

The Beauty of Holiness Part 2

The Doctrine of the Church

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Bible Text: Romans 12:1-2; 1 Peter 1:14-16
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Open your Bibles to the 12th chapter of Romans. The title of the message this morning is "The Beauty of Holiness Part 2," a continuation of last week's message and I do want to make note of a special guest we have here with us this morning. It's not really a guest, Miss Helen Spinelli. We're so delighted to have her back at church today. [applause] Amen. What a blessing it is just the family of God and to be reconnected, isn't it just wonderful? How grateful we are for you, Miss Helen, your love for Christ and just the blessing you are in our lives and for those that are with her today too, her daughter Marlene, Marty and the young lady. Thank you for coming.

Okay, the beauty of holiness, that's the message we looked at last week. We've been talking about the church in a series of the church, this ecclesiology series, "The Doctrine of the Church," and we've been saying that the work of the church, that what we're called to do on a day to day basis, week to week, month to month, year after year, is to pursue peace and to pursue holiness. That's our work and so we've been looking at unpacking those individual components, pursuing peace, pursuing holiness, and we've been looking at pursuing holiness a number of different weeks, what does it mean, and last week we looked at 1 Peter 1:14-16 and we titled the message "The Beauty of Holiness," which is actually taken from several verses in the Old Testament. First listen to these words from 1 Chronicles 16:29, "Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name; Bring an offering, and come before Him; Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness." The King James says "the beauty of holiness." The New American Standard says "holy array." And the idea is garments of holiness, beautiful, splendid garments of holiness, beautiful, the beauty of holiness.

So one of the things that we see is that holiness truly is beautiful because it's the essence of who God is. God is the author of all that is good and beautiful, and as Jonathan Edwards speaks of, if the ray of the sun, you feel the warmth of the ray of the sun, think how much hotter the sun itself is. When you look at the world and you see the outer edges of God's beauty, think how much more beautiful and glorious it is to see the full effulgence and radiating glory and beauty of God himself; we just see the very tiny evidences out of the far reaches of his creation. So to see beauty is to see God. He is holy and to be holy is to be able to see him more clearly and it makes us more of what we're

called to be. So there's beauty in the sense that we see his beauty and we become more truly noble and beautiful in our own humanity in the presence of God.

So the beauty of holiness. We said last week we need to take time to define our terms. If you weren't with us, we asked the question what is holiness, what does it mean to be holy? Most often we have a secondary, most Christians have the secondary meaning of holiness in mind when they try to define that word that means righteousness, it means purity, it means to be completely without any stain morally. That is true but that's the secondary meaning, not the primary meaning of holy or holiness. To be holy means in the primary meaning is to be set apart; to be separate, different and distinct. It's God otherness, his transcendence. And so that which is holy then in this world is that which is set apart unto God. Holy describes the realm of the sacred. Those who are holy are those who belong exclusively to God for his use.

So we saw last week, we'll look at the points just to review quickly because this is part 2, we said we need to know who we are, this is last week, not first point today, know who we are, you are a saint. If you belong to Jesus Christ, if you have repented of your sins and placed your faith in Jesus, the New Testament says that you are a holy one. Remember the word saint and holy basically mean the same thing. The Greek New Testament, the Hebrew in the Old Testament, the word is identical. In the English we get a division, holy and saint or holy and sanctified. It's not there in the original, same root word, so when you think of saint it means holy one. The New Testament calls us saints, you are a holy one, you have been set apart and you are now positionally holy, forever changed. As we read earlier from Colossians 1:13, to be delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of his beloved Son. You have been set apart for eternity. It's already done. What a glorious truth that is. That's positional holiness, to know who you are, know what you're called to do, we said last week, that is, to be holy, that is, to be in your experience consistent with what you are in your identity, to let your life reflect the holiness that is yours positionally. We sometimes call this progressive holiness, progressive sanctification. It means to grow in your experience of holiness, being more and more set apart from the world, more and more set apart from sin unto God. That is the calling of the Christian.

So know what you are to do to be holy, and then we said know why. Gratitude. Why do you do this? Out of gratitude for God. When we looked to Romans 12:1 last week, we turned to this passage for that motivation because as Paul says here in this passage, it's because of the mercies of God that we are to be holy. It's out of gratitude. It's not to earn anything. You cannot make yourself holy enough for God. Can the leopard change his spots? Can the Ethiopian change the color of his skin? Neither can you who are sinful make yourselves righteous, the prophet Jeremiah says. We can't change anything about ourselves, only God can do that.

So we can't make ourselves holy to earn favor, therefore we must be made holy by him through the blood of Christ, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He took our sins, he gives us his righteousness and you are positionally holy, you're holy forever, set apart unto God, separate from sin, and yet now in our Christian lives we are called to try to

grow and to progress in that. So the question is how do we do that? That's what we want to talk about today. That's the theme this morning, how precisely do you become holy? We looked at who, what and why. Today, how, that's the theme, and Romans 12:1-2 gives us a great picture of how we can become holy. So let's read those verses together.

1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Let's pray.

Our Father, as we come to this passage and we come to this subject, subject of holiness, that which is beyond our ability to conceive and certainly our ability to communicate, we realize that we need to do as Moses to take off our shoes because we're standing on holy ground. We ask You for Your grace, the ministry of Your Holy Spirit through the power of Your word to show us what it is, what we are called to be and how we can become more like You, how we can be holy for You are holy. Help us, Lord. Grant us grace. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

The beauty of holiness, how do you make progress in the pursuit of holiness in your experience, how do you separate more and more from sin and devote more and more of your life to God? How do you overcome the pressures of the world to be more like Christ? This passage gives us great encouragement and insight and I want us to consider the teaching of this passage under four points, and the first thing I think we need to understand here is we need, if you're going to pursue holiness, you need to embrace your calling. The first point: embrace your calling. If you are a Christian, you are a priest. If you have been born again, you are a priest. This is actually the teaching of this passage and it's certainly the teaching of the whole New Testament. It's not explicitly stated in the passage. The word "priest" does not occur in what I just read, but it is implicitly the undergirding and the framework and the substance of the passage. It's implicitly shouted in the text, you are a priest, because this is exhorting you to the work of the priest.

When he says, "I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies," he's saying present, that is technical terminology used of presenting offerings. The word "present" itself is a word reserved for presenting offerings. But what are you presenting? You're to present a sacrifice which is acceptable to God. This word "acceptable to God" or "pleasing to God" some translations say, is a word again associated closely with temple worship. It's a word that's repeated over and over again in the Greek translation of the Old Testament; this word here in Greek occurs in the Greek translation of the Old Testament when it says things like "a soothing aroma pleasing to the Lord."

So this is closely associated with all of the sacrificial system and the temple worship, acceptable to God. And then, of course, the word "service of worship" is another word which speaks of temple ministry. This word only occurs five times in noun form in the

New Testament always referring to the work of worship, the work of the temple. And so Paul is saying, "Listen now, as you consider all that God has done for you in Christ," which is the substance of chapters 1 to 11 of Romans, the message there is, "look what God has done in Christ for His people," and now chapter 12, verse 1, turns to the practical application of "all that God has done for you, now in light of this, this is how you are to live," and essentially the hinge of how you take theology and you make it practice is really opened up for us in Romans 12:1. You know, sometimes people, we can be all into theology but it doesn't change our life. You probably had seasons if you've been a Christian for long where maybe you grew a lot in knowledge but you weren't growing in real experiential holiness. It's easy to do. And knowledge puffs up. Now knowledge is not bad but knowledge for the sake of knowledge, knowledge that is applied is wisdom and that is transformative. You have to know the truth but not merely to know it intellectually but to obey it by the grace of God, to believe it, to act on it.

So Romans 12:1, Paul is trying to help the Roman Christians to whom he writes to apply what he's been teaching them, the glorious truths of the gospel that he's been unpacking in the first 11 chapters. He says, "This is the difference it should make in your life," and he's going to spend the last five chapters, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, practically applying it to their life but the hinge that connects doctrine and practice is here in Romans 12:1 and it is worship. It is the act of being a priest and understanding that your life is devoted to worship. You are a priest as a Christian. God came to make a kingdom of priests. The whole kingdom, everyone who has come to King Jesus is a part of a royal priesthood, 1 Peter 2:9. A holy nation. A royal priesthood. A people belonging to God. Chosen nation. That's what you are.

So see yourself as a priest. The imagery is rich to understand what that means. The Levites, you remember the 12 tribes of Israel, 12 sons of Jacob, Levi, one of the 12 sons, did not receive an inheritance in the Promised Land. When you read Numbers and read into Joshua, the Levites had no inheritance in the Promised Land. Why? Because the Lord was their inheritance. God himself gave himself to the Levites in a special and unique way, that is, the Levites were the only ones who could come close to the Lord. You remember that the tent of meeting was in the center and the Lord's teaching us through these pictures in the Old Testament the tent of meeting, the tabernacle, the place where man could meet with God was in the center of the camp. The tribes all camped around the tent of meeting but those who were immediately around the tabernacle closest to it were the tribe of Levi and the Levites were the only ones that were allowed to carry, they set up the tabernacle, they took down the tabernacle, they carried everything associated with the tabernacle. Any other tribe could not touch the things of the Lord without imminent death because God had given himself to the Levites as their inheritance, but among the Levites, all Levites weren't priests. There were four major clans you see as you read through the book of Numbers, four major clans: Gershon, Kohath, Merari and Aaron, and only Aaron of the four clans, Aaron's clan was the clan of the priests among the Levites.

So the Levites could come close but only Aaron's descendants could actually enter into the holy place itself. Only Aaron's descendants could actually offer blood, offer sacrifices

on the altar. Only that subset, that one-fourth group of all of the Levites, so one of the 12 tribes, one-fourth of that tribe, one 48th basically, one in 48 people were able to actually come into the very presence of God. That's the way it was in the old covenant, and now you all who belong to Christ are a part of that select group, you come into the very holy place of God. You go even better, you go not only to the holy place like the priests did, you go to the place that the one person, one out of that one clan of priests, Aaron's priest, the high priest one day a year could enter into the Holy of Holies bearing the blood from the day of atonement and offer blood on the mercy seat in the very center of the presence of God, the high priest. You and I, the Scriptures tell us, the veil has been torn. We enter all the way into the very Holy of Holies through the blood of Jesus Christ. We have access to the very throne room of God at any moment. That's your calling. That is who you are if you belong to Jesus. You are a priest.

This means that your life, though, is to be devoted to worship. If you belong to Jesus, then you are to live your life in devotion to worship. This is why you're here. You are here to offer sacrifices to God and to worship him as long as you're in this body. That's your work. Worship is what life is about. Not just on Sunday morning but Sunday morning is the apex of the week, but every day from time we wake up. Just like that's what a priest was, a priest got up in the morning and he did the work of worship from the time he woke up until he went to bed. What was his work? Worship, that's what we're called to do, that's what we are privileged to do, that's what you've been chosen by God to do. God wants you to come near to him and to live in his presence every moment of every day.

That's what it means to embrace your calling, you are a priest but, secondly, not only embrace your calling, embrace the work. 2. Embrace the work. This is not an easy work. It's a work that's all of grace but it doesn't mean it's easy. It's hard. That's why we need grace because grace enables us to do things we cannot do. Grace enables us to do the impossible. But it's hard and it feels hard. And it's really instructive to think about the work of a priest and the language in the passage. You're offering, you're presenting and offering your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice. You're offering yourself in the grueling, painful process of dying. This is worship. This is the work you are called to do.

I mentioned a priest was all about worship. I shared this before but just briefly want to remind you and for those of you that weren't here when we talked about this some months ago, the priest, the first thing a priest would do, they'd wake up before dawn, get completely ready, get their garments on, get into the temple, and they would have the morning offering. The Lord willed it that at first light when the sun crested the horizon in the east, at the moment that happened there was a watchman on top of the temple who would give the signal and it would be relayed to the priest who had the morning sacrifice, the lamb, and at the moment the signal was given, first light is seen, they cut the throat of that first lamb, the morning sacrifice, and the blood was spilled. And then sacrifice after sacrifice after sacrifice until now the very last light of the day at twilight, last light before the sun is completely down, as it's just about to go over the western horizon, the last animal is killed at that moment, blood offered again. And all throughout the day that has been the work of the priesthood. They have been offering sacrifices.

Now it's in many ways the reality, the hard reality of it is it was a bloody work. It was an awful work. There were smells. There was the difficulty of actually restraining animals and then killing them and the pain of that. There's something in our hearts that revolt against that because we know this wasn't the way it was meant to be. And so the very offensiveness of what they were doing was a perpetual reminder that this is what is required for sinners like you and me to come into the presence of a holy God. Our sin is this offensive that it cost this, blood continually being shed day after day, hour after hour. The offensiveness of that was all that testified that one day something far more offensive would have to happen, the holy one of God would have to come, he who deserved to be worshiped and adored and hailed as King and magnified and exalted, he would be treated as the scum of the earth because God chose in the moment of Christ's atoning work to turn his back on him and allow him to bear the weight of our sins and to be treated as if he had lived yours and my wicked filthy lives. And in that moment the most offensive thing that has ever happened happened, the one who created the world, the giver of life died. Impossible. Offensive. That's what it took for us to be saved.

So the sacrificial system testified to that but to think about, though, the work of the priesthood was that grueling laborious work of killing and it was death, it was blood, it was pain and anguish, it was fatigue. That's the work you're called to. Now it's a different kind of work. It's not physical blood but it is an offering of perpetual sacrifices. You are to offer your own body not in any physical self-harm. No, not at all. You are to put to death the lusts and desires of your flesh. In fact, Romans 13, if you just turn over to Romans 13:14, "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts." One of Paul's key themes in Romans and all through his letters is the flesh, that is, the physical body. The term "flesh" refers to actually flesh and blood but in the New Testament it's used as a technical term to refer to the body that is stained with sin, tainted with remaining sin. And so the flesh, as we see here, is characterized by lusts. This word "lust" means "desires." These desires can at times be good because God has made us to have physical desires, desire for food, water, sex. Those things are actually good desires but they must be used as God has commanded according to his word. Good desires can go to bad desires when they're inordinate desires, when we want to satisfy a desire more than we want to please God, more than we want to obey God in the way that we satisfy that desire. So we can eat too much and that's gluttony, that's sin. We can look for sex outside of the covenant relationship of marriage and that is sin in every case.

So we're to put to death these deeds of the body, these desires. In fact, you see this also, this theme runs through Romans. If you turn back to chapter 8, Paul in verses 12 and 13, he's been talking about the flesh and the Spirit. "Now we have the Spirit," he's saying, "and we're not to live according to the flesh," verse 12 of Romans 8. "So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh," that is, according to the desires and impulses of our sinful nature that still remains in us, we're not to live according to that, just following the lust of the flesh. No, we're not to do that, he says. Verse 13, "for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die." He's saying there if you live according to the flesh continually and you don't fight this, then you are heading toward eternal death; it's an evidence that you're not saved if you live according to the

flesh. It doesn't mean that you don't struggle, of course you do. Every Christian does. But it means are you giving into that and not fighting. The Christian fights by the power of grace. So he says, "for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live." The way that you put to death the deeds of the body is by the power of the Holy Spirit. In union with Christ you reckon upon the fact that Jesus' death is your death, that you died to the reign of sin, you present yourself to God and you rest in the power of the Spirit, and you don't make provision for the flesh, you turn away from those desires and through Christ you actually put to death every single lustful impulse.

That's the calling. In fact, you can look back just another chapter, Romans 6, Paul's building this theme through the entire letter. Verse 11 of Romans 6, "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body," you see sin wants to reign in your mortal body, it's trying to, don't let it. If you do, then you will obey it's lusts. "Do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God." Do you see that, present yourselves to God, the same word is used in Romans 12:1, present your bodies as a sacrifice, present yourselves to God. What we're supposed to do, what he's telling us is that the way that we are called to worship, we're called to make sacrifices, you're called to live as a priest. From the moment you open your eyes until you close them at night if you belong to Jesus, your work is to do the work of a priest to offer sacrifice after sacrifice after sacrifice and what do those sacrifices look like? It looks like an impulse to say an angry harsh word. It's an impulse to entertain a lustful thought. An impulse to eat more than I should. It's an impulse to do anything that the flesh would have me do. How do you worship? You put that to death. That's the sacrifice.

And you're called to do that every single time you have a sinful impulse, you're called to by the power of Christ, who you are in him, that in his death I died and his life is now available to me and I present myself to you. In fact, if we can start thinking this way when you're actually struggling with sin, every time you feel a temptation impulse to sin it's an opportunity to turn to God and say, "Lord, I want to offer this to You. I feel the impulse to want to do what I want to do and what I used to do and what I still find myself doing far more than I wish that I did, but I want to offer this to You as worship. I want to worship You in this moment. Help me." You can't do it without his grace. "Help me." Look to Christ. "Give me the power of Your Spirit. Lord Jesus, You never wanted to sin. You wanted to be righteous every moment and Your Spirit lives inside of me. Give me that." And you lay hold of that by faith and that itself ascends to God as a sweet-smelling aroma of worship.

From the time we wake up until we go to bed, that is our calling. Every time it happens it's an opportunity to fulfill our work. "Lord, You've called me to put it to death. I can't do it apart from Your grace. I present myself to You. I'm completely helpless." And don't we feel that way? Sin comes, it comes up so quickly, even areas where you feel like you've made progress sometimes will come back around and suddenly you're struggling with something that you haven't struggled with in maybe years and you realize how quickly

we can fall and yet how sufficient is the grace of Jesus Christ every single moment of every day, that we can look to him. But you see what this does is this lifts, worship is the key, this changes our battle with sin from being about self-help to being a Godward expression of love to a Christ who has saved us. Do you see that? It's not about overcoming sin because it makes me feel bad, it embarrasses me. Certainly it does those things, doesn't it. It's embarrassing when you lose your temper. You feel ugly. You feel ashamed. Guilty. Yes, those things are terrible but that's not the ultimate reason that we should want to obey. We have an opportunity to worship the living God in this moment and when you make it Godward in focus, that's where the power comes to overcome sin.

We must live as priests so we embrace our calling, we are to live as priests, we embrace the work, the work is a day to day presenting of our bodies, every ungodly impulse, and they come sometimes one after another, don't they? Sometimes you win one battle just to have the next one start, or then to bring the same one you won 30 minutes ago back around again. But what we can do is rejoice. Hey, it's just like a priest, you're like a priest. I was reading this guy talking about what the life of a priest was like in the Old Testament and he was talking about how hard it was, you know, you think about, like, so you've got to take this young bull and you've got to offer him. And so you're bringing the bull and the bull does not want to go where you want him to go. Bulls are not that easy to lead around in the first place so you're fighting with an animal, you also are dealing with an animal that's not guilty of anything. Animals are good. I mean, we've learned to like them especially those of us who like beef, we can see there's a value in what's going to happen. I couldn't help myself on that one. You see, pray for me. But seriously thinking about it's an innocent animal and you're killing an animal and you're going to have to catch the blood and you're going to have to offer the blood, and so your clothes are getting stained, the smells, you're having to cut apart the animal, butcher the animal, you've got to take fat and take it outside of the camp and offer it outside the camp. There's all of this labor that is involved and every time someone shows up with an offering, you have to inspect the offering, you have to go through the process.

So every time it happens, it's another burden laid upon you and if you think in an ungodly way you can do like the priests in Malachi 2 are described as being. The Lord says to them, "Why do you disdainfully sniff at My altar?" He says, "O that you would close the doors because you disdainfully sniff." The priests were so disgusted by what they were doing. Now listen, honestly, if you just look at the mechanics of what's happening it is disgusting but when you understand what's really happening, that sinners are being taken from separated from God, being brought across the chasm that sin has made into the very presence of God by the blood of the sacrifice, it changes everything. So the priest that had a heart of faith even though he was tired, even though he was weary, he knew here's a sinner who needs to be made right with God and God's given me this privilege. And so he offers that sacrifice to bring new fellowship and to bring the joy of the Lord to this wayward hurting person.

That's how he lived and so now think about, then, in Christian life sin, temptation after temptation after temptation, impulse after impulse after impulse, it's like another person showing up at the door with an animal. It's an opportunity. Embrace every opportunity,

that's your work. From the time you wake up until the time you go to bed, that's the work. You can kick against the goads or you can embrace the work, and if you embrace the work there's joy in the work because the most amazing thing at all times is why would God give me the privilege of doing this? Why would God give me the grace to put to death my own sin? If he left me as I was without God, without hope in the world, headed for hell, running there, if I was religious before I came to faith it was only to advance my own self-exaltation, it was only to advance my own purposes, it was not to know and love Christ. And God has taken me from the domain of darkness and he set me apart unto the kingdom of his Son. He's made me positionally holy and he said, "Now be about the work of worship." You have the privilege every day of getting up and being about the work of worship so embrace that work.

Thirdly, delight in being different. Delight in being different. Verse 2 of Romans 12, "do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Do not be conformed is the first imperative. There are two imperatives in that verse, do not be conformed and the second, be transformed. Those are commands and they're both in the Greek present tense, and as I've shared before the present tense in Greek is not about time as much as it is the kind of action. Not the time of action but the kind and the Greek present speaks of continuous ongoing action. So when it says do not be conformed, really a better rendering would be do not go on being conformed. You see, there's a being conformed pressure of the world. The world is continually exerting a conforming influence upon us, don't go on being conformed. And the idea is if you don't actively resist conformity, it will inevitably happen even to the Christian. That's why Paul says this. You have to stop this.

Now if you don't ever stop this, then that calls into question your salvation but the reality is as Christians if we are not actively resisting conformity we are by definition becoming conformed to this world, and what he's telling us is, "Listen, we're not to be conformed to the pattern of this world." The word here for "conform" means to have the same scheme and make-up. In fact, the word translated "world" really means literally is this age. Don't be conformed to this age. Don't let this age, this present evil age shape you but be shaped by the word of God, be transformed by the word of God. This present evil age is trying to shape you continually. You're called to the work of worship and to be about the work of worship you have to also make a distinctive, determined, intentional effort to be different and if you're not willing to be different you will not be a faithful priest.

Delight in being different, not in being different in the way that worldly people do so that they can express themselves, "I want to be different because I just want you to see me as different for who I am. Look at me." No, it's not that. The difference that we're called to be, "Be holy as I am holy." Be different and set apart from the world unto God. Be like your Father. Be like your Master. Be different.

It's a challenging thing to want to be different, though, isn't it? Really examine your heart? I mean, we want to be accepted and there is a normal human desire for that. I mentioned before that lusts are good desires that have gone to inordinate desires, that is, you want something more than is appropriate. It's okay to want to be accepted, God made

human beings to live in community, in relationship. He made us to connect with others. In fact, what Jesus is doing is he's going to sum up all things in himself. He wanted to make Jew and Gentile one. He wants to make people from every tribe and tongue and kindred one in his presence. That's the whole goal of history. That's the whole goal of salvation. And so there is in our hearts this desire to be united to other people and there's a sense in which that is good but it becomes inordinate when you want to be united more to other people than you want to be closer to God or like him. Being holy means being willing to be different from anyone else so that I can walk with God. If it means having to separate from every other person in my family, then that's what's necessary.

Now that's very rare that it happens that way but there are moments, but it's this determination to be different. Not to be conformed but to actively resist this conforming pressure of the world. The world, this age has the way it thinks about things, the things that it values, its aspirations, what it thinks life is about, and it's continually selling that message; it's continually on the internet, on television, in the movies, in everything that you read, this message is coming through. It's things like it's all about you. If it feels good, do it. All of these things the world is telling you. It's all up to you. You can determine, you can make your own way. It's all about self-fulfillment, self-expression. That's the conforming pressure of this world and if you and I are not actively resisting that, we are being conformed in ways we don't even see.

So the message here is to do the work that we're called to do, we have to separate ourselves. We have to come out and be separate from them so that we can do the work of a priest. This is our calling and we have to be delighted about being different. It's okay that everyone else thinks that I'm odd. It's okay, back to the Levites and the priests, it's okay that we don't have, they didn't have an inheritance in the land. They had some limitations about them. You know, all the other tribes had land that passed down generation after generation, the Levites lived in cities. They had a little bit of farmland that they were given. They didn't have an inheritance. This says to us we're supposed to live like we really don't have a stake in this world. Are you living like that? Are you living like your inheritance is God? Are you doing like Abraham who remember the author of Hebrews says that Abraham lived in the land of promise and he never owned it. Isaac lived in the land of promise, he never owned it. God said it's your land but it was never his land. Jacob lived in the land of promise, he didn't own it. And they came to understand that it wasn't about Canaan it was about heaven and they were looking for the city whose builder and maker is God. They desired a better country, that is, a heavenly country, therefore God was not ashamed to be called their God. That's the calling of every Christian. We're not looking for a life, to make a life here, we are looking for heaven. That's the calling of a priest, to live like someone who doesn't have an inheritance in this world and to be willing to do that and to embrace being different.

Fourth point: delight in the word. Delight in being different. So we said embrace your calling, embrace your work, delight in being different, delight in the word of God. The only way you can really reject the conforming power of this world is by being actively transformed and intentionally renewing your mind with the word of God. You have to think God's thoughts after him. If you're not doing this, you are being conformed. We

need to be much more intentional about this in our lives. We should be working on areas we're trying to grow in our godliness actively.

This is something we've been talking about as elders to do, in a sense, like we call it personal self-counseling projects and the idea is what are you working on in your life, what are you trying to, where are you trying to be transformed by the renewing of your mind rather than being conformed to this world? You know, I'm reading a book, I'm working on pleasing people. I don't want to please people, I want to please God. It's okay to want to please people to a certain amount but inordinate desire of pleasing people is you want to please people more than you should, you want to please people more than you want to please God. So working on that. Well, if I'm not being transformed and I've seen this as I've been reading it, man, the power of just getting into the word and seeing what it says about that, it is transformative and something about doing that that is totally different than just thinking about, "Hey, I don't want to be like that." No, get into the word. The word will change you.

So delight in the word. Now think about what it means to be different and I want to take a moment just to talk about that. Think about, you know, children. You're called to be holy if you're a Christian, you have to be born again and so, young people, the first thing is follow Jesus, believe upon the Lord Jesus, repent, place your faith in him. And then if you're a believer, you're still called to be a priest, you're called to be holy, you're called to be different. Delight in being different. You can delight in being different by obeying your parents when people around you don't obey them. You can delight in being different as a youth or a middle school or high school person by honoring your parents. You know, the world, they look down on parents. You could be different by honoring them, valuing them, valuing their opinion more than you value your friends'. That's radical. That's holy. That's biblical. Read Proverbs. You're supposed to be listening to your parents, listening to your father, listening to your mother, trying to please your father, trying to please your mother more than you're pleasing yourself or your friends.

So if you want to be holy, that's what holiness looks like for a teenager, that's one of the things that it looks like, and the beauty of holiness is that if you do that, you're going to find that life and joy are there. Life and joy are in being holy. Young adults, singles, how do you manifest holiness in your dating life? Date differently than the world dates. You don't look at relationships as kind of ways to just find fulfillment. You think about the other person and you care about their soul and you fear doing damage to another person. You heed what God's word says in 1 Thessalonians 4, do not defraud your brother for the Lord is the avenger of all such things. So you don't create emotions in the heart of someone you're not really interested in marrying. You don't expose them to temptation. You are holy because God is holy. Married couples, wives, how do you speak about your husbands? Is there holiness about that? Are you different than your friends, your unbelieving friends? Do you honor your husband? Husbands, do you honor your wives? Do you think about and speak about your wife to your friends in a way that's different and distinct, separate?

When it comes to social media, how much holiness is on our social media accounts? Your Facebook posts. Are your political statements evident of the fact that you are not really living for this present world? It doesn't mean you can't speak truth but when you start sinning in the way and sounding like the world, you're not being holy. Young people, you young ladies especially, would you want your church family to see the things you put online? The pictures you put online? Are you being holy? Is Christ pleased with that? Or are you tempting others to sin? Or even if you're tempting others to sin, you're tempting young men to lust, you're tempting other young women to feel inadequate because you're celebrating your beauty and flaunting it in a way that's ungodly?

Holiness requires that we look at all of our lives and we try to bring it under the authority of the word. It takes the power of grace. All of us are sinners. All of us have these impulses but God has called us to holiness. You do that by embracing the calling, it's all about being a priest, it's all about presenting offerings, it's delight in being different and delight in the power, the transforming power of the word. The Lord Jesus Christ is our righteousness. He can make you holy.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, we thank You for Your word, we thank You for the gospel, we thank You that You have enabled us to be holy, You've made us holy in Christ, those who belong to Jesus. We pray for those that have not yet repented and placed their faith that they might turn to Christ and be saved. Father, we are so grateful for the privilege of being in Your presence. Help us delight in that more and more and more and help us put off sin and put on experiential holiness for the glory of God. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.