

# A Hunger for Holiness - The Reason

REVIEW: For the last several weeks we have been working our way through the series called “A Hunger for Holiness.” In that time we have looked at the root problem that we really do not seem to have a passion for holiness in general. That first week we allowed Scripture to diagnose our hearts by asking the questions: are we marked by obedience, is heaven a holy place to us, and is holiness present in our evangelism. In week two we moved on to considered why holiness is needed - it is the reason we were redeemed (saved to be holy), but it is also necessary for our redemption. And last week we looked at what holiness is NOT, and then what holiness is so we could better understand our target.

TRAN: Today, I want to dig into the motivation for holiness. If I asked you why we should be holy, we would probably hear several different answers. Probably the leading one is, “God said so.” As good of an answer as that is, often times it not the motivator that it should be.

INTRO: Now, it is “Confession Time” with Uncle Keith. Gather ‘round kids and listen to stories of Keith’s youthful indiscretions.

STORY: Taking the car into muddy area of town on unfamiliar roads, having to be pulled out by friends, and then lying to mom and dad about it.

TRAN: The moral of the story, boys and girls is this: The right way to go is also the best way to go.

- I. The right way to go
  - A. When God gives us commands, it is meant to help us take the right path, the path that leads to life, and wholeness
  - B. C.S. Lewis wrote a book called *Reflections on the Psalms*
    1. In it, he pondered the idea that anyone could “delight” in the law of the Lord
      - a) Respect the law, understand the law
      - b) Even give assent to the law
      - c) But delight in it, be excited by it?
    2. He finally came to this conclusion, “Their delight in the Law is a delight in having touched firmness; like the pedestrian’s delight in feeling the hard road beneath his feet after a false shortcut has long entangled him in muddy fields.”
      - a) Or in Uncle Keith’s case, driving on solid ground after your car falls in a giant hole with ice and water

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- C. I've said this to you before in different ways, but how horrible it would be to know there is a God, but not know what God desires from us?
  - 1. First, that would be a lousy God indeed if He failed to communicate His intentions for us
  - 2. We would be in an eternal guessing game on our part - which is what people that want to ditch the Bible do - they guess what pleases God
  - 3. What it shows is that those rules in the Bible, the commands, the law
    - a) It is a gift!
    - b) God gives it not to harm us or squash our joy, He gives it because He loves us
- II. The theology of the law and the gospel
  - A. This is one of the great debates in Christianity - what role does the law play for the Christian
    - 1. We are no longer under law - Romans 6:14 "For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace."
      - a) The law was just meant to be temporary
      - b) It was to point us to Christ
      - c) Galatians 3:23-26
    - 2. BUT, the law is holy, righteous and good for us - Romans 7:12
      - a) God still expects us to keep the law - James 1:25; 2:8
      - b) Paul, in 1 Corinthians 9 says he is not under the law, and the next verse says he is under the law of Christ
  - B. Generally speaking, there are three ways of looking at the law
    - 1. First it leads us to Christ by convicting us of sin
    - 2. Second, it restrains evil in the world
    - 3. Third, it acts as a blueprint for holiness
      - a) It is the third way of viewing the law that Christians debate
      - b) I will tell you up front, I agree with the third way to view the law
  - C. So here is where the battles lines are drawn
    - 1. Some think that the law is God's tool for promoting holiness
    - 2. Others think the law does not apply to NT Christians - it was just for Israel
      - a) Now here is the foolish part of the debate
      - b) The ones that say the law is still being used of God usually say that there is a difference between the moral law, and the ceremonial and dietary laws that Israel observed
        - (1) The moral law is still in effect even today
        - (2) The civil, and judicial law - the ceremony and dietary things all point to things that are true

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- c) The ones that say the law does not apply today, usually clarify by saying that the law still holds universal moral truths that we should honor and observe
- 3. So in other words, they are saying the same thing - the morals found in the law are still things Christians today should practice
- D. What adds to the confusion is the fact that the word “law” in Scripture is used in more than one way
  - 1. It can refer to the OT Scriptures
  - 2. The Torah (the first five books of the Bible)
  - 3. The law of Moses (the law Moses received from God)
  - 4. Or, what God requires His people to do
- E. So, we are not under the law in the sense that we must observe the OT rituals, or are bound to the Law of Moses
- F. We ARE under the law in the sense that we still are obligated to obey the Lord and whatever He has expressed as His will
- G. So let’s be clear
  - 1. The Law of God CANNOT save us - only God’s grace through faith in Christ does that
  - 2. But what God has put in the Bible is there for our edification
    - a) Whatever the Bible teaches we need to observe
    - b) Whatever commands it gives, whether by precept, example, story, or song, we should follow

## III. Love and Law

- A. Okay, most Christians would have no problem with that last idea - we should do what the Bible tells us to do (assuming they believe the Bible really is God’s Word)
- B. But, we really need to not be afraid of the commands in the Bible, and come to love them as the Psalmist did in Psalm 119
- C. Too many people pit the law vs. the gospel
  - 1. The law is all commands, and makes Christianity a religion of good advice
  - 2. The gospel - well that is good news
- D. The fact is the two actually work together
  - 1. The law reveals our need for a Savior
  - 2. Then we are saved by our Savior
  - 3. Then the law guides us how to please our Savior
    - a) We mentioned this before, but God saved Israel from Egypt first, and then gave them the law

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- b) Let me give you another example: Paul, in Romans uses the first 11 chapters to talk about God's grace toward us, and then chapters 12-16 are how we live in light of God's grace
- E. Too many Christians put love against the law - as if they can't work together
  - 1. So you either have a religion of love, or one of law
  - 2. The problem is that love is commanded by law (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:36-40)
    - a) If you instruct people to love, you are making a command (law)
    - b) If you say law does not matter, neither does love which is the summation of the law
  - 3. Also, Jesus connects love and law - John 14:15, 21
    - a) In verse 15 Jesus could not connect the two ideas any stronger - if you love Me, keep my commands
    - b) If we want communion with God we are to keep His commands - verse 21
- F. God's laws are a grace to us because they express His character
  - 1. They show what God is like
    - a) What he values
    - b) What He hates
    - c) What it is like to be holy like God is holy
  - 2. So basically, if you are a rule hater, you are a God hater
    - a) God gave the rules so we could know Him and what pleases Him
    - b) The rules reflect His nature, so hatred toward the rules is hatred toward the character of God
  - 3. Think about how the law is viewed by those writing the Psalms
    - a) Psalm 1:1-2 "Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night."
    - b) Psalm 19:9-10 "The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb."
    - c) Psalm 119:18 "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law."
    - d) Psalm 119:5 "Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees!"
- G. So the point is simple - don't be afraid to stand firm on the law
  - 1. Not as a means of being saved

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2. But as an expression of the fact that we are saved
- H. The danger in saying that it is okay to stand on the law is legalism
  1. Making a rule for everything
  2. Becoming like the Pharisees that kept the outward rules but failed miserably at understanding the why behind the rules and observing the inward expression and motivation for the rule
- I. The opposite danger is a big fancy word, “antinomianism” - it simply means, “no law”
  1. The absolute worst expression of antinomianism is what Paul said in Romans, “Since sin brings more grace, let’s keep sinning so that grace will abound!”
    - a) Admittedly, that is not something you generally hear from people
  2. However, too many Christians have little room for law in their pursuit of holiness
    - a) They generally assume that good works will flow out of the gospel
      - (1) And good works should flow out of the gospel
      - (2) But who defines good works without God’s law?
    - b) The problem with assuming that good works will flow from the gospel without any concept of the law is you turn the gospel and your belief in it into one more thing you have to get right
      - (1) “If we REALLY believed, obedience would come naturally”
  3. The Bible never talks like this
    - a) It has no problem telling you all about grace
      - (1) Grace, grace, grace, grace
      - (2) THEN it will say “Therefore, stop doing this or start doing that”
    - b) I have no problem with good works flowing from the gospel - the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
      - (1) In fact that is where good works should flow from
      - (2) But it might be asking too much from the “flow” when we fail to teach the importance of the law
      - (3) It is a willing spirit following the law, made possible by the Holy Spirit - that is the proper response to grace
- J. The law is an absolute must to be taught to true believers
  1. Never as a condemnation - Romans 8:1 “Therefore, there is no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus.”
  2. But as a corrective - that mirror that James speaks of
    - a) That is what the law is to true believers
    - b) A mirror to help us correct ourselves in light of God’s commands
- IV. At the beginning of this message I said that I would be talking about our motivation to keep God’s commands for holiness

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- A. Too often the motivation that gets handed to most people is “God said so.”
  - 1. You might find someone that recognizes the role of gratitude in keeping God’s commands
    - a) God did all this for you
    - b) This is the least you can do for Him
- B. I think God provides a much better list of motivators
  - 1. In fact, it is almost like God is writing the correct prescription for what ails us
  - 2. God knows who we are as individuals, our personalities, temperaments, our sins, and circumstances of life
  - 3. So what might motivate one of us, may not motivate someone else as well
    - a) For example: If you take a military man, and show him Ecclesiastes 12:13 “Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.”
    - b) The motivator there: duty - which might strike a chord with a military man or woman
- C. So what I want to do is turn this into more a participation time
  - 1. I have given out several verses in advance which talk about following God’s commands, the law, His statutes, etc.
  - 2. Each of these has a different emphasis or why we follow God’s commands
    - a) So after I ask for the verse to be read aloud, that person will stand where they are, and read their verse good and loud
    - b) Then, I will ask the congregation to tell me what the motivator is that the verse mentions
  - 3. In your bulletins I have the full list of verses and the motivator listed so you can take those home and look them over at your leisure
- D. So, here we go:
  - 1. Ecclesiastes 12:14 “For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”
    - a) Motivation is that God sees all actions, good or bad
    - b) Better than Santa Claus
  - 2. Deut. 12:28 “Be careful to obey all these regulations I am giving you, so that it may always go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is good and right in the eyes of the LORD your God.”
    - a) Motivation: For our own good

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3. Ephesians 4:32 “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”
  - a) The motivation is God’s example to us
  - b) He forgave us, which sets the example for us to forgive others
4. Ephesians 5:2 “and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”
  - a) Motivation: Christ’s example of love
5. 1 Peter 2:11 “Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul.”
  - a) The motivation - this world is not our home
  - b) So there is nothing in this life that should be so attractive to us, because we are just journeying through
6. Proverbs 14:34 “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns any people.”
  - a) M: It lifts up a nation
  - b) You want this nation to be a great nation - seek righteousness
7. Matthew 6:33 “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”
  - a) M: You could say future grace
  - b) When we seek righteousness, God promises all kinds of other good things as well
8. Hebrews 12:1 “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,”
  - a) M: You could look at it as a communion with the saints
  - b) You could also say that the reason we throw off the sin, is to run for the prize - heaven
9. Romans 12:1 “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”
  - a) M: why do we worship?
  - b) Out of gratitude for the grace we have received
10. 1 Cor. 6:19-20 “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.”
  - a) M: the glory of God
  - b) We honor God with our bodies to bring Him glory

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11. Leviticus 11:44a “I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy.”
    - a) M: Why are we holy?
    - b) Because God is holy
    - c) Our motivation is His character
  12. John 15:10-11 “If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”
    - a) You can actually find two motivators here
    - b) Remaining in God's love
    - c) Also, that our joy will be complete
- E. It is so important for us to realize that obedience to God is not commanded “just cuz”
1. God is not some mean task master in the sky that just wants to see how high you will jump when He gives the command
  2. There are reasons for why God commands us to follow Him
    - a) The reason that motivates me, may not motivate you so well
    - b) But I think the prime motivator above all would be that God gives us these commands because He loves us, He wants us to experience life to the fullest extent, and the only way that will ever happen is to know and understand the Master's plan, and follow it
  3. If this list of verses seemed long, it could easily be doubled or tripled
    - a) So to end things up, I am going to challenge you
    - b) In your Bible reading for the remainder of this year
      - (1) Take note of any command that you read
      - (2) THEN, notice the why behind the command
        - (a) What was the motivation
        - (b) Why did God just ask that of you?
    - c) When you begin to notice those things more and more, it might just help you understand, and obey better than ever before