

# Moments *for* You

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Theme: Sanctification



## A NEW START

While waiting to board a plane at Chicago's O'Hare airport, I experienced a very special conversation with a medical doctor and his wife. After watching several planes jet into the darkness, the wife wistfully remarked, "I wish I could vanish into space just like that plane and start life all over again."

Why do people want a new start? Because life is incomplete and disappointing and sinful. We know what is good and right, and yet on every side we experience evil and wrong. Daily we're confronted with corruption in government, dishonesty in business, and cheating in marriage. Our faith in others and even in ourselves is shattered.

We were created for fellowship and friendship with God. However, the original condition of mankind has been broken by disobedience and sin. Isaiah the prophet writes: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). By our attitudes, words, and actions, we continually cry, "Give me more." And yet, always, there's a big hole begging to be filled. We pour into the vacuum an astonishing collection of things: work, entertainment, athletics, volunteer service, education, friendships, substance abuse, and more. But if we're honest, we have to admit that any satisfaction gained through our efforts only creates a greater longing for something more.

The chance for a new start is found in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus, on the cross, freely became our sin bearer, so that we might experience God's

salvation. The apostle Paul said, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9). Based on his or her reception of Jesus Christ, each person is either in Christ or not in Christ. There is no middle ground.

When a person is "in Christ," he is *justified* before God. Christ's death makes the sinner acceptable to God, as stated in Romans 3:24 and 2 Corinthians 5:19-21. Justification, applied to the believer, is that judicial act based on the merit of Jesus by which we are declared righteous. This is one of the results of God's salvation. Upon our profession of faith, we are declared righteous. All that Christ is, God places to our account so that we stand fully acquitted and forgiven in His sight.

In Christ, we are also *sanctified*. This is another result of salvation. The word sanctified means "set apart," and is from the same root as the words "holy" and "saint." There are three aspects to our sanctification. First, as believers in Jesus Christ, we are "set apart" positionally by becoming members of God's family (1 Corinthians 6:11). Next, we are also "set apart" for God's glory in our day-to-day attempt to be like Christ (1 Peter 1:16). Though we are not sinless, as we grow in grace we will sin less and less. This is the practical aspect of a day-by-day sanctification. Finally, each believer in Christ will be with Him forever, totally set apart from sin, so that our practice will fully correspond with our position (Ephesians 5:26-27; Jude 24-25).

When a follower of Christ grasps,

even in a limited way, God's great love, or catches a glimpse of God's absolute holiness, or understands God's condescension to visit Earth in human form at Bethlehem, or realizes the willingness of Jesus to bear our sins in His body on the cross, or enters into His sufferings for our sins—the only reasonable response is to give ourselves to Him so that His purpose will be fulfilled in us. God's plan for each Christian is stated plainly in Scripture: "To be conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29). To miss this is to miss the Christian life.

—Adapted from *How to Continue the Christian Life* by George Sweeting

*The person who has begun to understand God's holiness is a person who is changed. The idea of an unchanged Christian is a contradiction in terms. If you are not pursuing holiness, there is a good chance you are not a child of God.*

—Bruce Goettsche

## ENEMIES AND ALLIES

### TOUGH ENEMIES (1 PETER 4-5)

We have formidable opponents in our quest to become more like Christ: 1) the unholy sinful tendencies that come from within us, 2) the unholy world all around us with its attractive bait that camouflages the hook of sin, and 3) the lies and deeds of evil personified—the leader of the fallen angels we call the devil.

**The Flesh.** Peter wrote, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11). And later he added that we are not to live for "the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (1 Peter 4:2).

We carry the damaging effects of the disease of sin within us (1 John

2:16). Even though God has declared that we, as believers, have been forgiven of sin, are spiritually born again, and will never be condemned by Him (John 3:3,16-18), we will have a battle with sinful desires as long as we live (see Romans 6-8).

The term *flesh* refers to the sinful tendencies that rise from within us—lust, coveting, pride, self-centeredness—which lead us into sin (Romans 7:15-25; James 1:13-15; 4:1-10).

**The World.** The term *world* refers to the sin-permeated, fallen world-system of life on this planet that draws us away from holy living. It is everything that has been distorted by sin and opposes what is good and holy. God's word instructs us to "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

The unbelieving world around us can also be hostile to those who follow Christ. Peter warned about the likelihood that believers would suffer as Christians (1 Peter 4:16) and be objects of ridicule and attack because they identify with Christ (1 Peter 3:13-18). Jesus told His disciples, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world ... therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:18-19).

**The Devil and His Lies.** Just as Satan deceived Eve in the Garden (Genesis 3), so he continues to spin his web of deceit today. He is a liar by nature (John 8:44), and Peter wrote that the devil prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour us as his prey (1 Peter 5:8). He is called "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). He is doing his worst to lead people

astray and hinder the work of God.

Peter instructed his readers to resist the devil, standing firm in the faith (1 Peter 5:9). By knowing God, rooting our thoughts and actions firmly in the word, and relying on the Holy Spirit within, we will not fall easily into Satan's traps or give him a foothold in our lives.

### **POWERFUL ALLIES**

#### **(1 PETER 4-5; 2 PETER 1)**

Praise God that "His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). In contrast to the enemies of the flesh, the world, and the devil, we have the allies of: 1) new desires, 2) the church, and 3) the Holy Spirit.

**New God-Directed Desires.** At the moment we placed our trust in Jesus Christ and accepted His gift of salvation, God infused in us a new desire and a new ability to please Him (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:9-10). The Lord has transformed us at the very core of our being, enabling us to reflect God's holiness and to be free from bondage to evil desires (2 Peter 1:3-4). We now have Christ living in us and through us (Galatians 2:20), and we are challenged to die to sins and live for righteousness (Galatians 5:16-26; 1 Peter 2:24).

**The Church.** In contrast to the world that fights against us, as believers we are part of the church, a community that is designed to support us in our growth in holiness. Peter said, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10).

When we put our trust in Christ, we became part of the church, made up of all believers. God designed the church in such a way that we all have something to offer to everyone else. We each have a spiritual gift for build-

ing others up and working toward the goal of holiness together (Acts 2:41-47; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Ephesians 4:1-16).

**The Holy Spirit.** All of God's children have the Holy Spirit living within them, working to produce holy, Christlike behavior (1 Corinthians 12:7,13; Ephesians 1:13-14). To resist sinful desires and become holy, we must live in reliance on the power of the Spirit (Romans 8:4-13). If we submit to God's direction and rely on His strength and not our own, our lives will produce the fruit of holiness instead of the dead works of evil desires (Galatians 5:16-26).

The key to living a holy, Christlike life is not simply to attend church, try harder, read the Bible, or take a stand against Satan and his lies—as important as all those actions are. The key is this: We are to live the Christian life the way we began it—depending on God's grace and placing all our hope and trust in Him. The apostle Paul put it this way, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him" (Colossians 2:6).

Jesus Himself used an analogy of a vine and branches to emphasize that we can do nothing to please Him if we are not close to Him. He said, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:4-5).

To be holy and separate from sin, we must be close to Jesus Christ. That occurs as we focus our thoughts on Him, speak to Him in prayer, and depend on Him throughout each day.

—Condensed from *Why Would Anyone Want to be Holy?* By RBC Ministries



## SANCTIFIED BY TRUTH

*“Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth” (John 17:17).*

True Christian living is nothing more nor less than the manifestation of Christ in the life of the believer (Philippians 2:21). And the only secret of Christ-centered living is occupation with Christ Himself. For this purpose, God has given us abundant riches in His word. Someone has well said that if the Bible were merely a guidebook to show the way to Heaven, a much smaller book would have sufficed. But here is a book of over one thousand ordinary pages, and all of it “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)—and the one great subject of all its sixty-six parts is Christ.

He who feeds upon its sacred pages is feeding on Christ, for the written word declares the eternal Word. To read and meditate upon this divinely-inspired unfolding of the person and work of Christ is of first importance for the believer, if he would glorify God in his life.

It is said that John Bunyan had written inside the cover of his Bible, “This book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book.” If we desire to be holy—set apart for the use of our Master—we do not need to pray for power, nor for the gift of the Spirit, nor for some special blessing. Rather, we may join with the Psalmist in these earnest petitions regarding God’s word: “Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.... Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.... Order my steps in Thy word:

and let not any iniquity have dominion over me” (Psalm 119:18,34,133).

To read the Bible in a merely intellectual way will not minister Christ to the soul. Earnest, devout study of the Scriptures must never be separate from believing prayer. It is by this means that the soul is maintained in communion with God. Prayerless study becomes dry and unprofitable, leaving the student heady and cold-hearted. But prayerful meditation on the inspired pages will nourish the soul in divine affections, leading the heart to Christ Himself. Of this blessing may we all know more until we see Him face to face and be forever wholly sanctified!

—Adapted from *Holiness, the False and the True* by H. A. Ironside

*“A good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit” (Luke 6:43-44). The horrible travesty we have in America today is Christianity without holiness. If you say you accept Jesus, and then go raise hell, you have likely not accepted Jesus at all. Do not be deceived: the very first qualities of Christianity are holiness, purity, right living, right thinking, and right longing. We ought to take seriously the biblical doctrine of spirituality and holiness. —A. W. Tozer, adapted*

## 10 REASONS TO BE HOLY

*“Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16).*

Why does a believer desire to be more holy? Well, first of all, it is an instinct that is built into him at the time of his conversion. He receives a new hatred of sin and a new love of purity. The indwelling Holy Spirit yearns within to reproduce a sancti-

fied character. The new nature manifests itself in a craving for victory in the personal life.

But in addition to that, there are very strong practical reasons why a Christian should pursue holiness: why he should resist the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Here are ten of them.

**1. Sin brings dishonor to the name of the Lord Jesus.** The outside world is justified in associating the disciple with his Master. If the disciple sins, people reproach the Master and drag His name in the mud (2 Samuel 12:14).

**2. Remembering what our sins cost the Savior.** No thinking believer would want to continue in that which nailed the Son of God to the cross (1 Peter 2:24). If the shedding of His blood was necessary to pay sin's penalty, how can His followers ever tolerate or condone iniquity?

**3. Christ's love for us should constrain us to live in purity.** He demonstrated His love by paying an enormous price to redeem us. He has provided everything necessary for a life of godliness. He couldn't love us more than He does. It is a miserable response to such love to go back over the bridge to our former way of life (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

**4. Sin breaks God's heart.** Sin not only breaks His law, but His heart as well, whereas holiness delights Him. He said, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

**5. When we sin, it stumbles other believers.** It hurts people who have trusted us, whether in the family or the church. A young believer especially feels betrayed and shattered when the one who led him to the Lord brings disgrace on himself.

**6. The life of holiness is the best life.** Holiness is good for the spirit,

soul, and body. It saves us from remorse, guilt, shame, and many forms of disease. It leads to fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore (John 10:10; 1 John 1:4).

**7. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit.** Never lose the sense of amazement that one of the members of the Godhead is our permanent indweller and constant companion. This realization will motivate us to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

**8. Sin destroys our testimony.** Holiness gives liberty in serving the Lord, but sin shuts it down. The guilt and sense of unfitness that accompany unconfessed sin paralyze a person's outreach. His witness is temporarily destroyed, and his credibility is called into question.

**9. Holiness gives confidence in prayer.** "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:21-22). The flip side of this is that if we regard iniquity in our heart, the Lord will not hear us (Psalm 66:18). Sin disconnects the prayer line.

**10. Godliness is the best preparation for eternity.** Some day, perhaps soon, we are going to see the Lord Jesus. We are going to stand before His Judgment Seat. That means that we should be living now in the light of that awe-inspiring event (1 Timothy 4:8; 1 John 3:3).

These then are some of the reasons why we should never relax in the pursuit of holiness and why we should be highly motivated to grow in likeness to our blessed Redeemer.—Adapted from *Be Holy: The Forgotten Command* by William MacDonald

## NEVER GIVE UP

### JESUS, OUR EXAMPLE

Never give up. This is a message echoed again and again in the Scriptures. Consider Jesus, the author and the finisher of our salvation (Hebrews 12:1-2). Jesus finishes what He starts (Philippians 1:6). He did not spar with the devil for a season. He locked the enemy in combat to the end.

One of the most significant utterances ever to come from the mouth of Jesus was spoken on the cross. As He suffered the agony of death, Jesus said, “It is finished” (John 19:30). Jesus signed off on His earthly life when His task was finished—not before. The work had to be finished.

### PRESSING FORWARD

Paul stated it this way: “Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14).

We are called to press toward the mark of our high calling. To press is to use exertion. It is to apply pressure. The Apostle was calling us to effort. The pursuit of righteousness is not a cavalier matter. There is no easy-chair approach to sanctification. Determination is important. Effort is essential. “Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue” (2 Peter 1:5).

Let us never forget that spiritual progress cannot be achieved merely by our own efforts. Self-reformation is an exercise in futility if it proceeds without dependence on the grace of God (John 15:5). But to be sanctified involves work—activity, not passivity. Sanctification is cooperative. There are two partners involved in the work: I must work and God will work. We are not called to sit back and let God

do all the work. We are called to work, and to work hard.

### GOD’S DISCIPLINE

We are God’s children, and when we stray from our Heavenly Father, He disciplines us precisely because He loves us. At times, His hand is heavy on us. That does not mean that He is treating us in a heavy-handed manner. But the weight of His divine touch of discipline can easily overcome us. His chastening seems grievous (Hebrews 12:11-13).

But the discipline of God is not meant to destroy us but to heal us. The treatment is painful for a season. Knee braces are not comfortable. But the goal of the Father’s discipline is training. It yields the fruit we are all seeking, the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

### THE STRUGGLE REWARDED

When we seek to overcome besetting sins, we are easily frustrated, easily defeated. One straw breaks the back of the camel. Repeated failures do little to inspire confidence. This is why we are called to forget the things that are behind. We must forget the failures. We must not wallow in defeat. We must press on toward the mark. We must never, never, never give up.

Our goal is not trivial. It is worth fighting for. It is worth fear and trembling. It is the high calling of Christ. Indeed, it is the highest calling. It is worth all the blood, all the sweat, and all the tears. It is Him whom we strive to please. It is for Him that we rise up again after repeated failures. It is He who is our destiny.

—Adapted from *Pleasing God* by R. C. Sproul

*A holy life will make the deepest impression. Lighthouses blow no horns, they just shine. —D. L. Moody*

## SINLESS PERFECTION?

**Question:** Is sinless perfection possible in this life?

**Answer:** Ephesians 4:13 says that the spiritual gifts are given to build up the body of Christ “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” The word translated “mature” in this verse is the Greek word *teleios*. It is used throughout the New Testament to mean “perfect,” “complete,” “full-grown,” and “mature.” What Ephesians 4:13 teaches is that, the more we grow in Christ, the stronger and more unified we will be as a church. The verse does not teach that we will stop sinning.

Another passage that people sometimes get confused about is Colossians 1:28, which says that Paul wants to “present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” Also, in Colossians 4:12 Paul prays that we would “stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” In both verses, the Greek word for perfect should be understood to include the thought of being “mature” or “full-grown,” rather than “sinless.”

As human beings we are bound under Adam’s nature in this world. No matter how hard we try not to, we will still sin against God. While the Bible assumes that we will be pursuing holiness, it also recognizes that believers still sin: “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

This holds true for everyone. The apostle Paul rebuked Peter for showing favoritism (Galatians 2:11–13). Late in his ministry, Paul calls him-

self the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). Peter, James, John, and Paul all admitted that they were imperfect. How could you or I claim anything different?

True perfection will not come until the rapture of the church, when we rise to meet Jesus in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17). At that time the dead in Christ will be resurrected, and the bodies of the living will be changed (Philippians 3:20,21; 1 Corinthians 15:54). We will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10) where our works will be judged and rewards will be given (1 Corinthians 3:9-15). Our redemption will be complete, and our sin will be gone forever. We will live and reign with Christ in sinless perfection forever.

—Adapted from GotQuestions.org

## KNOWING GOD’S WILL

*“This is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thessalonians 4:3).*

Discovering God’s will is not necessarily a complicated process. He has given us many simple and clearly stated principles for life. For example, we are told it is “the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men” (1 Peter 2:15). In 1 Thessalonians 4:3 we read, “This is the will of God ... that ye should abstain from fornication.” And in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 we are told, “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

As we live by faith and do what the Bible clearly tells us to do, we can be sure the Lord will lead us through the difficult decisions when the options may not be clear. Above all else, God’s will is that we submit to Him, become more like Christ, and be willing to follow wherever He leads.

—Albert Lee, *Our Daily Bread*, adapted