



**A Passion for Holiness – Part 3**  
**Psalm 119:130-133**  
**GCSP – 03/21/2009**

Everyone stand up and go to the back of the room. Spread out some and when I say go I want you to begin turning around in a circle where you are at until I say stop. Stop. Without moving your feet look around at everyone else. We have people facing just about every possible direction. No we want to make progress in our lives so everyone take two steps forward. This is what happens when the people of the church have different goals, different agendas, different personal theologies, and different views of how things should be done at the church.

Now everyone turn and look at me; or better yet, look at the Bible I hold in my hand. Now take two steps forward. When we all have a goal of pursuing the pure and clear and holy Word of God, the church will be in perfect unity and Satan has no answer for successfully thwarting a holy and unified church.

You can return to your chairs and be seated.

I believe the primary reason the Spirit of God has led me to preach through this series of sermons on "A Passion for Holiness" is to help narrow our focus as a church. Because God created each of us as totally unique individuals we have a great tendency to view everything in slightly, if not greatly, different ways. We think in our own minds that we know the best way to handle things. We have varying agendas and we sometimes attempt to push things in different directions – albeit with good intentions. But if our focus is not united we will have the chaos depicted by the exercise I had you take part in a few minutes ago.

One of the ways we can grow in unity is if we are all on a passionate and focused pursuit of holiness. When we are truly pursuing holiness we will be pursuing God and the truth of His Word. We will not have any hidden agendas, we will not be taking the bull by the horns and trying to create the direction for the church, and we will not be preoccupied with our own personal theologies, however biblical they may be. But instead we will be doing the only thing that is truly within our control; we will be bringing our own lives under the authority of God's Word and into submission to God's will in our lives.

You see, I cannot control you. I can make the attempt to teach you and to preach the whole counsel of God but I have absolutely no control over how you respond to it and I cannot change your thinking, as much as I desire to do so. Only God's Word can accomplish that goal through the working of His Holy Spirit in your life. If all of us are genuinely pursuing holiness in our lives we will have a much better shot at achieving unity in the Spirit, and in walking according to the Spirit.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the **119<sup>th</sup> Psalm**.

**Psalm 119:130-133**

Let's pray.

I don't know about you, but whenever holiness is presented in an understandable manner, many desires are stirred up within me to make the necessary changes in my life to achieve what is being taught. My prayer and my desire in preaching through this series, or any series, is that God will give me the clarity of thought and the exact words to speak so that it is understandable.

I have sat under teachers, preachers, and professors, and even had spiritual conversations with friends or those participating in Bible studies who have not mastered the art of making the things they want to say understandable. Through my twenty-five years of leading Bible studies and teaching adult Sunday school classes there are times when I have to interrupt those who are sharing their thoughts with the group because they are either talking over everyone's head or they simply do not have the spiritual gift of teaching, because no one has a clue what they are trying to convey. And what is the purpose of sharing if no one understands; it would be similar to what Paul says concerning the use of tongues in **1 Corinthians 14:17**: "**For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified.**"

So I pray that the words that come out of my mouth will clearly convey what God's Word says and means, and that the Holy Spirit would open up your understanding of the text so that all of us are edified by the preaching of God's Word.

David tells us in **verse 130** that as God's Word unfolds in your life it brings light. Darkness cannot snuff out light but light penetrates darkness. Think of the billions and billions of miles between the earth and the stars in the night sky. All of that blackness and darkness does not extinguish the light given off by the stars but instead the light of the stars penetrates billions of miles of darkness so that we may see them.

The light of God's Word can penetrate the darkness of your soul and the darkness of your understanding. The light of God's Word is bright enough that all darkness will flee in its presence. The light of God's Word will expose what lays hidden in the darkness. Now if I don't like what the light is exposing I can shade myself from it or walk away from it. I cannot extinguish God's light but I can do a good job of blocking the light from my presence. I can extinguish man-made light. I can walk over to the light switch on the wall and extinguish these man-made lights or I can blow out a candle, but I can't turn off the sun or the stars or the glorious light of God's Word. I can turn away or shade myself from God's light but I cannot extinguish it.

The verse goes on to say that the light of God's Word **gives understanding to the simple**. Let me share with you one of the ways that we turn away from God's light. We read Scripture and formulate a theology or an understanding of what the Word says and then a brother or sister in Christ has a different understanding of that same Scripture. We try to convince our brother or sister that our way of thinking is the right way and we either leave it at that or we take the stance that some Scripture wasn't meant to be completely understood by human minds. After all, God's thoughts are not our thoughts and the secret things belong to the Lord, as the Bible says.

This verse tells us that God gives understanding to the simple through the light of His Word. I don't see any exceptions here although I do see a possible reason we may at times be stumped as to the clear meaning of certain verses and passages.

I'm not going to take the time to develop this so you can do the study on your own if you like, but the Book of Proverbs primarily deals over and over again with four groups of people: The simple, the foolish, the scoffer or scorner, and the wise. The simple person is easily influenced for good or for evil. They are quick to believe what they are taught but they are also quick to forget when they leave the presence of the teacher. The foolish understand the truth in some ways but more often than not they choose to do things their own way because their understanding is deficient; they formulate their own understanding and become stubborn and un-teachable. The scoffer or scorner fully understands the truth but just flat out rejects it. The wise understand the truth, they walk in the truth, and they teach the truth to others.

David specifically uses the word simple when he describes those of whom the light of God's Word gives understanding to. Using the definition of the simple from Proverbs we see that as long as this person is standing in the light of God's Word they will have understanding. If they walk away from the light of God's Word there is no promise of understanding.

The foolish from Proverbs would be those who have a surface knowledge of the Bible and have used that surface knowledge to formulate their own opinions and philosophies and theologies and no amount of teaching will change their minds. The foolish in the Book of Proverbs is the one who is being admonished and beaten all the time because it is the only hope to rid them of their foolish ways. Fools depend on their own light instead of the light of God's Word.

The scorner has seen the light but has chosen to reject it. The writers of Proverbs have made it clear that the scorner is past the point of help. There are verses that suggest scorners are to be beat as well but not to change their ways; these beatings are primarily examples to the fools so that they do not progress into becoming a scorner without hope as well.

The wise see the light, revel in the light, stay in the light, walk in the light, and teach to others what has been revealed to them. But be careful not to think too highly of yourself for many from the ranks of the simple, the foolish, and the scorners think themselves to be among the wise. As a matter of fact, it is hard to imagine anyone who does not think themselves to be among the wise at least some of the time, if not most of the time. I remind you of our exercise earlier when we were all facing different directions and trying to make progress. That was a picture of how different we can be in our understanding of Scripture yet each person believes he or she is right.

God's Word gives us the light. Many verses in God's Word tells us how the wise remain in the light and this verse tells us how even the simple can gain the true understanding if they remain in the light. But all too often we are drawn away from the light by some so-called new revelation or some obscure teaching that claims to be based in God's Word but is actually a misunderstanding or even a perversion of God's Word – so be

careful to stay in the light of God's Word and not find yourself standing in some form of man-made light instead.

David goes on to teach us some things about holiness in the rest of our text.

**v. 131** – Longing Passionately for the Lord's Commandments

The man or woman of God will long to know God's commandments, long to keep them, long to teach them, and long to bring everyone around them into obedience to them. Many Christians today long after the promises of God, which is fine and good, but we must not forget to long after His commandments. This would fall under the difference between seeking God's face compared to seeking His hand. Longing after God's promises would be seeking His hand while longing after His commandments would be seeking His face. The Bible is clear that we should long after His promises but only in close connection with longing after His commands, because all of God's promises and blessings flow from obedience to His commands.

Obedience is the key that unlocks the door to God's treasure house of blessings and promises. But don't fool yourself; the overwhelming majority of Christians believe in their own hearts and minds that they are obedient to God's Word. And we do that by justifying our sin and or disobedience to the point that we no longer view it as disobedience. We no longer see sin and disobedience for what is really is. We have created our own gospel by making the standard of behavior fit in with what we believe to be right.

Hold your place and turn with me in your Bibles to the **14<sup>th</sup> Psalm**.

**Psalm 14:1**

The opening phrase in this verse is very familiar to most Christians. **Psalm 53:1** begins the exact same way: "**The fool has said in his heart, there is no God.**" Do any of your Bibles have the words, "*there is*" in italics? I know the KJV and the NKJV make it a habit to do this but most other translations are not doing this anymore for some reason. Do you know why those words are in italics? - Because those words do not appear in the original Hebrew or Greek. When the translators added words, to in their minds bring more clarity to the English translation, they put these added words in italics so the reader would know.

Because there is no punctuation in Hebrew, what happens if you take those two words out? You get, "The fool has said in his heart no God" which could indeed mean exactly what the KJV translators tried to convey by adding "there is" but it could also mean, "The fool has said in his heart, NO, God" – meaning the fool is telling God, NO!

When we create our own standard of behavior and block out entire sections of God's Word from our hearts and minds, or make determinations of doctrine based on our own interpretations or obscure teachings from Bible teachers we like, we are in essence telling God, no.

Beloved, if you truly desire to pursue holiness in your life you cannot set yourself up as the standard for the rest of us to follow. Your way of thinking is not God's standard. Your philosophy and your theology is not God's standard. The Bible and only the Bible is

God's standard! And if you are justifying your way of thinking and your behavior and your interpretation of God's Word as the way the rest of us should be thinking and behaving and interpreting, then you have quite possibly walked away from God's light, you have closed your mouth and your mind, and you are definitely not longing for God's commands. You are only longing for the commands of God that you follow and that fit in with where you are at in your walk with the Lord. The rest of God's Word somehow doesn't apply to you because it either doesn't fit in with your set of beliefs or you have not remained in the light of God's Word so the Holy Spirit can teach you these things.

Complete and immediate obedience is not just the best way it is the only way a genuine Christian should live their lives. You cannot pick and choose what you are going to be obedient to and call yourself a wise Christian or a mature Christian or a holy Christian, etc. There is no such thing as partial obedience. It is either obedience or disobedience.

I listened to some CD's this week from a preacher who was teaching on prosperity from a Biblical viewpoint. There were several occasions when this preacher was reading into Scripture some things that just were not there, but his overall point that came through to me was that obedience to God's Word is the key to God's blessing and provision. This point is indeed undeniable. Passage after passage in God's Word promises blessing, provision, and prosperity IF you are obedient to His commands. All of God's commands carry this IF. IF you obey, IF you follow My ways, IF you do according to all I have said, IF, IF, IF, then I will bless you, then I will provide for you, then I will prosper everything you do, etc.

Obedience is the key to holiness - long for God's commandments.

### **Psalm 119:132** – Plead Ferently for Holiness

After speaking of the light and power of God's Word to give understanding, and after admonishing us to long after the commandments of God, David now admonishes us to pray that God would grant us holiness.

We need this teaching because we have to understand that holiness is not position we can attain on our own. We have a part in this process but without the power of God's Holy Spirit working in our lives, attaining holiness is a pipe dream.

We looked at several passages last week that made it abundantly clear that the power of the Holy Spirit manifest in our lives is the only way we can overcome the desires of the flesh. We live in the flesh but we must be about the business of walking in the Spirit so that the desires of the flesh will be crushed and crucified. There is nothing holy about the desires of the flesh and apart from the power of the Holy Spirit we will find ourselves indulging the desires of the flesh.

When temptation presents itself to you, you have a split second to determine if you will indulge the flesh or walk in the Spirit. Don't dwell on it, just call on God and say, "Turn to me and be gracious to me" O Lord. Plead fervently with God to keep you on the path of holiness.

Again, hold you place and turn with me in your Bibles to the **1<sup>st</sup> Psalm**.

### **Psalm 1:1**

Did you notice the progression? – Walk, stand, and sit. When sin and temptation are in your path you are initially walking. At this stage in your pursuit of holiness the only thing to do is to keep on walking and leave the temptation behind you. And I might add the direction of your walking must be toward God. **James 4:7-8a**, says, “**Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.**” By walking toward God and away from the temptation you are resisting the devil and pursuing holiness.

If you choose to not keep on walking you are now standing in the presence of the temptation and are rolling it around in your head. And while you still have the opportunity to start walking again and draw near to God, you are pretty much already hooked when you stop and stand. It is much easier to keep a body moving that is already in motion than it is to get a body moving from a dead standstill.

**James 1:14-16**, says, “**But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived my beloved brethren.**” The Greek words that have been translated “**carried away and enticed**” are terms for a fishing lure and a hunting snare. Once the fish or the animal is focused in on the lure or the bait in the snare it is pretty much over; the same for us when we stop walking and we stand in the presence of the temptation because it is now in our minds. And **2 Corinthians 10:5** makes it very clear that the battle begins in our minds.

Once you have stopped walking and are now standing in the presence of the temptation I would say that 99 times out of 100 you will sit, which means you are now fully engaged in the sin.

### **Psalm 1:2-3**

But notice that the one who kept walking, the one who resists the devil and draws near to God, is the one who meditates on and obeys God’s Word and the result is “**in whatever he does he prospers.**”

### **Psalm 119:133** – Rely Completely on God’s Word for Your Deliverance

We studied in **Romans 6:14** last week that “**sin shall not be master over you.**” David now tells us that the key to sin not being master over you, or the key to not allowing any iniquity to have dominion over you, is establishing your footsteps in God’s Word. This is the simplicity and the reality of true holiness; having your steps ordered or established by the Word of God.

Here is where many of us falter: We look too far down the road and we allow ourselves to get ahead of God. We are anxious or impatient with the course of our life or the course of the lives of those around us, whether it is a family member or others in the church. Notice David does not ask God to establish his entire journey but only his footsteps. David is not foolish enough to get ahead of God and ask him to order everything that lies beyond this present moment but only the next step. All of us can deal with the next step with God’s help through His Word. Anyone can remain holy in

the next step of our lives as long as we remain in the light of His Word. But when we consider all that is involved with living a holy lifetime...

God has called me to a ministry of writing. I do not know if it will ever go beyond the email devotions, the newsletters, and the posting and distributing of the sermons, but it can be an overwhelming task at times. Writing even a few paragraphs that are attempting to convey God's truth is a daunting responsibility. The email devotions typically take 60-90 minutes to write and they are usually 4-5 paragraphs. The newsletter article is usually a 4-6 hour project that spans over several days or even weeks at times. The thought of writing a book almost paralyzes me. My world and my schedule is such that I have difficulty thinking beyond an hour or two. I simply cannot wrap my mind around writing a book – unless I take it a step at a time. Write an introduction, write an opening few paragraphs to the first chapter, write a page today, etc.

On occasion someone writes to me in an email with some questions and concerns and the email takes me 20-30 minutes to even read and digest. I have an extremely hard time trying to respond to emails like these because in my mind this could take days to properly respond to and I struggle finding a spare hour or two in my weekly schedule.

But the thought of taking a first step is simple. And after taking that step you can consider the next step, and the next. This is God's design for your pursuit of holiness. Simply establish your footsteps in God's Words one at a time. Don't look at the enormity of living a holy life, just look at the simplicity of living in holiness for the next few moments. Then look to the next few moments, and the next, and the next. String enough of those moments together and before you know it you will hear God saying to you, "**Well done, good and faithful servant.**"

Let's pray