

# *Holiness*

*“We Shall Be Like Him”*

*Volume 2*

*By*

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# Nothing Special

*“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.”* (Romans 3:10)

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Paul asks a very important question: “What then? are [the Jews] better than [the rest of the world]?” (Rom. 3:9) We need to put this into perspective in our own thoughts as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Were we chosen because we’re better than anybody else? Does our being chosen have something to do with our innate worth? You know, sometimes we seem to think that maybe we’re not all that bad—maybe there is something special about us, and that’s why we are in relationship with the Lord. Paul’s answer is no; there’s nothing special about you. “No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin” (Rom. 3:9).

There’s not any “good” group of people. No one has any innate worth in him. Man is totally depraved, out of fellowship with God, unworthy of the presence of God, unworthy of access to His presence, unworthy of communion and fellowship with Him, but he is worthy of death and hell. “For I know,” says Paul, “that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing” (Rom. 7:18).

As we hold up the holiness of God, we see the condition of man. There isn’t a disease called sin that makes man weak, but there is a power called sin that emboldens man, making him strong and stout against God—a hater and an enemy of God. Don’t see sin as a disease; see sin as a force that emboldens man to defy the truth and

the holiness and the righteousness of God. The condition of man today is found in self-righteousness, humanism, and the deification of man. Paul addresses this, saying, “No, there’s no innate worth in you. We have proven that both Jew and Gentile are under sin. ‘There is none righteous, no, not one’” (Rom. 3:9-10).

As Christians, we believe that man is totally depraved. There is no worth in man; there is no righteousness. Righteousness means “to be in right standing with God.” It’s not just our moral attitude or behavior; righteousness here has to do with relationship. Outside of that relationship with God, there is no man that can stand right before God or have fellowship and communion with God. “There is none righteous—no, not one.” *“Knowing Why and What I Believe, Pt. 1,” October 21, 2001, Sunday AM*

# See How Ugly You Are

*“But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.” (James 4:6)*

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You’re always going to be opposed by God Himself whenever self-will and pride are involved. Pride is trust in self, or the wrong placement of value upon self. When you open up the Bible, it becomes a mirror that reveals what manner of man you are. It will humble you! Do you who are having trouble with pride and self-will want to know your problem? You’re not spending enough time in [the Bible] to see who you really are! You’re not what you think you are! When you open up this Book, you’ll understand who He is and His awesome power, majesty, and holiness! You’ll begin to fear God when you look into His face instead of vaunting yourself, being so proud and thinking too highly of yourself! It’ll drive you to your knees!

Do you want to get sanctified? See how ugly you are! It’ll cause you to run to obtain more grace and to say, “I can’t do it, Lord. There’s nothing good in me, but I humble myself and realize how absolutely defiled I am. I thank You for calling me and seeking me while I was lost. I just ask You to make me more like You.” He sovereignly inserts divine ability so that everything pertaining to life and godliness can be given to us in Jesus Christ.

“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord...” (James 4:10). We keep waiting for God to humble us! It doesn’t work that way. Have you submitted yourself? “How do you submit yourself?” By humbling

yourself! Humility begins with getting a glimpse of who you are. “Well, yeah, I know I’ve got certain problems.” You’ve got more than “certain problems.” You are depraved, worthless! Everything you do outside the presence of God, the anointing of God, is profane—an abomination! It’s a stench in the nostrils of God! How holy are you in your worship and in your walk? You just have to see how ugly it all is to God! You need a glimpse of how holy God is before you can move into sanctification. Nothing else is acceptable. Anything that’s done in the natural is as filthy rags! Be holy, for the Lord is holy.” *“Cleansed to Serve, Pt. 9,” November 6, 2002, Wednesday PM*

# Take Sin Personally

*“For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.” (Romans 7:11)*

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The apostle says in Romans 7 that in our Adamic nature, in our flesh, dwells no good thing (7:18). The tendency to sin is in every one of us: in our natural being and in our physical appetites. Our physical appetites will always gravitate toward sin. Now let’s define “sin.” The word “sin” means “to miss the mark.” What is the mark? Holiness . . . perfection . . . fellowship with God. Sin is anything that causes you to miss the mark. “All unrighteousness,” the Scripture says, “is sin” (1 John 5:17). “He that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). “Sin is transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). Anytime the declared law is given, anytime you know what the law is but transgress it, it’s sin. You’ve missed the mark. The mark is the law of God. The mark is the schoolmaster which leads us to Christ. *“Sin From Within, Pt. 1” July 31, 2002, Wednesday PM*

Sin makes us insane; we don’t do things that are reasonable. Sin is insanity! Knowing the consequences, why do we do it anyway? It’s a force that, in opposition to truth, has to be classified as insanity. Why do we do that? It’s because sin brings its own reason; it brings its own philosophy and standards of conduct. The power of sin clouds our reasoning, causing us to no longer be rational. Sin and its power progressively sear and dull our conscience. Although the conscience can end up being seared, the searing process is not a once-for-all process. It’s a dulling unto death that we call vexation. As our souls are vexed,

we, as Christians, become desensitized. The things that used to offend us don't offend us anymore.

We have a responsibility to not let sin reign in our mortal body (Rom. 6:12). When we talk about the finished work of Jesus, as it relates to our justification and predestination to be conformed to the image of Jesus, it doesn't mean that there isn't any responsibility on our part to actively contend against sin. "Should we sin," the question was, "that grace might abound? God forbid! How should we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:1-2) The man who has experienced the grace of God is not one who says, "I have an abundance of grace, so sin doesn't really matter. I don't have to deal with it." God forbid! The man who has experienced the grace of God now says, "How shall I sin? I'm dead to sin! I don't understand why this manifests, but I hate it and want it out of my life! How can I practically live my life separate to God for His glory?" He now has a greater hatred for sin than he could ever have anticipated prior to regeneration. Once he tastes the goodness of God and the liberty of regeneration (the new birth), a hatred for sin is created in him, not an embracing, not an ability to tolerate and justify its activity. He sees sin for what it is.

Sin is not just missing the mark of a moral standard. Because the definition of sin is "to miss the mark," we seem to think that sin has to do with behavior. Sin is not a behavioral problem. Sin is not that we fail to live by a certain set of rules or that we haven't kept the Ten Commandments. We need to see sin for what it is. Sin is a force—a power that opposes God, denies His majesty, and rebels against His justice and righteousness. It is a force that, given the ability, would destroy

God. We need to personalize sin, beloved, and see it as an enemy of the holiness of God. Once we begin to see it for what it is, as an enemy in opposition to God's righteousness and love for us, we will respond differently than if we had broken a set of rules. What am I saying? Take sin personally. If you can personify sin, see sin as a person who hates your heavenly Father, you will see the need in your own lives to develop a perfect hatred for it. Let sin now be something that offends you because of its opposition to your loving Father. See the force of sin as you would see any other personality that would try to destroy your children, your parents, or your loved ones. See it as someone who is actively out to slander, demean, and destroy. See it as a living force in opposition to all that's good and right. Maybe then we will respond differently than if it were just an impersonal standard that we're trying to live up to. *"Choices, Pt. 2," August 13, 2000, Sunday AM*

# Offending Our Heavenly Father

*“And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” (Luke 15:21)*

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1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” Right? “I’m sorry, Jesus. Forgive me.” Repentance is more than that. We don’t say “Hail Mary” and “Our Father” to get things out of the way so we can go back and sin again. (All of you former Catholics know what I’m talking about.) Repentance is having a heart that has been affected by the holiness of God. We are aware that in this transgression our loving heavenly Father, the Holy God, has been offended, but as new creatures this action also offends us.

How many of you are offended by your own sin? You should be. If you’re not, you’re probably not regenerated. If all you have is a little twinge of conscience, if you’re being dictated to just by the law and by a moral society, if sin doesn’t grieve you, or if you don’t hate that particular action, then there’s a good chance that you’ve not been regenerated. The new creature is offended by sin. Held up to the fact that there is sin in our members which is going to remain there until the day of glorification, we see that there’s a constant warfare going on, isn’t there? When we understand the grace and mercy of God, when we understand our sonship and the real working of God’s grace in our life in being accepted unconditionally into the family of God, we understand there is no tolerance for rebellion, for disobedience, for sin. *“Grace to Repent, Pt. 1,” August 1, 1999, Sunday AM*

# Every Sin Takes Us Deeper

*“Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” (2 Corinthians 3:17)*

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The more we sin, the more we’re inclined to sin. That’s why exercising can become an obsession and can even become sin; the more we do it, the more we’re inclined to do it. Whatever is a habit in our life becomes who we are. It’s so much easier to repeat that habit because it’s done as part of our nature, not as part of our scheduling or decision-making process. It’s who we are; it’s what we are.

What are our habits? What comes natural to us? You see, choices are to be made out of a determination to not let sin be victorious in this one incident, thereby setting a lifetime pattern for consistent victory and Christlikeness. Choose to discipline self and habitually move in righteousness, truth, forgiveness, and grace. Over time, this process is going to build our character, and—90 days from now, 120 days from now, 365 days from now, based on this decision—that’s who we will be. That’s when we begin to truly experience the benefits of sanctification, and not on a momentary-decision basis.

We used to offer our members as slaves to impurity, to ever-increasing wickedness (Rom. 6:19). The more wicked we were, the more wicked we became; the more natural it was to us. The more we sin now, the more we’re inclined to sin. Every sin takes us deeper into the pattern, the habit, of sinful choices. It has to stop now.

It stops with a decision now to yield our members as instruments to righteousness and to recognize sin for what it is: rebellion against the character, person, and holiness of God. It's not a moral decision; it's a relationship decision.

Father, we choose to know You and to be like You. We ask that You make it real in our hearts and begin to establish from this moment habitual Christlikeness so that we can say with the apostle, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." We thank You for it, in Jesus' name. "*Choices, Pt. 1,*" August 9, 2000, Wednesday PM

# When Sin Is Most Powerful

*“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9)*

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Peter went through this growth process of being delivered from self-sufficiency and self-dependence. This is the man that stood and said, “Lord, though everyone else is going to blow it, don’t worry. They may all forsake you but not me.” Take heed when you think you stand lest you fall. Is that a Bible principle or not? Then explain to me what misapplied liberty is if it’s not thinking you’re going to stand. What else can it be? “Hah! This won’t hurt me. I’ve got liberty. I’ve got strength to handle this.” Take heed when you think you stand lest you fall; misapplied biblical liberty is seen there.

A fabulous wealth of knowledge is to be gleaned from the old Puritan writers. Their writings are almost impossible to read, but if you can wade through them, you’ll glean some great nuggets. What great insight! One of them said that indwelling sin is most powerful when it’s felt least. Think about that. There are times when you are not aware of indwelling sin. “I’ve been successful recently. I haven’t been involved in those habitual sins. I’m feeling pretty good about myself.” There’s no apparent tendency toward sin or rebellion at this time. That’s when indwelling sin is most powerful. When it’s undetected is when it’s most powerful. When you think you’re doing your best, you’re probably relying upon yourself. When you think everything is good, then very possibly you’ve not done what James says—to continue in the Word. You’ve forgotten what manner of man you are. You’ve forgotten what your tendencies are and have set yourself up for a fall. You’ve gotten out there and have brought temptation upon yourself. It’s a very, very dangerous area to be found in.

“The heart is deceitful . . . and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9) If the heart is deceitful, if sin is in my members and there’s no good thing that dwells in me, and I don’t even know my own motives, should I set my own parameters? Is that wise? That’s why we set our course by the Word of God alone, and our liberties don’t become fleshly comprehension and determination of what is acceptable and unacceptable. That’s why we can’t allow society to infiltrate the church and tell us what’s acceptable and unacceptable. If the Puritans lived today, do you think they would recognize the holiness movement? How many of you think we have taken more liberty in this generation than they took?

We live in a society of leisure which makes us so susceptible to sin. There’s nothing more dangerous than leisure time to those with sin in their members. If you are sitting idle, sin is at work! The moment you’re sitting idle—not loving others better than yourselves and by love serving one another, not seeking the kingdom of God and going into all the world proclaiming the gospel—sin is working and drawing a stronghold. Indwelling sin, when least felt, is at its most powerful position. The next thing you know, you rise up and, like Sampson, you shake yourself, but the Spirit of God has left you. You’re without power and you’re overcome. Your heart is deceitful; it’s wicked, but you don’t know it. You boast in your liberty and your right to dictate areas of your life that the Word has not specifically said, “Thou shalt not.” That is not biblical liberty. There is no place in the Scripture that gives you license to be lord of your life in any area. You’ve been bought with a price; you’re not your own! *“The Law of Liberty, Pt. 2,” August 6, 2000, Sunday PM*

# Inward Gravitation Toward Sin

*“There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.”*

(Mark 7:15)

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Jesus responds, “It’s not what enters into a man from the external” (Mark 7:15). Here again He’s opposing pharisaical righteousness: eating certain meats that the Pharisees felt would defile a man. Jesus said, “Look, you’re more concerned with the outward. Your traditions have made the Word of God of no effect” (Mark 7:13). He said, “It’s not the meats that are being eaten!” It’s not the fact that you go to a football game or that you’re going to play golf. That’s not what defiles us. What we want to see, however, is that though everything we partake of may not defile us, it affects us. It’s those little foxes that can ultimately bring defilement. Apostle Paul said, “All things are lawful; they are not all necessary, and I will not be under the power of any.” You see, the problem is when these external influences begin to have power over you! Jesus said that, in and of themselves, these things will not defile you, but they will defile if they become part of your inner man and have power over you, when they become what you are articulating, advocating, and propagating. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Matt. 12:34). That is what defiles a man.

So many Christians seem to think, “The law is not that important. I’m walking in grace.” No, if you’re walking in the Spirit, you are fulfilling the law. Paul said the law is holy and just and good (Rom. 7:12). The law is for the lawless (1 Tim. 1:9). When sin dominates a person who habitually misses the mark, what does he need then? He needs to be

put under the law. The law is the only thing that can help him if he's habitually walking contrary to the revealed heart of God! It's because the sin is from within; it's not the circumstances! "You know, it's the circumstances that are causing me to sin! It was the fact that it was overcast today that caused me to lie in the bed." You're lying while you're in the bed! You are in the bed because you are a sloth; you're lazy! Your flesh dominates you! You are selfish, self-willed, and full of pride!

These ugly things come from within our hearts. Beloved, you can say all you want, but what's in your heart is who you are! You can jump out of that bed when it's time for golf or fishing or the mall or a more comfortable bed! It's what we want to do—our self-will! It's who we are, what our prizes are, what our idols are, and who our gods are!  
*"Sin From Within, Pt. 1," July 31, 2002, Wednesday PM*

# Constant Infiltration

*“And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts....”* (Mark 7:20-21)

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What’s in our hearts in abundance is what’s going to come out of our mouths! Jesus said it’s what comes out of your heart that defiles you! (Mark 7:20) So, we need to ask ourselves how this stuff gets into our hearts. What’s the vehicle that allows this into my heart? All that’s in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). You see, that’s the gate; that’s what allows all these things to come in. We encounter the vexation that’s in the world’s system on a daily basis. It constantly tries to infiltrate our hearts. How can we filter that which we have to confront on a daily basis? You see, there are things in the world that we will *have* to confront. Beloved, since we have to confront these things, we need to prepare ourselves with a filter so that we’re not defiled.

If we’re going to have to encounter these things that are in the world, dangerous things that are vexing humanity and especially the lives of believers, then what are we doing seeking these things and absorbing them in abundance? What are we doing by *willfully* bringing these things into our eye gates, into our hearing, and ultimately into our hearts? We need to be wise in being about Father’s business and understand that we are in the world but are not of it. You see, the difference is that you encounter these things because you’re in the world, but when you willfully partake of them, you’re of the world! To be “in” it is to be inadvertently exposed to it. To be “of” it is to pursue it, to delight in it,

and to fill yourself with it. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak.

Jesus says, “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:21-23). Paul says, “In me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing” (Rom. 7:18). Every one of us has these things in our members: these lurk within our inner being, desiring to express themselves and become dominant forces in our lives! What are we doing to root this stuff out? What are we doing to kill this? We need to be washing ourselves with the water of the Word. While we’re doing that, maybe we should drink something to kill all of these “weeds” that defile our hearts so that we’re able to lay aside the weights and sins that so easily beset us (Heb.12:1).

How are you approaching the things that should be an abomination to you? Are you justifying them for your work’s sake? “You know, they’re part of my vocation. I just have to participate.” Do you have to go to the parties and play the games and rub shoulders? Do you really? What’s it all about—this pursuit of holiness, the life in the Spirit, the walk of sanctification? What is it that we’re trying to do? Are we outwardly appearing to be holy, or is there an inward brokenness? Is there a hatred of sin in our hearts? What are we doing as we go out into the world on a daily basis? “*Sin From Within, Pt. 1,*” July 31, 2002, Wednesday PM

# The God Of Grace

*“Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.” (Genesis 3:21)*

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Scripture says that the law is good because it revealed sin. The law is good because it was through the law that the revelation came and showed us in type the great grace and mercy of God. If we are not careful, we will divide the Word into two different areas: law and grace. The law prophesied and provided our understanding of the bondage we were in, yet, at the same time, revealed the grace of God.

Many people think grace is only a New Testament concept, but it's not. Grace is the character of God. In the garden of Eden God said, “In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.” Rebellion, ignorance of the Word, usurping by the woman, and abdication by the man led to sin, and man fell. In the fallen state man was lost.

What was the first thing that happened? God visited Adam and Eve. God did not say, “Okay, no more walks for you, Adam.” God wanted to walk with Adam. Scripture reveals that God acted as He always had; he came to visit the man. How did Adam respond? He ran and jumped into a bush, trying to hide. Sin makes us want to run from God, while God responds by pursuing us. Why? God moves in grace. One might argue, “But God said the day they ate thereof they would die. God will hold us accountable.” Yes, but He still pursues us because of His love for us. He still wants to consummate this relationship.

Many believe that God’s attitude is, “Well, you sinned and now you have to live with it. You made your bed; now lie in it.” In the Garden of Eden, Adam refused to walk with God because of his nakedness. Was God’s response, “Yeah, that serves you right. I hope you sit on a thorn”? No. God made clothes for Adam and Eve. He got them some Gucci shoes and a nice pair of Hickey Freeman pants, and He was ready for a stroll. God did all the pursuing and providing; Adam hid in a bush. God shows that Adam’s only hope was to deal firsthand with God, but on God’s terms.

God is the God of grace in both the Old and New Testaments—nothing has changed. God in the Old Testament is often perceived as being harsh, judgmental, and as showing the righteousness and justice of God, while God in the New Testament is seen as being full of grace and philanthropy. Both books reveal the same God. “*The Goodness of Grace, Pt. 2,*” December 30, 1992, Wednesday PM

# When Grace Ceases To Be Grace

*“Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.”*

(Romans 4:4).

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One of the principles that we have to understand is that God’s mercy and grace is the expression of His character, His person. Grace was not the result of Jesus’ death; Jesus’ death was the result of God’s grace. Many of us seem to think that Jesus had to somehow stand between an angry God and die, but God would say, “Okay, I’ll be merciful.” God was merciful and sent Jesus to die while we were yet sinners! There was no merit on man’s part; man didn’t deserve it. It was initiated from the very heart of God.

The old hymn, *Amazing Grace*, says, “Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far and grace ‘will lead me home.” Samuel Storms made the following statement: “Grace ceases to be grace if God is compelled to bestow it in the presence of human merit. Graces ceases to be grace if God is compelled to withdraw it in the presence of human demerit.” These are powerful statements. God is not obligated to bestow grace based upon our performance, and it’s not grace if God has to withdraw it based upon demerit. Grace is treating a person without the slightest reference to what he deserves but solely according to the infinite goodness and sovereign purposes of God.

With that understanding of what grace is, you and I can stand back and look a little more clearly at the fruit in our lives. We can say, “Where is this coming from? Why am I doing what I’m doing? Do I do things

out of obligation or fear, wanting to earn God's love and mercy? If I live this way, God will more than likely hear and answer my prayer." That's not true. It has nothing to do with merit, and performance is not part of the equation. It's relationship; it's dependence; it's the knowledge of Who He is and how great and loving and merciful He is toward us.

The life of Jesus was based solely upon the assurance that He was about Father's business and that Father's grace would enable Him to finish the work. It's one thing to move in the power of God and cast out devils, walk on water, and raise the dead; it's another thing to take the sin of the world on you! As He sweat drops of blood He prayed more earnestly, "Father, if possible, let the cup pass; but nevertheless not My will, Thy will be done." Jesus showed the greatest strength at the time He showed His greatest dependence, and that's when sin's power was broken. *"Fruit That Remains, Pt. 3," July 11, 1999, Sunday AM*

# Unmerited Favor That Enables

*“But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” (1 Corinthians 15:10)*

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Have you ever been guilty of judging yourself by your performance rather than receiving the free gift through the redemptive work of Jesus, the free gift of God’s grace? Most of us have. We can become guilty of focusing on works, allowing ourselves to judge ourselves and others by actions rather than by Jesus’ performance.

Nothing you do will cause you to gain favor with God. Your achievements will not give you right standing with God. You cannot earn little angel points by your accomplishments. The best we can produce, our own righteousness, is as filthy rags in God’s sight. Jesus’ righteousness makes us accepted in the Beloved. Performance does not make us right with God; being right with God makes us capable of performing. Our teachings aim to stay in the center of the road, not swayed by any established theological standards. We want to bring the wisdom and counsel of God’s Word to allow the pure Word of God to speak to us.

We have compared the different forms of obedience to the Word of God: the “works” perspective versus the “grace” perspective. Actually, grace and faith work. We cannot isolate one from the other. If you have experienced the true grace of God, and faith was impregnated into your spirit by the Word of God, you will produce good works that remain.

Grace has two facets to it: unmerited favor and God's enabling us to obey. Grace is unmerited favor, or a free gift; but, at the same time, this free gift enables us to serve God and obey Him. For it is God who works in us to do and to will His good pleasure. God, by His grace, is at work in us. "*The Goodness of Grace, Pt. 2,*" December 30, 1992, Wednesday PM

# I See You Holy

*“Not by works of righteousness which ye have done, but . . . by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” (Titus 3:5)*

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Justification has to do with the justice of God. When Jesus was offered up, when He died, God’s wrath was appeased; He was satisfied. Because God was satisfied, He can now legally impute this to our account and still be just and the Justifier of those who believe in Jesus. The problem, though, is how we look at justification, or this pronouncement of our righteousness. We must see that our justification is absolutely by faith, because many times we just don’t feel righteous. We have to contend with these unrighteous feelings, with not looking or acting righteous all the time. We don’t always act holy or like Jesus, and yet God continues to see us holy and just in His sight.

Months back we taught along these lines, using the good day/bad day scenario. Perhaps you lied to get out of trouble. Maybe you should have been able to get something done but didn’t. Maybe you had some lustful thoughts or were moving in pride. You may have been gossiping. But now the opportunity comes to speak the gospel to someone and lead them to Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. Someone is brought to you to lay hands on for healing. There’s somebody before you that’s demon possessed, and it’s time to take authority and cast the devil out. How many of you would feel less prepared at that moment than if you had just been on a thirty-day roll of prayer and fasting, and, as far as you’re able to perceive, you’ve not committed any offense toward God? I’m not interested in what you know in

your head; I'm not interested in your theology. How many of you would feel more prepared in the second scenario than in the first? If so, you don't believe you're justified. We really don't believe it! Don't feel strange if you feel that way, because you're in the majority. Honest Christians will always respond that same way.

Father, our survey just proved that we don't believe we're forgiven. We feel that we have to pay a price—that there's a punishment and a time of earning back our right standing. Because of that we can't love You properly. But when we realize how much we've been forgiven, we can love You much. When we're ugly, You still love us. How much that makes us love You more! Keep us from pride and self-righteousness that try to cause Jesus to avail us nothing. Give us hearts to hear and faith to believe, in Jesus name. *"Another Gospel, Pt. 6," August 2, 2000, Wednesday PM*

# Awareness Of The Majesty

*“But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” (Isaiah 66:2)*

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The Lord was challenging me recently in some areas of my life with the teaching on the grace of God. I dealt with fear and condemnation that I put myself under because of a lack of performance in personal discipline in so many areas of my life physically, especially in the discipline of my workouts. All of a sudden, a flood of condemnation came on me. I thought, “Man, you need to get your act together!” It evolved into other areas in which I was guilty of the good day/bad day scenario. The Spirit of God said, “Are you’re trying to say that if you would work harder, you could force Me into doing things, answering prayers, and bringing about fruit in this ministry? Are you telling Me that I don’t desire to affect this aspect of ministry, whether it’s what’s going on in Africa or whatever else it might be? You mean to tell me that all of this is dependent upon your strength and your performance and your works? Yet so piously you can stand and say, ‘Without Him I can do nothing.’ You don’t believe that My grace is unconditional.”

It broke my heart. I was driving home when I began to weep with tears, thinking I didn’t know Him. “Father, forgive me. I’ve judged You based upon my own abilities.” As the Lord began to minister His grace and His love to me, I began to be healed from within and sensed a liberty. Then the Spirit of the Lord spoke to me again, saying, “Do you feel better now?” “Yeah.” “Now you’re ready? You couldn’t do anything when you were feeling bad, but you can do it now. Right?”

I was getting the point loud and clear. It created part of what I'm sharing on the awareness of the majesty of God. We need to acknowledge that His greatness is not based upon our perceived abilities or upon His benefits that He bestows upon us. We should purpose in our church gatherings to know, "I'm not here to be blessed; I'm not here to be refreshed. I'm not here to contribute to the body in doing my deed for the day. I just want to be in Your presence. I just want to know the benefits of that access by the blood of Jesus and that I am bringing glory to Your name." *"Holy Reverence, Pt. 1," August 20, 2000, Sunday AM*

# Limiting The Holy One

*“Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.”*  
(Psalm 78:41)

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Psalm 78 says that the children of Israel limited the Holy One of God. That’s quite a statement, isn’t it? Can you imagine that? They limited the Holy One of God! In other words, though God is sovereign and omnipotent, there are other aspects of His attributes and purposes that require obedience, diligence, and zeal on our part so that we may “apprehend that,” Paul says, “for which also [we’ve been] apprehended” (Phil. 3:12). Have you apprehended that for which God has apprehended you? Ah, beloved, let not any man steal your crown (Rev. 3:11).

We’re going to see that it’s necessary for us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). There’s something that we are required to do. Grace is not going to carry us through to victory without us praying, without us fasting, or without us studying. Grace is not effectual in our lives without us pursuing it, apprehending it, and longing for the good things of God. You see, don’t mistake grace as being a force that compensates for our carnality, that compensates for our slothfulness, and that compensates for our worldliness. Grace is the unmerited favor and the presence of God that enables us to do His good will.

Paul says, “His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all” (1 Cor. 15:10). That’s

not pride. Paul was telling the Corinthians, who were leaning the other direction, “You’re going to have to get with it. You’re going to have to pursue these promises and apprehend that for which you’ve been apprehended.” He then (look at the balance) went on to say, “Yet not I. I don’t want you to think that I’m boasting. It’s nothing in my own ability.” There’s no righteousness in the number of hours spent or the effort expended unless God is the Source, and His glory is the objective. “Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed” (verses 10-11). We see what it’s all about. It’s to bring about fruit that remains. Here Paul shows us in recognizing grace, the unmerited favor, the importance of seeing man’s righteousness as nothing but filthy rags in God’s sight; however, there is still a work of obedience that’s necessary.

In talking about the grace of God, there’s a necessity on our part to apprehend the promises. We need that grace to work in us—to create in us a desire and an ability to pursue Christlikeness and to establish the kingdom of God wherever God has placed us—without setting an agenda. We are not to come up with our own plan and then cause it to be truth. If we perceive that God is doing something, then we’re to go with it, but always be ready for God to change the course and to alter the end of this thing, because we are workers together with Him. “*Grasping God’s Grace*” July 11, 2001, Wednesday PM

# Committed To Obey

*“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection . . .”* (Colossians 3:5)

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Continuing with the aspect of the mortification of our flesh, we drew the conclusion that abstaining is not enough. We are not to just put off the old man, but are to put on the new man—take on Christlike character traits as the elect of God, holy and beloved. It’s not what we’re doing without that makes us holy; it’s what we’re partaking of. Holiness is not just restraining the flesh from participating in different activities, but offering up the flesh to the glory of God. Holiness is presenting ourselves as living sacrifices to God so that we can say, “I’m not my own any longer. My life is not going to be intermingled with the world or with the fleshly perspective, but I’m giving myself over to the wisdom and purposes of God. I want to be a candidate to be used.”

A lot of us seem to think we have to feel like obeying before we obey. “I just don’t feel like doing this, so there’s no sense in doing it. If it were of the Spirit, I’d be delighted to do it!” I want you to understand something. When you’re walking in the Spirit, there are a lot of things you do that you don’t want to do or that you don’t feel like doing. There’s no way you can gauge from your senses what the Holy Spirit is directing you to do, so take your sensory observations out of the equation. Realize that when you choose to do what is righteous you’re walking in the Spirit of God, because you wouldn’t have chosen to do it in the natural. The flesh never chooses to do right.

Anytime you gravitate toward righteousness and obedience, that is not you, the flesh man; that's you, the man that's alive in Christ Jesus. When Paul said it's no longer I "but sin that dwelleth in me," (Romans 7:20) he was making the distinction between the regenerated man, (the "I" who now had been bought with a price, the "I" who had committed his life to Jesus' lordship) and the appetites of the old man that still resided in his members.

I really want us to understand is this next aspect, because this is where we can get into trouble. When we talk about walking in the Spirit, we're not talking about an irresistible, supernatural force coming upon us, and suddenly there's a transformation of all our emotions and appetites so that we just embrace all of the things that are spiritual and eternal. Our flesh will not be in agreement. We need to understand that the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh (Gal. 5:17). So when I talk about walking in the Spirit, I'm not talking about coming to the place where obedience is not difficult or where you will always feel like obeying. You obey out of obedience; you obey out of commitment. That's walking in the Spirit. "*Methods of Mortifying, Pt. 3,*" August 5, 2001, Sunday PM

# The Pain Of The Plow

*“Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.” (Hosea 10:12)*

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A great chapter in one of A. W. Tozer’s books talks about the plow versus the dormant field. He talked about the comfortableness of the fallow ground that becomes crusted over. At one time in our lives we were producing fruit. At one time we were willing to walk in the Spirit and lay it all out on the line for God, but now we sit back smugly and are confident that we’ve done our part for the kingdom. We’ve produced some fruit. The man with the unfurrowed heart is one that comes into church and sits in the same seat every week and never changes. We call it faithfulness, but God calls it fallow ground.

“I’m just the same. You know how to find me—dry and flat!” There’s pain when that plow enters the hardened heart; i.e., those of you that have just chosen the status quo, those of you that have been sitting in this same congregation and are no more like Jesus than you were twenty years ago. You need an encounter with God! It’s going to cost you, and it’s going to hurt! That plow is going to enter your heart; it’s going to begin to dig furrows; and it’s going to begin to come across areas in your life where you will be made uncomfortable. There will be no miracle of growth; there will be no seed falling into the ground to die and then produce after its own kind until you’re willing to be broken before God, until you break up the fallow ground! It’s time to seek the Lord, praise God!

How do you do that? You get into this Book and begin to see what manner of man you are. You've lied to yourself if you don't think this life that we call walking in the Spirit is a constant progression. You never attain the finished product until He comes and you see Him and are like Him. There's a great line in the movie, *The Legend of Baggar Vance*, in which the caddie says, "Golf is only a game that can be played; it can never be won." Walking in the Spirit is pursuing a life of perfection, but it can only be attained at the coming of the Lord! Yet we press on toward the mark, the prize, the high calling of God. The admonition is that we pour out our lives as good soldiers and become temperate in everything else that we might become MASTERS of this supernatural realm! How diligently are you going to pour over this Book to hear what God is saying to you and to see what's lacking in your life? It's so that you can take the *rhema* of God (the word that becomes fresh to you at that moment) and declare it in faith, saying what God says and being persuaded that you can go in and possess this land called holiness, called victory—called life in the Spirit!

You see, prayer isn't praying our desires! Prayer is praying the declared will of God. Prayer is not coming to God, saying, "Lord, here's what I want; here's what I'd like; here's what I think the problem is." Prayer is letting God reveal the condition of your own heart, the condition of your family to you! Prayer is not you telling God what's going on; it's Him telling you what's going on! Frankly, this just takes effort. It takes a willingness to be broken, to let that plow enter your heart and break up all complacency. Are you satisfied with where you are? Isn't there more? We've not yet resisted to blood. "*Living in the Supernatural, Pt. 10,*" December 11, 2002, Wednesday PM

# The Pursuit Of Excellence

*“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” (John 15:7)*

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Are you rising up early? Are you praying at midnight? Are you studying “to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”? (2 Tim. 2:15) Do you labor in the Word of God, or do you just casually read it through? “I got my devotions in. I spent the time.” As you read the chapter, does your mind wander all over the place even though you get through all the words? You can never really read the Word of God without coming away changed! If you spend sufficient time in the presence of God, hearing the Word, then when God speaks, you are changed! You leave that encounter and are never the same! Is that how you approach the Word? Are you breaking up the fallow ground? Even memorizing the Word isn’t sufficient. You can quote the Word of God, but that’s not the issue. What of that which you’ve memorized have you truly hidden in your heart? You see, it’s in your brain, but it’s not in your heart. It’s not abiding in you until it affects you, until it has changed your character, until it has changed your course! Do you understand what the Word of God is requiring of you at any given moment?

The consequence of abiding in the Word and having the Word abide in us will be the crucifixion of self-will. The world will become crucified to you as you become crucified to the world, in truthfully examining your own heart to see if you are you an earth dweller. Are you still under the delusion that something temporal can make you happy or

can satisfy you? The acquisition of things, the ability to have that child, getting the promotion, acquiring the status symbol, living in the new neighborhood—do any of those things have an affect on whether or not you’re breaking up the fallow ground, whether or not you’re able to do what you know to do in a given situation? Do those things seduce you from a further pursuit of excellence? “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). Has there been the once-for-all crucifixion of self so that the world is crucified to you? That’s the breaking up of the fallow ground. “*Holy Ground, Pt. 8,*” May 19, 2002, Sunday AM

The first job that you have is self-purification; that’s the most important thing you can be doing in your life right now. Are you making sure that you’re being washed by the water of God’s Word? Are you taking time to come into the presence of God in your daily devotions, or are you just spending a little time in prayer, going over the prayer list we’ve given you? That’s vitally important, but, beloved, we need to be before Him, the God who is a consuming fire, so that He would begin to purge everything out of our lives that is impure. Don’t get up from your face until you know that you’ve encountered the holiness of God’s fire and there’s nothing in you that’s impure—until you’re gold, having been refined and now ready for the Master’s use. “*Secret Power of Lawlessness, Pt. 1,*” October 25, 1992, Sunday AM

# Cutting Out The Flesh

*“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”*

(Hebrews 4:12)

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“For the word of God is [alive] quick...” (Heb. 4:12). It’s alive! It’s powerful! You know, the thing that’s cool about the Word of God is that it is a two-edged sword. Do you know what it will do? It’ll cut both ways. You’ve got to be careful with this thing. The Word of God can be the most accurate, razor-sharp instrument that can perfectly circumcise your heart! Circumcision is symbolic of cutting off the flesh, and that’s what this Word does. The Word cuts the flesh out of your life! You pull that mirror up, and it cuts the flesh out of you! It reveals what manner of man you are and whether you’re a doer of the Word or a hearer only. But there’s another edge to that sword: that edge will kill and will bring the judgment of God. “He does not bear the sword in vain” (Romans 13:4).

We need to see that we’re going to contend with the sword of God in one way or another. The One upon the white horse, the One with the sword that proceeds from His mouth, the One who speaks and the nations are destroyed, the One who’ll bring that last judgment is the same One speaking to our hearts today—trying to circumcise our hearts from the flesh. We’re going to do this Word in one way or another. This Word will become preeminent in our lives to either humble us or condemn us. It’s alive and powerful! It’s a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart!

You're never going to know what manner of man you are by looking in the natural mirror, by comparing yourself to others, or by listening to your own public relations agents. So many of us are content to believe a lie. You're not going to know what you look like when you listen to your wife, and she tells you how good looking you are. In doing that, we're outside the rest of God. We're still laboring; we're still about our own kingdom. He's trying to bring us into a liberty where His Word can pierce the depth of our souls and spirits, and can discern the very thoughts and the intentions of our hearts. It's not what we do; it's why we do it. What are our motives? You see, so many judge the outward, but our motives can be those of self-righteousness, a help-the-old-lady-cross-the-street syndrome, and many other motives involved in helping the needy. What are the intentions of our hearts when we do those kinds of things? I wonder if we could be doing it to be seen of men. Could we do it to appease our conscience? Many people give to the poor because they feel guilty for having something! What's the motive behind what we're doing? Jesus said, "Don't give to be seen of men" (Matt. 6:1).

We're talking about ceasing from our own labors. We're talking about letting the Word of God come into our heart to discern the thoughts and the intentions. Do you already have a level of holiness in mind that you'll strive toward? "That's sufficient. That's about all I'm going to do. Surely God is satisfied with this. It's as good as eighty percent." We compare ourselves by ourselves. Who are we compared to what God reveals us to be? We'll never be at rest until we come to grips with who we really are and until the Word of God has discerned (the word "discern" means "to judge through properly") the thoughts and intentions of our hearts. *"The Divine Rest, Pt. 3," March 30, 2003, Sunday AM*

# The Highway Of Holiness

*“And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it.” (Isaiah 35:8)*

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We looked at Psalm 23: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” That pretty much says it all, doesn’t it? We’re not going to lack for anything on this course if we walk by faith and not by sight. The Scripture says that it’s our Father’s good pleasure to give us His kingdom (Luke 12:32), and He’s the giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17), praise God. We can rest in His integrity and in His character, realizing there is no want to those of us that are journeying here on this highway called holiness, a separation to God. This highway of holiness is a separate way; nobody other than true citizens of the kingdom of God are on the same path that we’re on. God is orchestrating our steps. We’re in this world, but we’re not of it. We’re going straight through this thing, and God has a purpose for each one of our lives. The whole world is caught up in self-esteem and individualism. We have the assurance of what our worth is. The masses are looking for worth, but we realize that our worth is in the fact that we’ve been accepted in the Beloved. God loved us and died for us. He purchased us and redeemed us back to Himself with His precious blood. What an exciting life we’re living here in the kingdom of God!

As we journey, we talk about general guidance as well as specific guidance. General guidance is based upon the revelation of the Word of God. We know what the moral statutes are. The general guidance for our lives is based upon the Ten Commandments. That’s what

He expects us to walk in before we can look to more specific guidance in our lives. If that one area of general guidance is not in place, then we're going to constantly be in error in pursuit of the specifics. If general obedience is not ruling our lives, we're going to be in error in specific directions. The one thing we all have to do is just spend time saturating our spirits with the Word of God. It's very important that we give that the priority it needs. "*Divine Guidance, Pt. 4,*" June 5, 2002, Wednesday PM

# Cleaning Up The Heart

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” (Hebrews 12:14)*

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We see in 1 Thessalonians 4:3 that holiness is the will of God for our lives. If we are not walking in holiness, we are not in God’s will. “I wonder if the person that I’m planning on marrying (or the person I married) is the will of God?” Was it done in holiness? Are you walking in holiness? No matter what you have planned, whatever you put your hand to that isn’t birthed in holiness will be defiled! Beloved, we’re consecrated; we’re set apart for God’s glory alone, and anything that we do in our own strength defiles the purity of the eternal purpose of God in our lives. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14).

We learned about “the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph.4:24). This new man, the hidden man of the heart, constantly communes with the Holy Spirit and is purged on a daily basis. We need to constantly walk in that sanctification process in which there isn’t any filthiness of flesh or spirit in our lives. We concentrate on the filthiness the flesh, but 2 Corinthians 7:1 says we are not to have a filthy spirit either. That’s really the most important thing. We major on all of the outward: fornication, adultery, drunkenness, lasciviousness. But what about pride, jealousy, bitterness, and strife? How about self-will? How about self-reliance, which really is anti-faith? It’s cleaning up the heart that we’re talking about—the thing that nobody else sees, but you know who and what you are. It’s pretty easy to slip into churches, to say all the right things, to lift

up your hands, and to quote a couple of verses, but you know what's going on in your heart. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

“Well, isn't holiness a separate work? Isn't that just for “supersaints”—you know, those who are really holy? The rest of us are just flesh, and we're just saved by grace.” Yes, you are saved by grace. There are no works involved at all in holiness. It is absolutely grace and faith. It is ceasing from your own labors, Hebrews says, and entering into the rest of God (4:10-11). But, beloved, I want you to know something: if the root is holy, the fruit is holy. If the branch is holy, the fruit is holy. We then realize from Romans 11:16 that if the root is holy, so are the branches and so is the fruit. The indication as to whether or not you've really tasted of the grace of God isn't just in a profession of faith or an intellectual understanding of redemption and regeneration. It's what's being produced in your life as you're daily trusting God. What are you trusting God for on a daily basis?

Are you living your life in faith? Without holiness you can't please God! Without being separate and saying, “I'm God's; He's the source. If God is for me, nobody can be against me,” then we're not living any differently than anybody else in the world who doesn't know Jesus. *“Cleansed to Serve, Pt. 5,” October 27, 2002, Sunday AM*

# Governing Our Thoughts

*“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”*

(1 Peter 1:13)

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Gird up the loins of your mind. The “loins” refer to the source of life and power. The “mind,” referred to in this scripture, is the seat of your reasoning. Why are you thinking what you’re thinking? What’s behind the thought process, the ideology, and the philosophy that we’re walking in? Gird up that mind. Protect it with the helmet of salvation, or, as the scripture says, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). We’re to think upon whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and worthy of praise (Phil. 4:8). Gird up the loins of your mind, because as a man thinketh, so is he (Prov. 23:7).

We begin to ask what governs our thought processes. How do I see God? How do I see myself? How do I perceive those around me and their worth? When we talk about representing Him as His ambassadors, how we perceive the worth of others becomes a very great measuring stick as to whether or not we’re moving in the heart and mind of God. Is everybody an aggravation to you? Are they not worth your time? “They’re not worth giving up my time on this project! They’re not worth what it might cost me to get ahead in the business if I spend time trying to help them through the adversities they’re in and lifting up their hands that are hanging down. Somebody of less worth than mine can spend time with them. They do need help, but, you know, from somebody that’s just not as valuable as I am.”

When you begin to see yourself as holy, consecrated, and set apart for God, it isn't your call when it comes to who you're going to spend time with, where you're going to be, and the submission to His lordship. The holy vessel does not say to the Potter, "Why hast Thou made me thus?" It's very important for you to understand that you've been created, molded, consecrated, and set forth with the anointing of God in your life to be totally about His business. How easily distracted have you been? What has caught your eye and has taken you off the course? What weights and sins have so easily beset you and slowed down your progress?

Girding up the loins, as we understand the typology here, had to do with getting ready to either do warfare or to run. (You know, it's hard to run in a skirt.) Men would gird up their garments in ancient times. They would probably take off those robes, and they would be ready to rip. He said, "I want you to do that with your mind." Take away all the distractions and everything that would hinder you from being quick to hear what the Spirit is saying. With all of the secular clutter it's hard to hear the voice of God saying, "This is the way; walk in it." Gird up the loins of your mind. Prepare it for battle! Prepare to hasten the coming of the Lord Jesus! *"The Real Holiness," July 29, 2001, Sunday PM*

# Abstinence Begins With Fasting

*“And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.” (Matthew 5:29)*

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It’s very important for us to understand what true abstinence is. It begins with fasting. We need to start off fasting some meals. When we talk about fasting, what’s one of the first things people want to do? “I want to go on a forty-day fast, praise God, like Moses! I’m going to fast forty days and forty nights without any food or water.” You’re going to die! That was supernaturally ordained and sustained. Why not start off with something in which you can be successful?

I don’t want to get into a whole teaching on fasting, but we know there are many kinds of fasts. It would be good for us to start fasting the dainties. “Yeah, I think I’m going to fast those brussel sprouts and just have a banana split.” I talk about not liking foods that are green. I don’t dislike all green stuff, just the basic things like brussels sprouts, broccoli, and lima beans. I fast those continually. What about the dainties?

Put the filet mignon aside and just have some mush. That’s fasting the dainties—things that you really like, those things that are special. You just say, “Mr. Flesh, you’re not having them.” Now, here’s the key, and this is the key with your children, too. Don’t wait until Mr. Flesh has been bad. We’re not talking punishment; we’re talking discipline. When you deal with your children, don’t wait to punish your children; discipline them! God doesn’t deal with us in a punitive way most of the

time in these areas. But when He chastens, the punitive may come because we fail to be disciplined. Some children think it's punishment for them to clean their room. That's not punishment; that's their job. Is it their responsibility to mow the lawn, wash the dishes, and do the clothes while Mom goes to the gym to work out? That isn't getting it! Our children need to be taught to get involved in giving, but if Mom's not working outside the home, some of those things are her job.

We're all having to learn to be disciplined. Our lives are to be disciplined, separate from the way the world does things. Our lives are to deny the flesh and all its lusts. Our flesh is so selfish, so self-centered, and so self-indulgent, but we're to bring it under control.

So what should you do? If you're a person who likes to stay in the bed, then make sure you get up early! If you're a person who wastes time, then discipline yourself and regiment your time. You want to know one of the best things you can do? If you're a person who wastes time, ask yourself if you're tithing your time to the kingdom. Are you giving two and a half hours every day in pursuing God in prayer and Bible study, in serving in spiritual things? I'll guarantee you're using a lot more than that on yourself, so discipline yourself! "*Spiritually Minded, Pt. 3,*" August 18, 2002, Sunday AM