

Serving God in True Holiness

Ephesians 4:24 (KJV 1900)

²⁴And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

- *We are to put on the new man who is created in “true holiness.”*
- *If the Bible says our new man is created in “true holiness” it means there must be a “false holiness” or a “counterfeit holiness.”*

Isaiah 65:4–5 (NKJV)

⁴Who sit among the graves, And spend the night in the tombs; Who eat swine’s flesh, And the broth of abominable things is in their vessels;

⁵Who say, ‘Keep to yourself, Do not come near me, For I am holier than you!’ These are smoke in My nostrils, A fire that burns all the day.

- *The expression “holier than you” does not originate from some skeptical agnostic, but from God Himself in reference to people who try to serve Him in self-righteousness and hypocrisy cloaked in the garb of religion.*
- *God describes religion, self-righteousness, and false holiness as irritating as smoke in one’s nostrils.*
- *Holiness is not keeping a set of rules.*
- *Holiness means to be set apart, dedicated, and consecrated for God alone.*

2 Timothy 2:3–4 (NKJV)

³You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

⁴No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

- *In the example of the relationship between a Roman soldier and his commanding officer we see a number of aspects of what holiness means.*
- *“that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier” - A Roman soldier separated himself from the affairs of this life so that he could please the one whom he served.*

- *Jesus Christ has enlisted us in His service. We didn't choose Him but God Himself chose us!*
- *Because God chose us, we are special to God.*
- *“that he may please him” – We must understand this statement properly or we will misunderstand our relationship with God. It does not mean that we must seek to win God's love, because He already loves us and His love is unconditional.*
- *“that he may please him” – What it means is that we have the ability and privilege to bring joy and pleasure to the heart of our God and Saviour through our lives.*
- *The difference between the two mindsets is like a child who tries to win his parents love by obeying versus a child who responds to his parents love by obeying.*
- *The first child always feels insecure and seeks acceptance by good works, while the second child produces good works because he or she delights and feels secure in their parents' love.*
- *“No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life” – This is a beautifully simple definition of holiness.*
- *“entangles himself with the affairs of this life” - The Greek word “entangle” means, “to become entwined, to become so involved in some activity as to experience severe restrictions as to what one can do.”*
- *Holiness protects us so there is a separation so we do not become either defiled by this world or entangled by those things that would draw us away from God.*
- *This does not mean we cannot enjoy living in the world, but we must learn to live in such a way as not to become entangled or defiled by sin and compromise.*
- *“No one engaged in warfare” – We must remember this is warfare and if we are at war we must be careful not to wander off and to be taken prisoner.*
- *What does the enemy do when they capture an opposing soldier?*

- *They take him as a prisoner – he becomes a POW and this is what happens if we don't live holy lives.*
- *What happens to POWs?*
- *They become prisoners and are no longer free. Whoever sins becomes a slave to those sins.*
- *They are tortured. Sin and unholy living torments their souls so they find no rest or peace.*
- *Sometimes POWs even renounce their allegiance and cooperate with their captors. Backslidden Christians will act shamefully and bring disgrace to the name of Christ, discredit the gospel, and sometime even totally deny their faith.*
- *“You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” – Therefore it is important that we endure hardship so that we do not surrender to the enemy and allow ourselves to be taken captive.*
- *The Greek word for “endure hardship” is κακοπαθέω kakopatheō and it means, “suffer misfortune, withstand trouble.”*
- *In war there are battles to be fought and difficulties to be faced, but through our faith in Jesus Christ we have the victory.*

Matthew 22:36–38 (NKJV)

³⁶“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?”

³⁷Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’

³⁸This is the first and great commandment.

- *Our motivation for holiness must be our deep love for God.*
- *How do we express our love for Christ in a practical and authentic way?*

John 14:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵“If you love Me, keep My commandments.

- *The Greek word for “keep” is τηρέω tēreō and it means, “to obey, to guard, to watch over in order to protect”.*

- *The idea of keeping His commandments is to treat them as precious and to protect them, watch over them, and obey them.*
- *If we do not love Him we may not initially say we are going to break His commandments. First we ignore them, which ultimately leads us to actively break them.*
- *What is the result of us keeping His commandments?*
- *We become more and more like Jesus.*
- *Therefore a good test to see if we are putting on true holiness is, “Are we becoming more like Jesus or more like our old selfish man?”*
- *If we are seeking to truly live holy lives our concern will be for God’s reputation and not our own.*
- *True holiness always will result in the nine fruit of the Spirit being manifested in our lives.*
- *If strife and contention result then we know that it is not truly holiness they are pursuing, but self-righteousness and hypocrisy.*

Exodus 20:7 (NKJV)

7 “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

- *The Hebrew word for “take” means, “to carry, to take, to lift, to bear” and in colloquial English we could say that when a woman marries a man she takes his name.*
- *The Hebrew word for “take” never refers to saying something, but always carrying or bearing something.*
- *The Hebrew word for “vain” means, “empty, to no purpose, useless, ineffective, unprofitable.”*

- *“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain” – This does not mean for people to use God’s name as a curse word, but to bear His name and to live lives that are unfruitful and bring disgrace to Him.*
- *The Jews have taken this commandment very seriously and in fact they have taken it so seriously that they removed the vowels from the name of God in the Hebrew texts so that no one knows how to pronounce God’s name.*
- *However, in reality they have been totally guilty of breaking this commandment.*
- *God gave Jacob the name Israel.*
- *Israel means “God prevails or rules” therefore Israel has taken God’s name.*
- *God called Israel to be a holy people and to bring Him glory and to be a light to the Gentiles.*
- *However, Israel walked in disobedience and rejected their Messiah and God and even to this day walks in unbelief.*
- *Israel is called by His Name, but they do not reflect His holiness and glory and thus they have taken His name in vain.*
- *However, the day will come when Israel will recognize Jesus Christ as their Messiah and God and they will walk in righteousness and faith and Israel who is called by His Name will bear it for His glory.*

2 Corinthians 5:20 (NKJV)

20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.

- *Ambassador: the highest-ranking diplomatic representative appointed by one country or government to represent it in another.*
- *We as Believers are called Christians and bear the name of Christ to the entire world.*

1 Peter 2:12 (NKJV)

12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

- *If our conduct is honorable before the unbelievers in the name of Christ, even if they speak against us as evildoers, God will be glorified.*
- *Therefore, another definition of holiness could be to live our life in such a way that our words, actions, and even thoughts bring glory to God's name.*

Romans 2:21–24 (NKJV)

²¹You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal?

²²You who say, “Do not commit adultery,” do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?

²³You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law?

²⁴For “the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,” as it is written.

- *When we as Believers take the Lord's name in vain by living in defeat and allowing sin to rule over us, the unbelievers blaspheme the name of Christ.*
- *Only Believers can take God's name in vain because we have been given His name and our choices will determine if we bear His name without purpose (in vain) or exalt His name by manifesting the power and authority of His name in our lives.*

2 Samuel 12:14 (NKJV)

14 However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die.”

- *God called David to be king over Israel and to be the highest representative of Israel's calling to be a righteous nation.*
- *God has chosen us so that we can bring glory to His name, but many Christians have brought shame to the name of Jesus Christ through carnality, sexual impurity, conflicts, pride, and selfishness.*
- *Through the careless and selfish actions of Believers, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is maligned and mocked and His name is blasphemed.*

- *Our primary motivation in life will determine the choices we make.*
- *If our primary motivation in life is to be happy then we will make choices that will tend toward compromise and instant gratification and ultimately we will be unhappy.*
- *However, if our primary motivation in life is to glorify God, then we will choose purity and holiness even when it sometimes means self-denial and suffering.*
- *The interesting result is that those who choose to glorify God's name over self-gratification end up being very happy and content, while those who choose compromise and sin in order to be happy end up very unhappy.*

1 Peter 4:1 (NKJV)

¹Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,

- *“Arm yourselves also with the same mind” – The weapon we need to take up so that we can live a life free from the bondage of sin is to embrace a way of thinking that accepts the fact that when we resist sin it sometimes initially produces suffering.*
- *How does resisting sin create suffering in the flesh?*
- *Temptation works through our flesh whether it is a craving through addictions, lust, pride, gossip, anger, or a whole host of things. When we resist them it creates a conflict and one way we can stop the struggle is to give in to the temptation.*
- *The way for us to experience freedom from sin is not to give in to the temptation, but instead take hold of God's goodness and choose to suffer for a short time if necessary so we can defeat our sinful habits.*
- *Our motivation is not temporary happiness, but a willingness to suffer for our Saviour so that His name will be glorified through our holy lives.*

Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV)

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of

your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

- *“that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” - We need to come to the deep conviction within our own hearts that it is our reasonable service to be living sacrifices that are holy and acceptable unto God.*
- *“that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” – The Greek word for “prove” means, “to test, examine, to recognize as genuine” and thus we must learn to recognize and discern the will of God.*
- *We are to learn how to be in the center of God’s will.*
- *We need to know the heart of God in regard to His will.*
- *So often we struggle with what the Word of God says about holiness.*
- *The reason we struggle is because we have not yet learned what it means to be living sacrifices.*
- *The very act of asking the question, “What can I do?” or “What can I not do?” is a symptom of not yet understanding the heart of God toward us.*
- *What does it mean when it says, we are not under the Law, but we are under grace?*

Romans 6:13-15 (NKJV)

13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

- *The message of grace is not that we are now free to sin, but that we have the power of God to live in freedom and victory.*
- *Sin shall not rule over us because we are under grace.*

Romans 8:3-4 (NKJV)

3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,

4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

- *The Law was weak to help us because of our sinful nature, but Christ came to live through us so that we can live holy lives for the glory of God.*
- *Grace does not ask “What I am I allowed to do?” but asks, “What do You want me to do?”*
- *The standard under grace is higher than the standard under the Law.*

Matthew 5:27-28 (NKJV)

27 “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’

28 But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Matthew 5:22 and 1 John 3:15 says that whoever hates his brother is a murder.

- *One may think that God is too severe to those under grace.*
- *But under grace He is offering us so much more.*
- *He is offering us freedom in the depths of our hearts so we can be free from all tormenting thoughts and feelings and walk in His abundant love.*
- *Under the Law people had only to deal with their actions, but under grace we have to deal with our hearts.*
- *The Law speaks about compliance for the Law seeks nothing more than compliance.*
- *You can teach someone the Law, but you cannot teach someone how to live by grace. This can only happen through the Spirit.*
- *The Law set the minimum standards while grace is like the Olympic bar, there is no limit to where God can take us.*

- *The standard that God wants us to live by is not something that mere words can express, but it is something we must experience as we draw closer to the heart of God.*
- *We are to not seek to see how far we can go before we are out of the will of God, but we are to seek how to be right in the center of the will of God.*
- *Do not commit adultery.*

Ephesians 5:23–25 (NKJV)

²³For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

²⁴Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

- *God is not simply after His people to have marriages that do not end in divorce, but a relationship that is a prophetic picture reflecting Christ's relationship with His Church.*

1 Peter 3:7 (NKJV)

7 Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

- *This Scripture captures a glimpse of the tenderness that a husband is to have toward his wife.*
- *Do not steal*

Ephesians 4:28 (NKJV)

28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

- *God is not simply wanting His people to be honest and not steal from others. He is seeking something more; a heart that desires to labour to provide for the needs of others.*
- *Do not bear false witness.*

Colossians 3:16-17 (NKJV)

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

1 Peter 4:11 (NKJV)

11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

- *God is not simply desiring His people to refrain from lying and using profanity. His heart for us is that our words would be filled with grace and we would speak the very words that He would want to express to those around us.*
- *Do not kill*

Matthew 5:43-45 (NKJV)

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’

44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

- *God not only wants His people to refrain from killing their enemies, but to reflect God’s heart of love toward them.*

Romans 13:14 (NKJV)

14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

- *“make no provision for the flesh” - When we ask, “Am I allowed to do this?” or “How far before this becomes sin?” we are making provision for the flesh which will ultimately lead to a spiritual and moral failure.*
- *How can Christians, especially youth, stay pure in a society that is so sexual charged and seductive?*

- *When Christians ask, “What is fornication?” What they are really asking is “How far can I go before I am guilty of fornication?”*
- *That question in itself is saying “How far can I go until I have crossed the line and am out of God’s will?”*
- *If you touch a girl you won’t be able to hear God’s will regarding your relationship with her.” Bill Woods*
- *So how does a young person stay sexually pure?*
- *If anything you do arouses feelings that should only be met in marriage then you have gone too far.*
- *We must not continue to lower the standard of God to accommodate people, but trust that God’s grace is sufficient for us to meet that standard. Otherwise things come down to a whole new level.*
- *We are not to wrestle with the Word of God to find out what is permissible.*
- *When you are under the control of lust and sin some decisions that you are absolutely sure are the right ones are certainly the wrong ones. You have become blinded by sin.*
- *God’s grace reaches deeper than our greatest mistakes.*

Matthew 6:33-34 (NKJV)

33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Matthew 6:33-34 (The Message)

33 Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don’t worry about missing out. You’ll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.

34 “Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don’t get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.

- *One of the tactics the enemy uses against us to stop walking with the Lord in obedience and faith is to overwhelm us.*
- *The enemy wants to focus our attention on all the mistakes we have made, and all the things we have to fix, and all the possible things that can go wrong, and all the things we may have to face.*
- *But God says, “take My hand and know that I am good. I control the future. Walk with Me and I will lead you forward and you will get to the ultimate destination I have for your life.”*
- *For those who have never received Christ, today is an opportunity to enter into a whole new life that does not lead to a dead end but to eternal life.*
- *For those who have received Christ, but have lost the way because of poor choices and difficult circumstances, today is an opportunity to take hold of God’s hand and allow Him to lead you in the path of restoration and healing.*
- *For those who have tasted of God’s goodness and have been learning to lean on Him we can give thanks and ask Him to strengthen us to continue our journey of faith.*