

Strive for Holiness

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[0 : 0 0] well let's turn in our bibles to the passage of scripture which we read in the letter to the hebrews chapter 12 and as god would help me i'd like to read again and concentrate on verse 14 hebrews chapter 12 at verse 14 strive for peace with everyone and for the holiness without which no one will see the lord the holiness without which no one will see the lord without holiness anyone can be converted without holiness anyone can be forgiven in one moment otherwise there's no hope for any of us without holiness friend you can be regenerated you can be born again in one moment without holiness but our text is telling us without holiness you'll not enter the gates of heaven having been forgiven you need then to become holy before you can enter the gates of heaven our bible tells us with regard to heaven there shall by no means enter anything that defiles and yet and yet heaven is full of sinners that's the glory of the gospel what's being said here how can these two things be reconciled the greatest sinner on the island in one moment can have all these sins forgiven yet will never enter heaven until he's made holy i used to be reconciled the greatest sinner on the island in one moment can have all these sins forgiven i used to be very confused about that until the illustration was pointed out to me you've got a ticket for the olympics and you go along to the stadium you've got your ticket they can't stop you entering in you've got your ticket that's your entitlement to get in you arrive up to the stile you put your ticket in the stile opens but it's only that wide and you're this fat you can't get in you've got a ticket you're entitled it but you're this wide before you can get through the gates into heaven you have to lose a lot of baggage you have to lose a lot of weight that's what's been pointed out here blessed be christ in one moment he can give you a title to everlasting life however great a sinner you are if you just believe upon him but once you believe upon him the work has to commence the work has to start

getting rid of the baggage getting rid of the excess fat so that you're fit to go through having a title for heaven is one thing being fit and ready for heaven is something else without holiness no one will enter the gates of heaven so what is holiness holiness god alone is holy god alone is holy so holiness is being like god that's what holiness is being like god god has chosen his people to be made holy do you know there's no verse in the bible which says we're predestined to salvation there's no verse in the bible that says that what the bible says we're predestined to be conformed to the image of his son and the first stage the first step in being conformed to the image of his son is having your sins forgiven it has been well converted if that's the way you want to put it that's the first step that's the first stage but we have to become like christ there is such a gulf between god the father and you and me that even if our sins are forgiven there's such a gulf we can't we can't identify with god we need something between god and us something we can identify with and that's why god sent his son in human nature so that we could identify with him he is what god would be like if he was on earth well he is god and he was on earth and we have a record of it so we're to become christ-like we're to become like jesus in both behavior and disposition we have to behave like him but we also need to have internally the disposition which he had the spirit he had the attitude the frame of mind which he had so what was christ like he always had his father in his mind he always kept his eye on his father and isn't it in john chapter five where he says i can't work because the father's not working the father's doing nothing more today do you ever wonder when he went into the pool of bethesda and he saw there the man 38 years impotent and he healed them and then he walked out and do you ever see like wait a minute it'll only take you 20 minutes to go around the whole lot of them why don't you go around and they deal a lot of them it's only 20 minutes it'll take you what did he say i keep my eye on my father if he's not working i can't work he was equal with the father he was god and he knew any power on earth had to come from god the father so he says i keep my eye on the father and until he works i can't work christ always had his father in view always had his father in his mind he always looked to his father he always agreed with his father even when he was disappointed we might say if i'm not sure we can use that word about christ but you know christ was never confused i don't know about you but i get extremely confused about what god is doing extremely confused i don't understand why he does this and he doesn't do that christ was never confused with what his father was doing and he was able to rejoice in it do you remember the disciples were once sent out on a evangelistic campaign to bethseda churrsin tyre and siren sent the seventy out you remember and they came back how did you get on how did you go how many converts what seems not one and that's when the saviour had to say woe unto you churrsin woe unto you by siden for if a mighty work done in you had been done in tyre and sidon they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes what do we read a couple of verses on an unsuccessful evangelistic campaign you might say how did the son of god respond if we're trying to be christ like how did he respond verse 25 at that time now as

I said at that time you and I would be terrified terribly disappointed I don't think we can use that word with christ because he and the father were one but at that time when you and I would be so disappointed have you run christianity explored with no one turning to god read this at that time what did jesus say in response to that situation father I thank you father lord of heaven and earth that you've hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children I thank you that's what he said to his father when I would have said lord I don't understand we've to learn to become christ like if we're to become holy we're to become like christ copy christ how did christ respond to certain situations christ always did what his father wanted and christ as we read there was always able to rejoice in what was happening he was able to rejoice in what you and I would call adverse providences i find that extremely difficult so often but if i have to become christ like i have to learn to rejoice when my plans go wrong i have to learn to rejoice when god's ways are most definitely not what i planned not what i hoped and wait for it not what i prayed for can we be christ like christ was always able to delight in his father whatever his father was doing there are such things you know or i should say there are such people that they call fair weather christians oh they'll follow christ as long as everything's going fine but when the tables turn when there's trouble that's the kind of god you have changing my god they don't know what worship is god is always right god's plan is always righteous it's we who need to change not god now how does one become christ-like well as already said and i hope i'll never tire saying it one must first be forgiven you cannot become holy you cannot become christ-like until first you have your sins forgiven becoming holy is a process but that process cannot begin until first forgiven the second lesson we have to learn is the process is not one year not two years not ten

years lifelong lifelong process blessed be god forgiveness instant the moment you first believe blessed be god but being sanctified becoming like jesus the rest it will take the rest of your life that's the lesson that's teaching the scripture i suppose in short we could say one one becomes holy by living a life of faith in christ living a life of faith in christ always trusting him especially when things go wrong especially when i think john calvin who says if everything is plain sailing in the christian life there is no role for faith by definition faith requires obstacles faith requires problems to solve by definition faith requires darkness that you have to go through without seeing where you're going otherwise there's no role for faith and our bible tells us untiringly it's by faith we enter the kingdom by faith we are sanctified by faith now god sanctifies christ sanctifies the holy spirit sanctifies but what does what do they use in our sanctification how does god sanctify us how does he make us holy how does he equip us for heaven how do we get ready to go through the style having the ticket what does god use let me mention two or three things he uses first of all the bible he uses the bible the word do you remember that wonderful prayer of prayers you know we call and you'll notice the catechism says commonly called the lord's prayer how he taught his disciples to pray but actually the lord's prayer is john chapter 17 and christ prayed just before he entered gethsemane just before he went to the cross he made that prayer of intercession for his people and he said there sanctify them through thy truth thy word is truth christ christ is there praying to his father knowing his will he's praying effectually or effectively and if you and i must be in john chapter 17 or you're not going to be there we've got to be in john chapter 17 where christ prayed for those whom the father

[18 : 56] had given him sanctify them make them holy through your word through the scriptures god uses the reading of the bible to make us like jesus god uses listening to the scriptures uses that to sanctify us he uses our meditation and by the way that seems to be a forgotten art i i had an elder who met aw pink who as you know lived here in stornoway and he always remembers him saying when he came round with that monthly journal which aw pink produced called studies in the scriptures he remembers them coming along to his office and placing a bundle of them on the counter and he said to him these are the studies this month and remember that's exactly what they are studies the scriptures are not meant to be read he said they're meant to be studied they're meant to be meditated upon and in our busy busy age we've forgotten how much we miss by just not taking one verse one verse and studying it thinking hard what it means for you

God uses it uses that to make you like Jesus sanctify them through thy word thy word is truth the meditation of it the listening to it the reading of it the studying of it it makes you like Jesus similarly prayer as we read in the scripture sanctified by the word and prayer building yourselves up in your most holy faith praying in the Holy Ghost every time you pray God uses it to sanctify you that's what God uses prayer oh you say my prayers waste the time never answered it doesn't matter

God uses prayer to sanctify you to make you holy to make you like Jesus you see I always remember being told prayer successful prayer is not as it were speaking reverently trying to twist God's arm to do something he's not really willing to do that's not prayer that's not a function of prayer prayer is God changing us so that we agree with God what's best and let me tell you it doesn't come naturally but it's God to come if we're going to be Christ like if we're going to walk through the gates of heaven and that will be the evidence that we truly have committed our souls to

Christ that we've truly been forgiven strive what's our text strive and by the way isn't it interesting the context strive for holiness without which no one suits either or strive for peace with everyone do you find people difficult to get on with good God sanctify you you find it difficult try carry on try strive and as you strive God sanctifies you perfect you makes you like Jesus it's a lifelong process don't get discouraged when it doesn't happen quickly it's a lifelong process something else God uses he uses struggles he uses problems he uses difficulties we're reading

Hebrews 12 just read Hebrews 11 it is just full let me just read what shall I more say time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah and Daniel and David and Samuel and the prophets who through faith conquered kingdoms enforced justice obtained promises stopped the mouths of lions quenched the power of fire escaped to the edge of the sword were made strong out of weakness became mighty in war put foreign armies to flight women received back their dead by resurrection some were tortured you can't just pray to escape torture some were tortured by faith refusing to accept the release they could have accepted release if they just denied

[25 : 39] Christ just sign here that you're converting back to Islam and there will be no torture God gives them grace faith to endure others suffered mocking and flogging and even chains of imprisonment they were stoned they were sawn in two they were killed with the sword they went about in skins of sheep and goats and destitute afflicted mistreated where's they just pray with faith and it'll disappear I don't see that anywhere there now we did read there by faith some did escape the edge of the false sword sometimes it is God's will that you should not go through persecution and escape it sometimes only verse 36 is it or 37 others were killed with the sword by faith by faith they were able to say when they saw death facing them

I still love my saviour and I'm prepared to die for him how did they do that by faith faith isn't for dodging problems dodging difficulties sometimes in the mercy of God yes but only sometimes something else God uses to sanctify us to make us holy to make us fit for heaven and it's the subject of verses 5 to 11 chastening God uses chastening now what is chastening it is chastisement it is not punishment Christ took all the punishment you and I do not have one drop of punishment to endure but we're subject to chastisement or as the word used in the ESV discipline what is it it is a rebuke it is a correction the original words translated rebuke translated correction most of all it's translated instruction better still it means being put back on the rails we've wandered off the rails we've wandered off track

God Christ out of love puts us back on track wonderful wonderful wonderful thing to be a Christian we can never stray out of Christ's eye he'll always bring us back wonderful wonderful wonderful now listen if you have never been chastened by God if you have never been corrected chastised by God don't rejoice do you know what it means read verse 8 if you've never been disciplined by God never been chastised by God you have never truly believed in him verse 8 if you are left without discipline in which all have participated then you're illegitimate children and not sons we have to know the rod it's a rod of correction and let me tell you it's a rod of mercy it's a rod of love it's a rod putting us back into line as we conclude therefore holiness sanctification becoming Christ like it implies change now we don't like change none of us like change but if we're going to be fit for heaven we have to change holiness implies difficult choices difficult decisions have to be made if we're becoming

Christ like holiness implies time toil tears holiness means if you're becoming holy you cannot be proud there's no such thing actually it's a contradiction in terms to talk about a proud Christian if we're Christians we're humble if we're Christians we're forgiven because of what Christ did if we happen to be improving Christ has improved us he's blessed to us the word our prayer our struggles our the chastening he's done it now God sanctifies us but our text tells us we've to strive we have to strive let me also tell you you don't know what happiness is unless you've been sanctified we Christians take a long long long long time to learn to be truly happy is to be holy we take a long time to learn it but blessed be God he's chosen us in Christ to be vessels of honour one last thing if you're not a

Christian here today if you're not a believer here today what am I going to say to you I'm going to say this first of all forget forget about becoming holy they can't even comment instead concentrate concentrate on forgiveness concentrate on Christ get to Christ whatever you do make turn to him ask him to forgive you and he'll do it in one moment turn to him and in one moment you can make you a new person and you can begin the process but until you repent until you turn to him until you surrender your life to him then without holiness no one will see the Lord blessed forever be the name of

[33 : 34] Christ he says to us come to me come to me that's the gospel and we don't need anything else but to hear his voice saying to us come to me may God the Holy Spirit make his truth effectual to every one of us let's bow our heads in prayer our Father in heaven take the things of Christ and make them ours bless us around the gospel we pray may your Holy Spirit unite us to Christ in saving faith we pray because we pray only in the name of the Lord Jesus Amen we're going to conclude our service of worship by singing Psalm 16 on page 16 page 16 of the blue book to sing Psalms Psalm 16 we sing verses marked 3 to 7

Psalm 16 at verse 3 the godly in the land for holiness renowned they are the glorious ones in whom all my delight is found down to verse 7 I'll praise the Lord my God whose counsel guides my choice and even in the night my heart recalls instructions voice Psalm 16 verses 3 to 7 the godly in the land for holy history now they are the glorious ones in whom all my delight is found that sorrows will increase who on what

God rely I will what sacrifice to them their worship I define O Lord you are to me my cup of portion true the share that is assigned to me your guard and keep secure great a jobbar

To me is my delight.

I'll praise the Lord my God, whose counsel writes my choice.

[37 : 38] And he will in the night my heart recalls his actions.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Transcription by CastingWords