
“The Role of Jesus in Holiness”
(Hebrews 12:1-3)
Pastor Peter Yi
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Introduction:

NIV Hebrews 12:1-3

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. ² Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

So far this month we've looked at the foundation, the absolute basics of our pursuit of holiness. And that foundation is God. We've been reminded over and over again, that because God is holy, so we too are to be holy. So we looked deeply into the character and quality of the holiness of God. Remember we said that for God to be holy is for him to be totally and completely other from the rest of creation. There is none like him. But the other side of the holiness of God is his moral perfection. God cannot sin, he cannot be tempted with sin, he cannot tempt us to sin. Sin does not appeal to him. In fact his emotional response to sin is hatred. That's also what it means for God to be holy. Then last week we said that we all need to have rich and deep encounters with the holiness of God. These encounters will serve as the greatest motivations for us in our pursuit of holiness.

So up to now, the focus has been on God and rightly so, but what is the role of Jesus? And then what is the role of the Holy Spirit? Today we're going to look at the role of Jesus and then in a month's time, after missions month, we'll look at the role of the Holy Spirit in our pursuit of holiness.

So when it comes to role of Jesus in our pursuit of holiness I think the bible emphasizes three major roles that Jesus plays in this.

The first is that **Jesus is the one that makes our holiness possible.**

Holiness is not something we achieve just because we've made a decision to be holy, or we made a few New Year's resolutions.

Self improvement is possible for all people, but holiness is only possible for those who are in Christ.

The ancient theologian **Augustine** said something like this (3 statements) in regards to sin and holiness in different stages of our lives.

First, before a person becomes a Christian, he or she cannot not sin. Is this really true? In a sense, yes. The bible says that without faith, it is impossible to please God. So apart from faith in Christ, that is, being a Christian, it is impossible to please God. A person who is not yet a Christian can be a good person, for sure. Those good people are everywhere, all around us. But a person who is not yet a Christian cannot be holy. According to the bible that is impossible.

For those of us who are Christians, think back to the time you were not Christians. During that period of our lives, for what acts do you think God will give us credit and recognition? All that we did before we became Christians lacked benevolence, were vastly, if not completely, self-centered, and were devoid of faith and God.

Think of our lives even as Christians. How often have we offered pure worship, pure service, pure devotion to God. Is it not often, if not always, still covered with self and insincerity? Of course it is. If that is the reality of life as a Christian, how much more filthy and unacceptable are our so-called gifts before we became Christians.

So that was the first statement. We cannot not sin before we become Christians.

The second statement goes like this. When we become Christians we can not sin. The amazing thing about being a Christian, the paradigm shift, the newness of life that occurs is that we are now able to do something that we were once not able to do. We are now able to not sin. That is why the bible uses these amazing words for our salvation. For starters the word salvation or saved. Conversion. Turning. Reconciled. Born Again. A new creation.

Sometimes I think we forget the depth of transformation that has occurred in our lives because of Christ. We forget how we were before Christ entered our lives. And we forget how far along we've come on this journey as God's sons and daughters. What Christ has made possible for each person who has accepted Jesus as their savior is the possibility to not sin.

Imagine a person who has grown up his whole life in the slums of a developing country, a product of generations of poverty. All he has known is what he has known—lack, want, hopelessness, working for a measly one dollar a day as is the case in a poor country like Haiti or Nicaragua. But this is all he has known. He has no idea there is another world out there, filled with potential, education, employment, possession, dignity, possibilities. Until one day someone reaches out to him, offers to educate and train and provide the basic skills to make his life better. And as he enters this new world, he truly begins to see that a better life is indeed possible.

So it is with the person who has accepted Christ. The only world this person has known in the past was living unforgiven and unreconciled to God. But as a Christian, he now sees that a new life of obedience and joy are now not only possible, but are a part of his birthright.

Then Augustine mentions a final stage and it goes like this. When Christ comes back or when we go to heaven, whichever comes first, we cannot sin.

So the first stage, before we become Christians, we cannot not sin.

Once we become Christians, we can, not sin.

Once we go to heaven, we cannot sin.

When you and I go to heaven, there will be no more possibility of sinning. I think that'll be weird, because all you and I have known all of our lives, from birth to death, is sinning. So to live a life where sin and temptation are not only no longer present, but no longer possible, I think that'll be a wonderful and glorious experience.

All this is possible because of Jesus.

The bible says that it is for freedom that Jesus set us free. Freedom from what? You don't receive freedom unless you were once in slavery. The bible says that we were all at one point slaves to sin. Sin was our master. We were all under sin's powerful spell, unable to break free.

And so Christ, in dying on the cross “FOR OUR SINS” and rising again from the dead, has bought us our freedom.

Ephesians 1:3-4

3Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. **4**For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love

[1 Corinthians 1:2](#) To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:

[1 Thessalonians 3:](#)

12May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. 13May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

2 Timothy 1:9

9who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,

Hebrews 10:10

10And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Colossians 1:21-23

21Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of^[f] your evil behavior. 22But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— 23if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Jesus is the one that helps us become holy.

If holiness were up to us, we'd be doomed to failure and would have given up a long time ago. Many of us have tried over and over again by our strength to achieve some measure of holiness and we've failed miserably. No matter how strong your determination, we cannot be holy on our own.

In many areas of our lives, a little will power is all it takes and we can be successful. We have living proof right in this room that this is true. Diets. Exercise. Academic and career achievement. Accumulation of wealth. Many of us have achieved one or more of these things in our lives. Again, all it took was a little determination. All we needed to do was to put our minds to it. Put forth a little commitment.

Not so with holiness. Oh how foolish we are to think we can achieve any measure of sustained and real holiness apart from the help of Christ. It is not possible. Let's look for a better way, the prescribed way. The way of Christ. Listen to the following verses.

Ephesians 5:25-27

25Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her **26**to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, **27**and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Christ's goal for the church, for us as a community and of there is no community without individuals, his goal is to make her holy. It's not just our goal. It's his goal. Friends listen to this very carefully. The goals of God, the goals of Christ do not fail. They are always achieved. Remember the verse from Philippians (1:6)?

6being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

What is the end goal? When will Jesus stop working toward this goal? When it's completed. The good work God has started in us will be completed, in every single one of us. Friends, that should be cause for great joy and confidence in our pursuit of holiness. When we fall flat on our face for the umpteenth time, we get our knees, repent, and recite these verses. "Christ's goal for me, for our church, is to make me, us, holy." "Even though I messed up, Christ will complete the assignment. He will make me holy."

How will he do that? How will Jesus make us holy? Well of course he makes holiness possible, like we said, by dying on the cross for our sins, but now, day by day, step by step, how will he help us become more holy? Look at verse 26-27

26to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, **27**and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

The Word. One of the primary means by which Christ will help us become holy is the word of God. As God's people we must lift up our attitudes regarding God's word. I think it has dropped over the years.

For some the way they treat their bibles.

For others we don't engage in it the way we used to.

For some we think the bible is optional, to be read and picked up when we have a spare moment. One of the reasons we no longer put the bible verses up on the screen is for all those reasons.

To help each person get into the habit of handling and navigating through their bibles. To have a place to record a word impressed by the Holy Spirit. To build in us a habit of reading the bible at church and at home.

Bible memory is not child's play. Sermons are not just the rantings of a pastor. Bible reading is not the working of some mojo to keep evil away. The bible is the means by which we will grow in holiness.

Just begin.

Now we arrive at our final point. **Jesus himself, becomes the model of holiness that we should imitate.**

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race marked out for us.² Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Jerry Bridges says in his book “The Pursuit of Holiness” that one of the reasons why we don’t see growth or success in our pursuit of holiness is because our view toward sin is wrong. He says that when we sin or think of sin, the view is more self-centered than it is God-centered. We are more concerned about what sin does to us, how it makes us feel, and sets us back; instead of being concerned about what sin does to God or how God feels when we sin. We don’t think first that we’ve grieved God and disappointed him. We don’t think that we’ve disobeyed the commands of a holy God. Or that we’ve abused the grace of Christ. Or that we’ve trampled the cross. It’s far too self-centered.

First this passage teaches us that the life of holiness, the Christian life, is a difficult one. So much so that while we live this life, we can grow weary and we can lose heart. Everyone who is a Christian knows this. We know how a huge disappointment or tragedy can set us back. We know how a life of spiritual neglect can lead us to backslide for years and years. We all know that the life of holiness is a difficult life. And to endure and succeed in such a journey what are we to do? What are we to do to be holy?

First throw off everything that causes us to sin. And then set your focus on Jesus. He is the one who authored our faith. And he’s also the one who will perfect our faith. So look to one who can and will do that for us. It’s silly for us to look elsewhere because everywhere else we look, from those places no help will come. It is only from Jesus that we can confidently expect his power and his working in our lives to be holy.

But there is another reason we must look to Jesus. And that’s because of his cross. Many people in the world confess that Jesus was a real historical person. It’s not only Christians who believe that. Many people in the world agree that he lived an exemplary life. Even Ghandi praised Jesus for this. But Ghandi never became a Christian. Many people look to teachings of Jesus as one of the best teachings in all of the history of humankind. Many people look to all of these things, but they don’t look to the cross. The cross is horrific. The cross is scandalous. The cross makes you confront a holy God. The cross forces you to look at your own brokenness and sinfulness. It’s the cross that has become a message of foolishness to the world, says the apostle Paul. The cross has the ability to save and condemn. The cross says that all other ways to God are wrong.

It is to Jesus and his cross that we are to look, that we are fix our laser guided pursuit. Consider Jesus. Consider the cross for which the Son of God bled and died. Consider the sins, our sins, for which he suffered and died. Consider the shame, consider the pain, the ridicule. Consider the victory he achieved as he rose again and is now sitting at the place of highest power and authority. Consider Jesus. Fix your eyes up this Jesus. Take them off of yourself. Take them off of the sins. Fix them upon Him.