

Having considered the NECESSITY and NATURE of Gospel Holiness—it's my intent this morning to examine—The MISTAKES of Gospel Holiness—and I've selected five common mistakes of true, Christian holiness—these have not only been realized throughout church history, but to varying degrees, are all present in the church today—we could liken each of them to a cancer that seeks to kill or destroy all TRUE holiness of heart and life...

But—before I do that—I want to very quickly remind you of what we learned last time—I suggested a rather simple three-part definition of what Christian holiness, or sanctification, entails—[1] the radical restoration of the whole soul to the image of God—that is—sanctification, or Christian holiness—has a definite and distinct beginning—the old man is put to death and a new man raised in his place—thus Christians are holy, in that they've been recreated after the holy and righteous image of God...

[2] The continual conformity of the whole soul to the image of Christ—this is negative (mortification) and positive (vivification)—that is—we are to cleanse the soul from all that defiles it, and positively promote every grace that adorns it—thus in its simplest definition—true or gospel holiness is Christ-likeness—it's becoming more and more like Christ...

[3] The hearty compliance of the new man to the law (or commandments) of Christ—by "law of Christ" is meant the moral law of God, summarized in the Ten Commandments, reduced to two, love God and your neighbor—thus true Christian holiness is in essence Christ-likeness, which could be described as LOVE—loving God and our neighbor—as defined by the law of God—is holiness—holiness isn't something indefinable or unexplainable...

Thus—having considered the NECESSITY and NATURE of holiness—I want to briefly define and illustrate five mistakes from Scripture—providing several corrective statements that contrast true holiness with these mistakes or perversions—thus, it's my goal to examine these five mistakes as a means to teach you, more fully, the NATURE of true holiness...

I. Five Mistakes about Holiness

A. Moralism

1. Moralism is the attempt to live moral without Christ—it's man's attempt to live holy by himself for himself...
2. Now—there are various kinds of moralists—but most of them, attach themselves to some form of religion...
3. Thus—those who claim to be Muslim, Buddhist, Roman Catholic—would all be considered moralists who practice moralism...
4. But—perhaps one of the largest groups of moralists would be professing Christians—who've never been converted...
5. Again—moralism is man's attempt to live moral—without being savingly and vitally attached to Jesus Christ...
6. There are multitudes of professing Christians—who've reduced the Christian religion to the attempt to live morally...
7. Now—the NT describes first century Pharisees as clear examples of moralists—who were extremely religious...
8. Matt.23:25-28—"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men's* bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness..."

9. Our Savior uses two imageries to illustrate the Pharisees' moralism or externalism—[a] a cup, and [b] a tomb...
10. [a] A cup, v25—"For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence..."
11. [b] A tomb, v27—"For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness..."
12. There's a single lesson in these two imageries—the religion of the Pharisees was merely outward and not inward...
13. V28—"Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness..."
14. That is—their religion, and thus morality, was merely or purely external—it never touched or changed the heart...
15. Thus—in light of this first mistake—let me suggest three basic and yet very important lessons about true holiness...
16. [1] True holiness originates from a changed heart—that is—it begins on the inside and expresses itself on the outside...
17. Thus—moralism is the same as externalism—it fails to understand the spiritual and inward nature of the law...
18. Matt.5:20—"For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will be no means enter the kingdom of heaven..."
19. The scribes and Pharisees had reduced the law of God to mere externals—for example, they understood the 6th commandment, You shall not murder, as forbidding actual or literal murder..
20. But Jesus in His first major discourse, The Sermon on the Mount, clarifies that to hate your brother unjustly, is to murder him in your heart, and is thus a violation of the law...
21. Thus—the law of God has always been concerned with the thoughts, intents, motives, and workings—of the heart...
22. [2] True holiness is the work of the Spirit of God—that is—it's the work of the Spirit working within our hearts...
23. Thus Scripture often divides humanity into two categories—those who walk according to the flesh and Spirit...
24. Those who walk according to the flesh, though they may give the external appearance of holiness, are all flesh...
25. Brethren—a person can give the appearance of holiness and be in the flesh—in fact moralists tend toward strictness...
26. [3] True holiness is for the praise and glory of God—this is contrast to moralists—who work for their own glory and praise...
27. Matt.6:1—"Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven..."

B. Legalism

1. Legalism is a rather large concept with many variations—at it's worst—it's the attempt to be right with God by law-keeping...
2. But—that form of legalism that I'm here referring to is a lesser form of it—that's common among many Christians...
3. That is—the imposing of one's own standards upon others, as if, they were God's standard of purity or holiness...
4. Matt.23:23-24—"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel [Matt.15:1-9]..."
5. The OT commanded the Jews to give a tenth of their possessions in order to assist and support the Levites...

6. But—it never commanded that this tithe include something as minute as herbs—this was taught by the elders...
7. That is—it was a tradition taught by the elders—that the Jews, especially the Pharisees, took great pride in...
8. You see—the Jewish leaders were fond of taking the law of God, and extending it to include additional commands...
9. For example, did the OT law command fasting, yes, so the Pharisees commanded that everyone fast twice a week (Lk.18:12)...
10. Did the OT law command various ceremonial washings—yes, so the Pharisees commanded washing before every meal (Matt.15:1-9)...
11. Thus—their error was twofold—[a] they added their traditions to God's law, and [b] they imposed them on others...
12. Thus—our Savior was NOT offended by their tithing of herbs—He expressly says—"These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone..."
13. That is—if you want to tithe herbs fine—that's not the issue—the issue is—you do so at the expense of what's expressly commanded...
14. Thus—the problem was—they elevated their traditions to the level of command and imposed it everyone else...
15. [1] True holiness is defined by God's law—hearty compliance with God's law, for right reasons, results in holiness...
16. Holy living and walking—is living or walking—that's in harmony with the holy and good command of God...
17. But—what legalism does is—it puts the traditions of men in the place of God's law and imposes them on others...
18. For example—the Scripture teaches—we are to worship God in fear and joy"—with a sober and joyful heart...
19. Thus—tradition says—men are to worship God with a suit and tie—out of respect to God we should dress a certain way...
20. Now—this may or may not be a good thing to do—but brethren—wearing a suit to church— isn't God's law...
21. You see what a legalists does is—he takes his application of Scripture as the standard—imposing it on others...
22. Thus—whether you wear a suit or not—doesn't make you more or less holy—wearing a tie doesn't make you holy...
23. God's law says—"In fear I will worship You"—I'll come into the presence of God in awe and with holy respect...
24. [2] True holiness humbles the soul—this of course is the opposite of legalism—which inflates the pride of man...
25. Legalism works like this—you make up the standard that suits you—impose it upon others and look down on those who don't comply...
26. It's rather easy to reduce morality to a list of our preferences or opinions, and look down on others for non-compliance...
27. Thus—a sure sign that a person is NOT holy—regardless how strict they are—is proud and judgmental spirit...
28. John Murray—"Self-confident moralism promotes pride, and sanctification promotes humility and contrition..."
29. [3] True holiness leads to love—because a legalist is a proud soul—he's also a judgmental and unloving soul...
30. I pointed out briefly last week—that true Christian holiness includes a—"hearty compliance to the law of Christ..."
31. I furthermore reminded you, that that law is fulfilled by love—love to God and love to our neighbor—this is what the law demands...
32. Thus—by necessary inference—those fulfilling the law, or those who are living holy lives—will be loving...

33. Let me put it this way—those who are most loving, are most holy—and those who are most unloving are unholy...
34. A judgmental, hyper-critical spirit—is the sure evidence of a legalist spirit—which is necessarily—an unloving spirit...

C. Passivism

1. This refers to a view of sanctification or holiness—that denies Christians are active in the process of sanctification...
2. Now—here it's necessary for me to clarify—there's several related errors—all which promote a form of passivism...
3. Yet—to be a little bit simplistic—one of the common themes throughout them all—is the need for a second blessing...
4. There are two kinds of Christians—there's are those who are merely saved and those who have reached a special level...
5. Though this form or perversion of sanctification takes several forms—it basically suggest two kinds of Christians...
6. [a] The lower-level Christian—this kind of Christian is saved—but still in a fierce battle with his or her sin...
7. [b] The high-level [life] Christian—this kind of Christian has learned the secret of—letting go and letting God...
8. This person has been delivered from the struggle of Romans 7, and has entered into the joy and liberty of chapter 8...
9. Now—the error I am here addressing, what I've called "passivism"—has also been referred to as "quietism..."
10. We know it today by the phrase—"let go and let God"—that is—Christians are not to work but merely wait...
11. [1] True holiness is the result of GOD'S work—that is—our working is the result of God's working within us...
12. Thus—again and again the Scripture ascribes the work of sanctification to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...
13. 1Thess.5:23-24—"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it..."
14. [2] True holiness is the result of OUR work—that is—holiness is never obtained without our working for it...
15. Thus—the NT uses two imageries that describe our involvement in sanctification—ATHLETICS and WARFARE...
16. Again and again, Christians are told to "fight the good fight" "run the race with endurance"—both of which demands work...
17. Furthermore—Christians are exhorted to "pursue holiness," "pursue righteousness," "seek righteousness," "practise righteousness," "mortify the deeds of the body," "cleanse themselves," "perfect holiness," "put on Christ..."
18. [3] True holiness is the result of our working because of His working—that is—He works IN and we work OUT...
19. Phil.2:12-13—"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure..."
20. Thus—Christians are NOT able to work in and of themselves—they can ONLY work out what God works in...
21. John Dick—"Sanctification may be considered as a privilege, and as a duty. In the one view it is the work of God, and in the other it is the work of man, assisted by supernatural grace..."
22. John Murray—"Our activity is enlisted to the fullest extent in the process of sanctification. But we must not rely upon our own strength of resolution or purpose. It is when we are weak that we are strong..."

23. Wilhelmus a Brakel—"Sanctification is an efficacious work of God. God alone is its cause...Man, being thus moved by the influence of God's Spirit, moves, sanctifies himself, engages in that activity which his new nature desires and is inclined toward, and does that which he knows to be his duty..."
24. Herman Bavinck—"Granted, sanctification in the first place is a work and gift of God, a process in which humans are passive just as they are in regeneration, of which it is the continuation. But based on this work of God in humans, it acquires, in the second place, an active meaning, and people themselves are called and equipped to sanctify themselves and devote their whole life to God..."
25. Thus—the proper way to explain this truth—is that God works 100% in our sanctification and we work 100%...
26. Sanctification is NOT God working 50% and man working 50%--neither is God working 75% and man 25%...
27. Brethren—sanctification is NOT God working 99% and man 1%--God works 100% of our sanctification in us...
28. Every single thing that we do is the result of His grace—it's the evidence of the Holy Spirit forming Christ in us...
29. But—we are 100% active in that process—we must strive, run, pray, labor, work, resist, pursue, and obtain...
30. Now—how are we able to bring these two facts together—well, let me suggest we do so by the reality of FAITH...
31. Faith is the work of God in our hearts—but faith is also the means whereby the soul is active and works for God...
32. For example, Hebrews 11—BY FAITH Abel offered a better sacrifice, Noah built an ark, Abraham offered Isaac, Moses left Egypt...
33. How did these saints do all these things?—well brethren, be sure they did not do these things in and of themselves...
34. Thus—Christians are sanctified by faith just as much as they are justified by faith—how else can we work but by faith...
35. Brethren—this is something I fear many Christians are unclear on—they think we are justified by faith but sanctified by works...
36. No—we are justified and sanctified by faith—but—the faith of our sanctification is active and not merely passive...
37. Let me make a necessary distinction—the faith by which we are justified is wholly passive—it only receives...
38. But the faith by which we are sanctified is both passive and active—it receives from Christ and works for Christ...
39. J.C. Ryle—"Moreover, the Scriptures nowhere teach us that faith sanctifies us in the same sense and in the same manner that faith justifies us! Justifying faith is a grace that 'worketh not,' but simply trusts, rests, and leans on Christ. Sanctifying faith is a grace of which the very life is action: it 'worketh by love,' and, like a mainspring, moves the whole inward man..."
40. Jn.15:5—"I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing..."

D. Asceticism

1. Asceticism is the mindset that thinks—self-denial of basic comforts—somehow renders the soul more pious...
2. Again, there are several forms or kinds of asceticism—for example, the Medieval practice of monasteries and nunneries...
3. Throughout especially the Medieval ages, many believed that removing oneself physically from the world made a person more holy...
4. We also see it today in the old-older Amish—holiness is defined as separation from all aspects of modern life...
5. Now—there are two basic flaws to asceticism—[a] it views non-moral items as in and of themselves sinful...

6. [b] It views sin as something outside of us rather than within us—thus the need to remove ourselves from the world...
7. But—dear friends—you must know—the reason sin is within the world, is because it's made of people just like you...
8. Matt.15:18-20—"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are *the things* which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man..."
9. [1] True holiness takes place within this world—that is—Christians are intended to shine as lights within this dark world...
10. Phil.2:14-15—"Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights IN THE WORLD..."
11. Jn.17:14-16—"I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world..."
12. [2] True holiness takes place separate from this world—that is—the sinful and wicked elements of this world...
13. That is—things that contradict the holy and just law of God—things that violate His revealed word or will...
14. 1Jn.2:15-17—"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever..."

E. Perfectionism

1. Now—as with these other views—this view has several variations—perhaps the most common was the Wesleyan view...
2. Now—let me simply state, very plainly—historically the Wesleyans and Methodists believe in this doctrine...
3. John Wesley himself taught on this topic rather frequently—in fact he preached two sermons entitled—On perfection, and Christian Perfection...
4. Now—it must be admitted at the outset—that by perfection Wesley did not believe absolute perfection in the full sense...
5. Those who reached this perfection, were nevertheless capable of sinning, falling, and were in need of growing...
6. But basic to the Wesleyan view of perfection—is the notion that Christians can reach a place of ENTIRE sanctification...
7. That is—the Christian becomes so holy that he no longer consciously or purposefully violated the law of God...
8. Now—it's important to keep in mind—Wesleyanism replaces the law with love—love doesn't full the law it replaces it...
9. Thus for Wesley the terms "entire sanctification" and "Christian perfection"—were synonymous with "perfect love..."
10. In fact—a text that Wesley used rather frequently was 1Jn.4:18—"There is no fear in love; but perfect love cast out fear..."
11. That is—perfect love to God and our neighbor—those who have perfect love have no fear for love casts out fear...
12. [1] True holiness remains imperfect in this life—the new man, within the best Christian, is never totally renewed...
13. Now—remember what I said two weeks ago—the whole soul is renewed, in that, every part, is in part, renewed...

14. But—and this is important—no faculty of the soul is perfectly renewed within this life—every faculty remains in part fallen...
15. Rom.7:18—"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find..."
16. Now—it's because the flesh remains in every Christian, that every Christian will continue to sin in this life...
17. 1Jn.1:8-10—"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us..."
18. [2] True holiness is always obtained with great struggle—that is—every Christian is engaged in a fierce fight...
19. Rom.7:19—"For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice"
Gal.5:17—"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish..."
20. My dear Christian friend—fighting and wrestling with sin, even the same sins, is very consistent with true holiness...
21. Heb.10:14—"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified [Heb.7:19; 9:9; 10:1]..."
22. The author of Hebrews frequently uses this word "perfect"—it primarily refers to perfection of justification...
23. Now—I want you to see how these two blessings are related but distinct—we have been perfected and we're being sanctified...
24. My Christian friend—the only perfection that you and I will know in this life—is the perfection of justification...
25. Jesus Christ lived a perfect life—and this perfection has been imputed to our accounts—we are perfect in Him...