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Sermon Notes

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## **Without Holiness No One Will See the Lord**

### **Hebrews 12:14**

Thomas Brooks was a Puritan pastor who lived in 17<sup>th</sup> century England. Sometime before 1662, he began a new sermon series with these words:

“If I were the fittest man in the world to preach a sermon to the whole world, gathered together in one congregation, and had some high mountain for my pulpit, from whence I might have a prospect of all the world in my view, and if I were furnished with a voice of brass, a voice as loud as the trumpet of the archangel, that all the world might hear me, I would choose to preach on no other text than Hebrews 12:14:

***Hebrews 12:14 Pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.***

That is an AMAZING STATEMENT!!! The Bible contains over 31,000 verses... and there are many that are more famous than Hebrews 12:14. But Thomas Brooks was serious about his love for this one verse... he proceeded to preach 58 sermons on that one verse!! Friends, that's over THIRTEEN MONTHS' worth of sermons on one verse!!

Now, I do not plan to nail you to one spot in the bible for the next thirteen months... but I think it reasonable to ask, “What did a godly pastor like Thomas Brooks see of such immense value in this one verse that occupied over a year's worth of his pulpit time? And what can we learn from his studies? What does this one verse say to our souls???”

Brooks immediately began to answer some of those questions by zeroing in on the salvation of souls... this one verse is an urgent trumpet call to all hearers to MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE A GENUINE SALVATION IN CHRIST... that you are not being self-deceived, that you are not being lied to by the devil

Brooks poured out as molten lava the zeal he had that all his hearers be genuinely saved in Jesus Christ:

“The salvation of souls is that which should be first and most in a minister’s eye, and that which should lie closest on a minister’s heart. O beloved friends!! Our dear Lord Jesus was infinitely tender of the souls of men. He left His Father’s bosom for souls; he trode the winepress of His Father’s wrath for souls; he prayed for souls; he sweated for souls; he bled out his heart’s blood for souls; and he made himself an offering for souls... and what an overwhelming encouragement this should be to all his faithful messengers to plead for souls, to mourn for souls, to study for souls, and in preaching to spend and be spent for the salvation of souls!!”

So... Thomas Brooks preached 58 sermons on one verse of Hebrews because he felt that eternal souls were at stake

It would do us good to pay close attention to this one verse for at least one Sunday... for this one day, let us be fully engaged in this one verse... let its power shock us and warn us and encourage us and motivate us to look after the TRUE HEALTH of our souls, and to do so for OTHERS as well...

## I. What Is Commanded?

### A. “Pursue”

1. Press after peace, as the persecutor pursues and presses after him that he persecutes
2. Earnest, eager, passionate, incessant pursuit
3. The image is one of a total life focus of something you can never perfectly attain in this life

B. “Peace with all...” discussed last week... I don’t want to spend any time on it today

### C. “Holiness”

1. This will be the main topic of this message today
2. What is this holiness?
3. Simple definition: holiness = separation, set apart unto God for His purposes

4. Here especially it refers to purity from sin

D. Without Which No One Will See the Lord:

1. To “see the Lord” in this context means to spend eternity in the presence of God, as we shall prove later in the message

E. Simple Doctrine:

There is a personal holiness that comes as a result of diligent effort, diligent pursuit, that is absolutely required to spend eternity in heaven in the presence of God

II. What Is the Holiness We Must Pursue?

A. What It Is NOT

1. NOT the LEGAL HOLINESS that Adam enjoyed in the Garden of Eden
  - a. The holiness that comes from perfect obedience to the Laws of God
  - b. From perfect innocence, right standing before God based on our own obedience to His commands
  - c. If this is required for heaven, then WOE to every man, woman, and child that has ever been born
  - d. Because of the sin of Adam, not one human being has a natural standing of righteousness in God’s sight

***Romans 3:10 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one***

2. NOT the IMAGINARY HOLINESS that many natural persons THINK they possess based on MORALITY
  - a. Many of the lost people around us think they are basically righteous, basically “good enough” for heaven
  - b. They think of their moral achievements: their hard work, their discipline, their abstaining from drugs or alcohol, their

frugality, their kindness to other people, their charity toward the poor, the volunteer hours they spend doing good works to benefit the underserved

- c. They THINK their morality will be good enough for whatever “heaven” there is after this place
- d. BUT they do not realize the truth of the situation:

***Proverbs 30:12 “There are those who are pure in their own eyes and yet are not cleansed of their filth”***

***Revelation 3:17 You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.***

- 3. NOT the outward, external, visible holiness which consists in someone being free from SCANDALOUS VICES and the ordinary performance of religious duties
  - a. Many godly persons in the bible possessed this... such as Job, Zechariah and Elizabeth... all spoken of as blameless in their generation
  - b. The apostles who preached to the Thessalonians said this:

***1 Thessalonians 2:10 You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed.***

- c. BUT someone may be outwardly holy in the same pattern, but not truly holy within... the outside looks righteous, but the inside is corrupt

***Matthew 23:27-28 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. <sup>28</sup> In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.***

NO! The holiness of Hebrews 12:14 is not a mere outward show like a whitewashed tomb!!

## B. What Is Essential for It But Not Referred to in this Verse

1. Separation from common things; Separation unto God as His personal possession
  - a. The Bible frequently speaks of holiness in this sense
  - b. The Jewish nation were set apart unto God as His personal people

***Exodus 19:5-6 out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, <sup>6</sup> you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'***

***1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God***

- c. In the Old Covenant sacrificial system, many things were spoken of as “holy to the Lord”... set apart for His private and personal use

The SACRED INCENSE... there was a recipe for it in Exodus 30:34... it contained a specific blend of gum resin, onycha, galbanum, and frankincense, all in equal amounts, ground into a fine powder...

God was very clear that this particular recipe was to be SACRED, HOLY, for HIS PERSONAL USE... no one was allowed to make it for their own private use

- d. Separation from the world is PART of the holiness God intends for us; but this is not the central understanding here
2. The Imputed righteousness of Christ
  - a. This is the CENTERPIECE OF THE GOSPEL
  - b. Without this righteousness which comes by faith, no one will see the Lord... no one will go to heaven
  - c. Many verses speak of this:

***Romans 1:17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."***

***2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.***

***1 Corinthians 1:30 Christ... has become for us wisdom from God-- that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.***

- d. This is ABSOLUTELY PERFECT HOLINESS... it is the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to the sinner by simply believing in His name
- e. Without that holiness, none of us has any hope of surviving Judgment Day and making it to heaven
- f. BUT it is NOT what the author is speaking about here!!!
- g. Why do I say that? Because the holiness the author is commanding for us here is a holiness gained by PURSUING IT... BY INTENSE EFFORT... the imputed righteousness of Christ is a FREE GIFT, given all at once, perfectly... it is not earned, it does not come by striving or effort:

***Romans 4:3 What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."***

***Romans 4:5 However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.***

### C. What It IS

1. It is an INHERENT, INTERNAL, QUALITATIVE HOLINESS... something of the heart
2. It consists in two parts: one from God and one from us
3. From God, it consists in the infusing of holy principles, graces, power by the Holy Spirit making a new heart that has new desires and new loves and new hates, new thoughts, new emotions... all of them are HOLY

4. From us, in consists in a HOLY USE of those graces in a pattern of HOLY WALKING... HOLY HEART resulting in a HOLY LIFESTYLE as defined by the Word of God
5. Actual heart disposition resulting in actual holy living
6. It is Christlikeness in heart and life
7. In this verse, it is something we are commanded to PURSUE, to CHASE, to RUN AFTER... throughout the NT it is implied that we will be pursuing ALL OUR LIVES
8. It is the essence of the “Holy Race” marked out for us in Hebrews 12:1

***Hebrews 12:1 let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.***

9. BUT IT IS NOT PERFECTION EITHER!!!! It is something we pursue but never perfectly attain

### III. What Is At Stake?

A. Without Holiness NO ONE SHALL SEE THE LORD

B. What Does It Mean to “See the Lord”?

1. As already established, this is nothing less than eternity in heaven
2. Many verses speak of the blessedness of this heavenly sight of God

***Revelation 22:3-4 The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. <sup>4</sup> They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.***

***John 17:24 Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory,***

***1 Corinthians 13:12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.***

***John 3:3 Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.***

3. This is the very thing that filled Job with yearning:

***Job 19:26-27 And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; <sup>27</sup> I myself will see him with my own eyes-- I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!***

4. This was the very thing that Moses asked of God

***Exodus 33:18-20 Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. <sup>20</sup> But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."***

5. This is the very thing that will fill our hearts with eternal bliss, eternal blessedness

6. This sight will be awesome, so incredible as to instantly transform us and make us like Christ forever:

***1 John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.***

7. Consistent teaching from Christ:

***Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.***

8. To “See the Lord” means to see at last the ORIGIN, the SOURCE of all true happiness:

“It was when I was happiest that I longed most...The sweetest thing in all my life has been the longing — to reach the Mountain, to find the place where all the beauty came from — my country, the place where I ought to have been born. Do you think it all meant nothing, all the longing? The longing for home? For indeed it now feels not like going, but like going back.”

— C.S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces: A Novel of Cupid and Psyche*

***Revelation 1:16 His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.***

***Revelation 21:23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.***

C. What Does it Mean that NO ONE will...?

1. Here in this verse, however, the statement is negative
2. Without this holiness that one strives for, no one will see God
3. There will be NO EXCEPTIONS...
  - a. No one will be able to circumvent this requirement
  - b. No rich person or poor person; no old or young; no Jew or Gentile; no mighty king or lowly peasant; no President or janitor
  - c. NOT A SINGLE EXCEPTION
  - d. Heaven belongs to those who have this holiness

IV. Why Is It True that This Holiness is Required for Heaven?

A. The Essence of God Himself

***Isaiah 6:1-3 I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. <sup>2</sup> Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. <sup>3</sup> And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."***

B. The Actions that God Has Done

1. When Satan and his angels become unholy, God cast them out of heaven
2. When Adam and Eve became unholy, God cast them out of Eden
3. When Israel became unholy, God cast them out of the Promised Land

C. The Assertions that God Has Made

1. God has described heaven

***Isaiah 57:15 For this is what the high and lofty One says-- he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit***

2. God has said who will never enter heaven

***1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders <sup>10</sup> nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.***

***Galatians 5:19-21 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; <sup>20</sup> idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions <sup>21</sup> and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.***

D. The Essence of the Unholy Person

***Colossians 1:21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.***

***Romans 8:7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.***

Simply put, the unholy person cannot enter heaven and see God's face because that person hates God and God will not spend eternity in God's presence; God will not allow such a person into heaven.

V. How Does This Relate to Justification by Faith Alone?

A. Clear Teaching of the Gospel: Perfect Righteousness is a Gift of God, Not by Works

***Romans 1:17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."***

**Romans 3:21-22** *But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. <sup>22</sup> This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.*

**Romans 4:3** *What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*

**Romans 4:5** *However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.*

**Romans 4:6-8** *David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: <sup>7</sup> "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. <sup>8</sup> Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."*

**Philippians 3:8-9** *I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.*

B. So... if we are Perfectly Righteous in God's Sight by Faith Apart from Works, How Can You Teach That There is a Holiness I Must Strive For, and If I Don't Have It, I Cannot Go to Heaven?

C. Answer #1: It's is what this text says!!

1. "Pursue" = strive, make every effort, run after holiness... and that holiness that you are pursuing is REQUIRED TO SEE THE LORD... no one will see the Lord without it

D. Answer #2: James 2 teaches the same doctrine in different words

**James 2:14** *What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?*

**James 2:26** *As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.*

E. Answer #3: The transformation of salvation results in a changed life or it never happened

***Luke 19:8-10 Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." <sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."***

F. Answer #4: Many verses teach that a striving after righteousness is part of our salvation

***1 Timothy 6:11-12 But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. <sup>12</sup> Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called***

***Romans 6:22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.***

***1 John 3:2-3 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. <sup>3</sup> Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.***

G. Harmonizing Justification and Sanctification

1. Our personal holiness is INSUFFICIENT for heaven... even our best, holiest days could not possibly stand the test of Judgment Day apart from Christ
2. We MUST have justification righteousness... the imputed righteousness of Christ ALONE is enough for heaven
3. BUT everyone whom God justifies, God then sanctifies
4. Sanctification is a COOPERATIVE EFFORT between God's Spirit and the believer... we work and He works
5. Holiness will never be perfect in this life... BE NOT DISCOURAGED if you still see MUCH SIN in yourself... but is

there a deep yearning for holiness, an actual attainment of holy victories, a deep grief over indwelling sin???

## VI. How May We Be Sure We Have This Holiness?

Tremendous sense of urgency to answer this one question! If this sanctification holiness is an essential part of a heavenly journey, how can I be sure I possess it?

“Marks of sanctification holiness”: Thomas Brooks listed sixteen... I’ll give you a sampling

### A. Deep delight and admiration of the holiness of God

1. Unholy persons may be much impressed with other attributes of God: His power, His knowledge, His creativity, His love/mercy
2. Only holy persons are deeply drawn to God’s holiness

***Exodus 15:11 "Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you-- majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?"***

### B. Having a holiness that spreads to all areas of life

1. Everything a person does is set apart from wickedness, pure and holy, given only to the King of Kings
2. The body is holy, the mind is holy, the thoughts are holy, the motives are holy, the lifestyle is holy, the money is holy, the time is holy, the possessions are holy, the relationships are holy

***2 Corinthians 7:1 ¶ Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.***

### C. Setting highest esteem on holy things

1. The things of the world are seen to be of little value
2. Holy people value holy things above all common things
3. They esteem another person not because of their physical achievements, or intelligence or wealth or power or beauty... but because of this one thing: HOLINESS

4. So the things of God are of ultimate value... the holy Scriptures, holy worship, holy fellowship with others

D. Constantly yearning to be holier still

***Matthew 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.***

***Philippians 3:12-14 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.***

E. True hatred for all ungodliness and wickedness: all sins are equally detestable

***Hebrews 1:9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy***

1. Secret sins
2. "Small" sins
3. Habitual sins

F. Deeply grieved and troubled by their own unholiness... not merely the consequences of sin

***Psalm 38:18 I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin.***

***2 Corinthians 7:10 Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.***

G. Attracted to and delighted in holy duties: prayer, bible, worship, witnessing

1. These are not seen to be a BURDEN but a DELIGHT

***Malachi 1:13 And you say, 'What a burden!' and you sniff at it contemptuously," says the LORD Almighty.***

2. There is a hunger and thirst for God in the midst of them

***Psalm 42:2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?***

***Psalm 16:3 As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight***

***Isaiah 11:3 and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.***

H. Laboring to make other people holy

1. People generally

***Romans 10:1 ¶ Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.***

2. Family

***Joshua 24:15 But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.***

3. Church members

***Hebrews 3:12-13 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. <sup>13</sup> But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.***

I. Conformed to the holiness of Christ

1. This holiness is completely CHRIST-CENTERED
2. It comes initially from faith in Christ and is sustained constantly by faith in Christ
3. Christ is at the right hand of God interceding for it
4. Christ sent His Spirit into our hearts to achieve it
5. This holiness is patterned after Christ in heart and lifestyle

***Romans 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.***

***Philippians 2:5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus***

J. Deeply troubled by the unholiness of other people

***2 Corinthians 12:21 I am afraid that when I come again my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged.***

***2 Peter 2:8 Lot: (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)***

***Psalms 119:136 Streams of tears flow from my eyes, for your law is not obeyed.***

K. Delighted in the Word of God, especially in its holiness and purity

***Psalms 119:16 I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.***

***Psalms 119:97 Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.***

L. Regularly making God's glory the ultimate end of all the person does

***1 Corinthians 10:31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.***

M. Speaking a holy language; a mouth filled with holy things

***Matthew 12:34-35 For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.  
<sup>35</sup> The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.***

***Ephesians 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.***

***1 Peter 4:11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God.***

VII. How Must We Make the Most of This Verse?

A. Come to Christ: “See the Lord!!”

B. Examine Yourself... Is this Constant Quest for Holiness in You?

***2 Corinthians 13:5 ¶ Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you-- unless, of course, you fail the test?***

C. Give Careful Attention to these Three Categories of Sins in your Life

1. Secret sins

2. “Small” sins

3. Habitual sins

4. Seek purity in major areas

a. Sexual purity

b. Speech purity

c. Relational purity

d. Purity in lawful pleasures

D. Focus on Christ above all else: He is the vine, you the branches... holiness comes from ABIDING IN HIM BY HIS SPIRIT

E. DO IT FOR DELIGHT!!!! Pursue Holiness so You Can “See the Lord” Better NOW!!

1. Sin CLOUDS our spiritual vision and makes it hard for us to “See the Lord” now

***Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.***

2. Holiness is the most delightful, most peaceful, happiest, most confident possible life

3. Especially delightful: to be able to see Christ better and better by faith