

Holy Persuasions

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 January 2022

Preacher: Tom Holland

[0 : 00] Amen. We've been speaking about pursuing holiness in an unholy world.

! There's many a great passages written by inspired men in the Bible,! and particularly a number of passages from the hand of Paul.

And in his letter to the church at Colossae, in Colossians 3.15, Paul said this, Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs in your earthly nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry.

That was written almost 2,000 years ago. I imagine what Paul would think of our culture today. The great Puritan John Owen said in his book, appropriately entitled, The Mortification of Sin, this often quoted statement, and I'm going to give this quote to you in its totality in a future lesson next week or so.

But he's famous for this, Be Killing Sin or It Will Be Killing You. And of all the books he wrote, and they're contained in 16 volumes by Banner of Truth, if you want to buy two sets, one for the pastor, one for me.

[1 : 46] Not bad, \$340, I think, on each. That's in his book on mortification. Mortification, of course, is not a word that we use every day.

It's actually a medical term. And according to Noah Webster's original 1828 dictionary, it means the death and petrification of one part of an animal's body while the rest of the body is still alive.

Now that we've just eaten, we can... Brother Webster, and he was our brother, applied this meaning to mortification in the scriptural sense.

He said this, The act of subduing the passions and appetites of penance, abstinence, or painful severities inflicted on the body.

The mortification of the body by fasting has been the practice of almost all nations. And the mortification of the appetites and passions by self-denial is always a Christian duty.

[2 : 59] A number of years ago, I bought a reproduction copy of his 1828 dictionary. It's really fun to read. He'll have a definition and then he'll say, See Ephesians 3.6 or see Galatians 1.10.

You know, to further define what I mean here. This duty means to put to death the misdeeds of the body, then to destroy the strength and vitality of sin as it attempts to reign in our bodies.

It's always lurking nearby. Mortification, this process of killing sin in our bodies, cannot be carried out in our own strength.

It's not going to happen. Again, John Owen, Mortification from a self-strength carried on by ways of self-invention unto the end of a self-righteousness is the soul and substance of all false religions.

Mortification or the killing of sin in our bodies can only be done by the strength and under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Dr. Owen put it in the high language of the 17th century.

[4 : 30] The Spirit alone is sufficient for the work. All ways and means without Him are useless. He is the great efficient. He is the one who gives life and strength to our efforts.

Now there's no question that we must be about the practice of killing sin in our life or what the Puritans called mortifying the flesh.

Equally, there is no question but that the strength to do so must come from the Spirit of God as He indwells and directs believers.

Without His strength, there will be no mortification. But there's no question that we must work diligently at killing sin in our life guided and strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

Remember back in September, God and the farmer bringing in the crop by working together? Well, this is a cooperative effort led by the Holy Spirit of God, strengthened by the Holy Spirit of God, made possible by the Holy Spirit of God.

[5 : 52] Sin is consuming. Sin consumes unbelievers. I have pointed out in a previous lesson that it does not mean that unbelievers are not capable of doing good and decent things.

They are. I often use the example of Dr. Salk who invented the polio vaccine, died an agnostic, unbelieving Jew. As far as we know.

But sin is always lurking in the shadows, ready to pounce like a mountain lion on his next meal. Even things that are good and well-meaning seem often or always to have sin lurking in the shadows.

And the believers in this world, or rather are the believers in this world immune from all of this? Is the mountain lion capable of pouncing on us?

The evil of Satan and his demons are not only capable of pouncing, they are desirous of doing so. They want to pounce.

[7 : 04] They want to destroy our witness. They want to destroy our capacity to serve the Lord in righteousness. They want to destroy Christian marriages. And that's happened at untold levels in the last 50 or 60 or 70 years.

I think I read a statistic not long ago there's more divorces inside the church now than there are outside statistically. Pretty amazing. So the question is, how are believers, bruised and buffeted by the world and the devil, and living out our lives in unredeemed flesh, how are we going to destroy the sin that is seeking to destroy us?

Well, that's a good question. The Puritans said that we must have within us what they referred to as holy convictions. And that's not a term we banner about.

So let's employ one that is understandable in our day. In place of convictions, let's use the word persuaded or persuasion.

And that leads to three paramount truths that must be in each one of us. If you're taking notes, this is what you want to write down. Each of us must be persuaded convicted that a holy life is important because it is God's will for each of us.

[8 : 41] You've got to be persuaded of that or convicted by the Spirit of God of that great truth. Living a holy life is important to God. Each of us must be persuaded or convicted that the pursuit of holiness is worth the tremendous and can we also say painful effort to be about the business of killing sin within us.

And above all else, each of us must really believe and live in the light of God's revelation, Hebrews 12, 14, saying that without holiness no one will see the Lord.

God said those things. God said that. And we need to be convicted or persuaded that's a message from God to His people.

Now how can we be persuaded that all of this is true? The Puritans would say we must develop holy convictions in order to strive for holy living.

And we've talked in here a lot over the last couple, few months about striving. Not arriving, striving. How can we possibly achieve that?

[10 : 10] Well, let's mark this down in our mental files. Holy convictions can only be developed and I would say matured by daily exposure to the Word of God.

We've got to be in the Word of God. And when I use the words daily exposure, it would be tempting for me to put a word in there and say saturated.

Let's saturate ourselves with the Word of God. Saturate our minds with the exposure to the Holy Spirit inspired Word of the living God.

The Holy Bible is the only inspired writing on this planet. And I'm not going to apologize to Joseph Smith or to Charles Taz Russell or Judge Rutherford they found in Jehovah Witness or any of these other things.

I'm not going to apologize to Mohammed. It's not inspired. Not inspired. No other religion, no other belief system has any inspired writing from God.

[11 : 29] None. No cult has any. book of Mormon is not inspired. The Jehovah Witness Bible itself is a mistranslation of the King James.

And one of the most glaring mistranslations on purpose was John 1 1 in the Jehovah Witness Bible instead of saying in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

They say in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word is a God. They say Jesus is a God. One of many that are out there.

But a lesser God they teach. In fact, they teach He's an angel that was created by the Father. Only the Holy Bible is inspired.

I remember John MacArthur he frequently was on Larry King Live. After Larry King died he said he used to have private conversations with Larry and Larry would say I wish I could believe the way you do.

[12 : 33] And he said Larry, you can. If you embrace it by faith. He said I just can't bring myself to do that. Anyway, I remember one time he was having a debate with Deepak Chopra the Indian whatever he is holy man shall we say.

And John was talking about the Bible. And Chopra said which Bible? And John said the Holy Bible. That was his answer. And by the end of the program Chopra said something I'll never forget. He said you and I live in two different universes Dr. MacArthur.

and John said we sure do and I thank God that you see that. You see that because God has allowed you to see that. And I thank God for that. But only the Holy Bible is inspired.

Now that is not to say that other books on Bible topics are not to be read and be read frequently. There's some good books out there.

[13 : 41] In my world those would include works by John MacArthur, R.C. Sproul, James Montgomery Boyce, John Owen, Jonathan Edwards, Thomas Watson, Bishop Ryle, J.I.

Packer, and I could add some more to that list. We can learn much from these men. But these men would be the first to tell you that their works are not inspired.

I heard John MacArthur say one time he's written 200 books now, over 200 books. I don't know how many tapes he's got and has distributed millions. Now he gives them away for free.

He said, and this is what John said, the day will come when my words are going to pass away, but the Word of God will endure forever.

It will never pass away. Well, how serious is God when it comes to His earthly children being exposed to His Word.

[14 : 44] We have an important passage written all the way back in the Old Testament, all the way back in the Pentateuch, that means five, five books, the first five books of the Bible written by Moses.

This is actually in the book of Deuteronomy. He was writing about the importance of the Levitical priests knowing the book of law.

That's another word for the Pentateuch or the first five books of the Bible. And in Deuteronomy 17, beginning in verse 19, it, meaning the book of the law, shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life.

Talking about the Levitical priests. Read it all the days of his life, every day, so that he will learn to fear the Lord his God by carefully following all the words of this law and these statutes, so that his heart will not be haughty toward his countrymen, and that he will not turn away from the commandment to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may live long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel.

That was written a long time ago. The earthly king, the earthly priests were commanded to read the word of God, they referred to it as God's law, all of the days that they served.

[16 : 22] He was to do that so he could develop within himself the fear of the Lord. This should happen when one considers the inflexible nature of God's law and his righteous demands upon our lives.

By reading the law they learned the absolute necessity of striving for holiness. Is it the same with us or should be?

By reading God's word we know the specific instructions that God has given us in order to deal with specific situations. When we read a passage like that in the Old Testament we should reflect upon it and then I find myself thinking okay there's some New Testament counterparts that come to mind that complement that Old Testament truth.

Here's a passage a direct quote from the Lord Jesus himself John 14 21 the one who has my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me and the one who loves me will be loved by my father and I will love him and reveal myself to him.

Great passage. Obedience is the pathway to holiness. You have no hope if we're not being obedient. If we're not obedient we're not striving.

[17:48] If you're not obedient you're not a striver. But we cannot obey the commands of the Lord if we don't have them. But of course we do have them in the word of God which we call the holy bible.

But you know we have to do certain things don't we? We got to pick it up. If you need to dust it off don't tell us just dust it off. You don't have to brag about that just dust it off.

I've got several that's accumulated dust but I got some that haven't. we have to pick up the book and we've got to read daily and systematically.

I remember the little street urchin that was speaking when St. Augustine heard tole legge tole legge pick up and read pick up and read and there was a passage out of Romans and he picked up and read it and got radically saved and changed the course of Christian history.

Amazing. Let me ask you a question. It's just one of hundreds. I'm using this as an example.

[19:07] How should we live out our lives in the midst of a perverse generation? Now I guess first of all we need to establish do we live in a perverse generation? Yeah I think we could do that pretty easily.

Maybe a few have some doubts but by internalizing and striving to live out the commands of God found in scripture.

Here let's try one on for size. Treat the parts of your earthly body as dead to sexual immorality impurity passion evil desire and greed which amounts to idolatry for it is because of these things that the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience and in them you also once walked when you were living in them but now you also rid yourselves of all of them anger wrath malice slander and obscene speech from your mouth do not lie to one another since you stripped off the old self with its evil practices and have put on the new self which is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the one who created it a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew circumcised and uncircumcised barbarian

Scythian slave and free but Christ is all and in all and by the way that's Colossians chapter 3 verses 5 to 11 now I want to consider the number of commands that the Spirit of God gave us in those seven verses of inspired scripture we are to treat ourselves as dead to spiritual immorality impurity passion evil desires and greed and I've taught in previous years to be dead means you're incapable of doing anything we should be dead to those things they can't harm us because we're dead to them in addition to being dead to those five we're to rid ourselves of anger wrath malice slander and obscene speech and then

Paul writing by the inspiration of the Spirit says oh by the way you're never to lie to one another don't tell any lies of course that goes right back to the Ten Commandments doesn't God's already covered that I count in there eleven commands in those seven verses I've had guys tell me if I just knew what some of the commands were they're everywhere by knowing the word of God what I said earlier being saturated we can bring to our minds passages that can help us in any given situation we find ourselves in almost any given situation I did a little research one time I had something in mind I won't tell you what that is tonight because I might still pull it off before I enter into glory I got all these friends dying amazing including some police officers retired officers in the [22:49] New Testament alone there are some 600 commands directed to the believer 600 what if I said let's write down 27 of them right now without looking it's not easy but there are 600 of them this is what the spirit of God says about commands and he says this in John's first epistle 1 John for this is the love of God you want to know the love of God this is the love of God that we keep his commandments how do I do that Lord well you got to know them I put them to you in a book keep his commandments that's the love of God then he adds and his commandments are not burdensome he's not asking us to leap tall buildings or any of that stuff by the way that's 1 John 5 3 and

I'm going to post another question don't yell! an answer just consider this how about issues or an issue not specifically mentioned in scripture how do we deal with that well a number of years ago a person whose name has been lost to history apparently and I tried to find it and I couldn't find it it said unknown he wrote a brief paper and he entitled that paper formula with a colon how to know right from wrong how to know right from wrong and it was based he based his comments on passages found in the letter to the Corinthian church and he started in 1st Corinthians 6 12 and he said everything is permissible for me but not everything is beneficial and then he got into his formula and he said one ask yourself this is it helpful is it going to help you is it helpful physically spiritually and mentally everything is permissible for me but I will not be mastered by anything and

then the next question was this does it bring me under its power if this thing I want to do therefore if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin by eating meat

I'm never going to eat meat again because I don't want to cause him to fall into sin and then he asked this he said what you're planning on doing does it hurt others so whether you eat or drink whatever you do it all to the glory of God and you'll take care of that just do it to God's glory and in that regard does it glorify God run in such a way as to get the prize all those are found in the various Corinthian chapters and as simple as this formula may appear it is powerful in developing conviction if we're willing to use it we talked about conviction or persuasion earlier this you can develop convictions using this but we have to be willing to use it these questions can get rather searching but they must be asked if we are to pursue holiness as a total way of life interesting that Dr.

Bridges is often given credit for this formula but in one of his many books he pointed out this was given to him by a friend who doesn't want to be named and of course Dr.

Bridges is now in glory so we're not going to get it from him in his first epistle the apostle John wrote these inspired words my little children this is 1st John 2 1 my little children I'm writing these things to you so that you may not sin camp out in 1st John great book when I got to be a new believer I fellow FBI agent that I worked with we'd gone through we were at the academy together not the same class but we met there and then we hooked up in Oklahoma City bought me a number of he was witnessing to me I wasn't yet a believer and we went to a Christian bookstore I didn't know there were Christian bookstores I didn't and he bought me several books and one of them was how to study the Bible and it said read 1st John every day for 30 days and I pretty much did and I'm still reading it it's just it's just rich we should make it our aim to never sin that's the goal we're going to fail yeah probably my case yes absolutely but that's our target that's our aiming point that's what we're aiming for and when we sin we have an advocate with the father

[28 : 43] Jesus Christ the righteous the greatest theologian ever produced on American soil was Jonathan Edwards brilliant brilliant theologian he made a list and he called them his resolutions this is January we're supposed to come up with resolutions those are things I break on January 3rd but he came up with a thing he called his list of resolutions I think there were 77 of them I'm not going to cover them all tonight but I'm going to just briefly mention one but he read that list at least of all of them at least once a week and I've got them at home I'll make you a copy if anyone's interested this is resolution number seven take this home with you tonight resolved never to do anything which I would be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life that's powerful if you knew that it's 715 between now and 815 the Lord's going to call you home you may not know who the national champions are just plug in

OU but if you knew within this coming hour you're going home to be with the Lord would you be afraid of doing anything that you may have done previous to this time in your life this is what Jonathan Edwards said never do anything which you'd be afraid to do if this were your last hour and that's how those lists of 77 resolutions work they're powerful I wonder how many of us would make such a resolution or 77 of them to live by well we should if we're serious about practicing holiness we should