moment in this passage.

But I really think it's meant to be a wonderful comfort to us. Look at verse 6 again. This is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead. That though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

So those who are dead refers to Christians who have died, perhaps even through persecution. Okay? He's not talking about preaching to them after they die.

[37 : 08] He's talking about preaching the gospel to those who have been converted and have passed away and were reflecting now back on their life and their death.

their judgment in the flesh the way people are speaks to the fact that they have indeed died like all people will die. Okay? But their life in the spirit the way God lives speaks to their eternal life received through faith in Christ.

And Peter said that this gospel is preached so that those who believe will live though they will still die. And it's reflecting on Jesus' own words in John 11.

I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me though he die yet shall he live. And everyone who believes or who lives and believes in me shall never die.

Do you see the connection here? Peter is saying in confusing words perhaps in English. He's saying this is why the gospel is preached because as we reflect even on believers who have already died perhaps even died as a result of this kind of suffering.

[38 : 17] We take comfort in the fact that they still live. That in Christ in the gospel they still live. But what does this have to do with our holiness and suffering?

The people to which Peter was writing were under threat of death for their holiness and their faith. Their faith was demonstrated through their holy behavior. So their temptation would be to abandon public pursuits of holiness in order to preserve their lives.

Are you following with me? So they're under threat of death. If they continue to publicly live in this holiness to display this transformation to the world around them to even preach this gospel to the people around them.

That means their threat of death will grow even greater. So the temptation would be I'll just live my holiness in private. I'll speak of the gospel to others who are open to the gospel.

I'll not take that stand among my co-workers. I'll not take that stand among my community. I'll not take that stand among my family because if I do the result could be tragic.

[39 : 30] But Peter writes this to encourage them to continue in holiness knowing that death in this life is that if that's where it leads is not the end for a believer.

That even when our lives are threatened we take comfort in Christ who graciously gives us eternal life through the gospel. Well let's finish with this.

God calls every believer to devote their life to his glory and purpose. And again as we are looking at this passage we're fitting it into the thought of who we are in Christ and what he has called us to be as a people.

Meaning he desires Lakeside Bible Church to be a holy church. That begins of course with individual believers but it should be reflected in the congregation itself.

And there are many applications we could draw to that that we'll save for another day. Pursuing holiness must be at the forefront of our minds as we consider who we are in Christ and what he calls us to be as his people.

[40 : 34] So in closing let's connect this back to these values that we've mentioned at the beginning. First it is by nature of our union with Christ in the gospel that God calls us to live in holiness.

Christ died for our sins. Therefore we must abandon sinful desires. So a gospel focus is what will produce holiness in our lives.

Secondly, the first way we demonstrate holiness is through our gathered worship with God's people. I mean that's really the baseline isn't it?

To be a holy person, a holy Christian is that we commit ourselves to the regular gathering of God's people for the purpose of worship. There is no greater setting apart to our culture and devotion to God's purposes than when we gather to sing our praise to him, to hear his word preached to us, to repent of our sins afresh, and to communicate and commune with God's people.

So we live it out first in that way. Third, it's a commitment to Bible teaching that informs us about what it means to live in holiness and how to pursue God's will.

[41 : 56] If you don't read the Bible, how will you know what is sin and what is not? If you don't submit yourself to biblical teaching and preaching, how will you ever grow in the knowledge necessary to actually live a holy life?

It's necessary. And then fourthly, one of the primary functions of a discipling culture is for Christians to help one another abandon human passions and pursue the will of God.

By lovingly speaking truth to one another, we will grow into a mature, holy people. And I recognize that it's actually very hard to live a life like this because it's a very hard life for me to live.

It's hard to live as a holy husband and father. It's easy to play a game of putting on a form of holiness before a church, but then actually live a life of holiness when the church isn't around.

It's a struggle for me like it is for anyone else. I know that it's hard. I know that the temptations are strong, especially when it comes to being maligned by people around us.

[43 : 12] But our challenge this morning, even before the part of holiness, is to keep our eyes fixed on Christ, who for our salvation pursued God's will, even when it meant certain death.

What a comfort that is to our own suffering. What a motivation that is to our personal and our corporate holiness as a people.