

Living a Holy Life Lesson #4

Today is the conclusion of our holiness study. We have seen and discussed the three types of holiness: **Positional, Practical and Perfect**. Leading us into today's study, we must keep in mind, no one can affect the **Position** we are already given in Christ. Salvation is a gift of grace to those who believe and cry out. Also, no one can prevent God from **Perfecting** believers in Holiness. He promises to complete his work in all believers. The only areas of holiness a believer can influence is **Practical Holiness** and we are commanded to daily pursue this, to daily strive to live and be holy. We seek this holiness in response to what God has given and what He promises to give us at the end of our journey.

1 John 3:1-3 brings all these truths into one beautiful section of scripture. **1 John 3:1-3 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. ³ And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.**

Notice: We are God's Children now (**Positional**) We will be like God (**Perfect**) and everyone who has this hope purifies himself/herself (**Practical**).

The desire for **practical purity** sustains believers on the pathway of sanctification. It must be noted the word for "purifies" in 1 John 3.3 is a verb in the "present indicative" stance, meaning the action is both now and continuous and the verb/action is presented as a matter of fact. While grammar and English might not be your forte, the issue must be understood to live out our faith practically.

Example: The phrase, "I studied" is past indicative. "I am studying", is present indicative. "I will study", is future indicative. Our Positional Holiness is a past event. Our Perfect Holiness is a future promise, but today, factually speaking, those who belong to God **are** purifying themselves as He is pure. It is a continuous work until we arrive at God's level of purity. (Fortunately for us, The Spirit helps us in our weaknesses, and leads us far beyond what we are capable. Tonight, our study will end with our helper, but for now, let's discuss the challenges of daily purification issued to you and me.)

All Children of God are to behave and think morally. If this command wasn't to be a daily challenge, we would be told "we are already purified as He is pure", or "we will be purified as He is pure". Instead the Bible says, "we purify ourselves" (continuous refinement) as He is pure. Also notice the language of 1 John 3 doesn't speak of a onetime act, but a continuance towards complete purification. This involves active labors so we may enjoy the fruit of sanctifications now.

In Heb 12.14 we are told to "strive for holiness", elsewhere we are told to grow, pursue, reach, and press on towards perfection. Truly, believers are made holy through Christ already and are now called to continue growing into and striving for this perfection by cooperating with the indwelling of Christ's Holy Spirit. This will lead us to the position and pleasure of complete conformity to Jesus. To be enjoyed now, our gift requires our growth!

Example: Children are a good picture of this. When they are born, they are family members by position, but as they grow, they are expected to behave like family members in practice. They are to grow by following the patterns of the family. If they refuse, there is a struggle. Peter speaks of our growing status as members of the household of God. He said,

1 Peter 1:14–21 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” ¹⁷ And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, ¹⁸ knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. ²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ²¹ who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

To be obedient children we must confront our former passions, this work has many perils, but the blessing is to become more like Christ. We remember, Christ came on our behalf to save us; though He is our hope, we labor to walk in agreement with his will out of appreciation for his sacrifice. Today I’d like to consider some of the perils and pearls of this pursuit, and then end by refocusing on the promises of God.

There are perils on the pathway of holiness, dangers, and trials we must look for. **The First Peril** is, **“We must know God and his ways”**. Often, we do things wrong and hurt, because we simply *did not know what God wanted* at that moment. If we do not stop to think “Is this right or wrong”, we often miss God’s will. Sure, we know the big rules. Hopefully, most do not even have to think whether or not murder is wrong 😊, but if we do not pursue God’s will attentively, **we often make big stumbles over so called “little issues”**. *Can I get an Amen!*

God is moral and ethical and has a position on every subject matter. Note: we can take this too far, like asking, “*God, do you want me to wear a blue shirt or a red shirt*”. Thinking this way will drive you nuts. Instead, learn to daily seek the moral will of God. We do this through intimacy, spending time in prayer, worship, contemplation, and study of God’s Word. Over time, it’s easier to distinguish God’s continuous will as we become practiced in the ways of God.

The Second Peril is, **“We must learn to fully trust God so we can fully submit to his will”**. We get into trouble thinking our way/will is better than God’s, or results in greater power, position, pleasure, or promises. All of us do this, especially in areas of habitual sins. We tend to say, “O, I know what God says, but this will actually satisfy me”. Every breach of discipline actually hurts us and keeps us from receiving the full blessings of obedience.

To be submitted to God’s will, we must know Him and trust his ways more than we trust “self”. This submission requires **humility (The third peril)**. Humility says, “*I can trust God. His plans are better than mine. Without him I am not holy, but because of him, I will always be holy. Trusting God, I humble myself before him and will do what He says.*” If a person does not walk in humility before God, he/she will oppose the will of God every time God requires change or

sacrifice. Many an arrogant man destroyed a lifetime of blessings and left earth broken, beaten, and battered. We've all seen this; to avoid this fate we must grow in humility!

There is a pearl found in humility. A pearl is an area of beauty found in our struggle against sin. Believers who are humble before God, abide in fellowship with him. This daily intimacy nourishes our soul much like a branch eats daily from the tree's roots. Abiding produces life and fruit; believers who abide with God in intimacy WILL have growth and fruitfulness. They hear God's voice and respond to God.

It's a really a pretty picture if you think of it. The creator of all wants you yoked to him, so He can fill you, sustain you, nourish you and cause you to grow. But... it's a choice... you must decide to daily abide in Christ. When the pearl of intimacy with God becomes your highest desire, you see it is also the greatest path for practical daily holiness.

Jesus said, *"Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you {positional}. Abide in me, and I in you {practical}. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.{perfect}"* (John 15:3-5) What a promise! What a pearl!

There is another peril of Practical Holiness: all who discover they belong in heaven, also discover they are sojourners on earth. This is both peril and pearl. As a man seeking to be holy, I am often rejected by the world and its residents. Additionally, no longer do I enjoy the "pleasures" of the world, my tastes have changed and are changing. The pursuits of worldly people grieve my heart. The damage and destruction my eyes see, pierces me, as I am sure it does to a greater extent in Christ. This creates a 'sober' mindset which can lead to despair if I do not cling to the peril. Jesus wept, hurt, and was anguished by man's sin, but He laid down his life for the joy of seeing the few who would be saved. This is a HUGE pearl. Seeing other brothers and sisters rescued from darkness outshines all the costs of not belonging on earth.

Jesus promises blessings to those whose lives are despised by the world. He said, *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."* (Matthew 5:10-12)

If I were to list all the perils of faith, we'd be here a while, but the good news is, for every peril there is a pearl. Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for Christ, my shepherd, walks beside me and is always with me. He is the highest delight and remedy for sorrow.

There are so many pearls of life in Christ. Our relationship with him grows soooo deep and intimate. We experience the fruit of righteous living and know the growing fruits of the Spirit. We learn to avoid food that hurts our tummy as we feast on the rich marrow of God's word. Our family, friends, and communities experience healing and blessing. God's favor follows us everywhere. I could go on an on, but want to end with a beautiful passage of scripture.

We are in a relationship where not only do we pursue Holiness, but God disciplines us to be holy as he is holy. It is a joint project, and intimate journey with the outcome assured.

Let's read again, with fresh eyes, God's words in Hebrews 12:7–14

⁷ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸ If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful {peril} rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness {pearl} to those who have been trained by it. ¹² Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. {pursuit} ¹⁴ Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord {practical holiness}.

The sweetest pearl is **“intimacy with God producing the peaceful fruit of righteousness”**. Peace was given to us and promised to us. As we learn to submit to God's will, in humility and by discipline, we see yucky wars come to an end. There is nothing greater than living at peace with God, trusting in his Fatherly hands and loving plans and not resisting his will.

Testimony: Looking back on the battle fields of my life, I see so many areas where Jesus has become my peace. Not continually struggling with dirty thoughts, filthy habits, and ruinous activities has become its own reward. Knowing God and receiving his love is sweeter than anything the world can put in my mouth. Truly, I am seeking what God promises to give. As He is Holy, I am striving to be Holy, with the promise that when I see him, all the wars will cease, and I will be found completely at peace and perfectly sanctified in him.

Gang, I want to end with this. holiness is a journey. We all have the same starting point, the gift of Christ and the same ending point, again the gift of Christ. In the middle we learn to walk in harmony with the gift giver. God loves us and desires our good. Let us choose to daily pursue God, knowing the blessings of holy living far outweighs any potential loss.

Here is the greatest hope. While we labor, Christ works on our behalf.

1 Thessalonians 5:23–25 Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. ²⁵ Brothers, pray for us.

Now is decision time: Will you decide today to grow in faith and intimacy with Christ. If so, put into practice what you have learned and may God richly bless your pursuit of his holiness. Remember: you are still a child of God, so “Grow; baby grow!” Pray for me as I pray for you.

In His love—Todd