

# THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S WILL

## STUDY EIGHT

### Can God's Will Make Us Holy?

#### *Selected Scriptures*

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*Through our Lord Jesus Christ, God granted us not only forgiveness, not only peace, not only righteousness, but He also granted us the capacity of holiness, which we never had before.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**T**HE more we follow God's will, the closer we walk with God. We feel the reassurance of His comforting hand, the relief of His compassionate mercy, and the wonder of His faithful love. "How good it is to be near God!" the psalmist exuberantly exclaimed, and our hearts agree (Psalm 73:28).

Also, the more we follow God's will, the clearer we see His holiness—which can be terrifying. Our natural response to the blinding splendor of God's perfection is to shrink back. We feel like we've accidentally barged into a sterile operating room with doctors and nurses in surgical gowns glaring at us. Immediately, we're aware of every speck of dirt on our body, every unsanitary smudge, every germ, every contaminating flaw. Embarrassed, we can't leave fast enough.

That would be our response to God's holiness were it not for God's grace. God invites us to come into His presence even though we are unworthy. In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we'll examine how He brings sinners near to Him. We'll also learn His purpose for bringing us near, which is to produce holiness in us as we follow His will.



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### **PREPARE YOUR HEART**

As you prepare your heart to engage His Word today, join the psalmist in reflecting on God's holiness, and offer this prayer to God from Psalm 99:1-3.

*The LORD is king!  
Let the nations tremble!  
He sits on his throne between the cherubim.  
Let the whole earth quake!  
The LORD sits in majesty in Jerusalem,  
exalted above all the nations.  
Let them praise your great and awesome name.  
Your name is holy!*



### **TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES**

The prophet Isaiah vividly portrayed his experience in the presence of God. Read *Isaiah 6:1-5*. In 6:1-4, what words or concepts capture your attention and describe His holiness?<sup>1</sup>

In 6:5, what was Isaiah's response to that heavenly scene? What contrast is depicted between 6:1-4 and 6:5?

God's absolute holiness is as opposite to humankind's sinfulness as light is to darkness. The two can't exist together. And yet, as our creator, God desires a relationship with us. Provision must be made for our access into His presence. Let's find out how God makes that possible.

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### **Observation: Holiness as a Position . . . Holiness as a Process**

Continue reading *Isaiah 6:6–7*. What happened to Isaiah which illustrated God's provision for access into His presence?

Just as God sent the angel to remove Isaiah's guilt, He sent His Son to absolve our sin. Let's observe what Christ did for us.

#### **Holiness as a Position: Justification**

In the New Testament, provision was made for humankind's sin through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. How did that happen, according to *2 Corinthians 5:21*?

According to *Romans 5:1*, what is our role in the justification process? How does *Romans 4:5* further reinforce this truth?

Our positional holiness—or justification—is a *passive* measure, in which we are declared righteous by God through faith. That provides us access into God's presence.

#### **Holiness as a Process: Sanctification**

If we are to enjoy fellowship with God and grow in our faith, our lives must demonstrate *active participation* in the process. Let's consider several Scriptures from the Old Testament that flesh out this expectation.

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From *Leviticus 11:44–45*, what did God expect of His people?

Read *Psalms 24:3–5*. What conditions are laid out in 24:4, and what are the benefits in 24:5?

With what is God's holiness coupled in *Isaiah 52:10*? Who benefits?

*If you and I plan to live holy lives, our lives must be marked by a sense of separation and difference. To say that we are holy suggests that we emulate a morality that is like unto our God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

Now let's turn to the New Testament. What specific commands do you find in *Romans 6:12–18* about our responsibility in demonstrating holiness?

Record your observations from *Romans 12:1–2*. What essential actions did Paul command Christians to take in doing God's will?

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How is holiness defined according to *1 Thessalonians 4:3–7*?

*First Peter 1:13–16* synthesizes our call to holy living. List the five commands Peter issued in 1:13–15.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

*As His children, He gives us a purity that matches His, and we can fellowship with Him. Sinful creatures though we are, when walking in the light we have a sense of communion with our God that if it were not for holiness we would not otherwise know. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### **Interpretation: Holiness—Balancing Grace and Effort**

God's holiness is a common theme in our worship. "Holy, holy, holy," we sing, but what does the term mean? Overview the biblical use of *holy* or *holiness* by reading a Bible dictionary entry for this concept. For a free, online option, check out *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Record insights that stand out to you.

*Holiness is the sense of being set apart for the purpose, and the work, and the glory of God. Holiness is separation from all that is sinful, and impure, and imperfect. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

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As we read earlier, God commands His people: “You must be holy because I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16). How is this possible? We obey God’s will to be holy by balancing two principles in our walk with God: *grace* and *effort*. Through the precious blood of Christ, we are justified (grace); through the Holy Spirit’s power, we engage our mind, spirit, will, and body in the pursuit of holiness (effort).

How does [Hebrews 12:14](#) underscore balancing grace and effort?

What principles did Paul outline in [Romans 6:14–16](#)? Summarize your understanding of sin as master under the law and righteousness as master under grace.

Some teachers promote the concept of, “Let go and let God”—as if walking in holiness requires no effort at all. In our search of the Scriptures, how would you evaluate that approach?

*It isn't as though God does it all and I do nothing. Rather, God does His part, and I do mine! God sends the signals, and I read them and respond.*

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



### **Correlation: Motivation for Holiness**

One powerful, biblical motivation to be holy is gratitude to God. Consider [2 Peter 1:4–8](#). In 1:4a, what promises did Peter highlight? In 1:4b, what benefit do believers realize?

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In 2 Peter 1:5a, Peter began with, “Now for this very reason also” (NASB), or “In view of all this” (NLT). What is the connection between 1:4 and 1:5?

In 2 Peter 1:5b–7, what were Peter's commands for his readers, and how does the entire passage inform us about the relationship of gratitude and effort in holiness?

*We have a divine nature, and thus we yield and place ourselves at God's disposal. Once yielded, He pours out the power, and we declare war on everything that is evil within and without. And we live a life that is different—morally excellent and ethically beautiful. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### **Application: Honing Our Holiness**

As believers in Jesus Christ, we are *positionally holy* because of Christ's merit and finished work on the cross. Yet, we are called to *be* holy as He is holy. Thankfully, through the Holy Spirit's enablement and the Scripture's direction, we possess three essentials for our journey.

First, *we have His assurance*. Because God is holy, He will always act in a way that is for our good. We can trust Him. Second, *we have His promise*. His holiness guarantees that He will always lead us the right way. His will may be mysterious, but it is never wrong. Third, *we have His example*. As Father to His children, God is our model of moral wholeness. He invites us into His presence to show us the beauty of holy living.

Reflect on the Scriptures highlighting the truth of our positional holiness. Is there one passage which encouraged you in a fresh way? How so? What promise are you taking from it?

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What truth about God's holiness or about His provision elicits gratitude in you? In what area will your gratitude prompt you to pursue holiness? What will that look like?

Take a moment to reflect on your loved ones—family and friends. Is there one who needs encouragement or direction in his or her pursuit of holiness? How can you support this person in word or action?

*Even though we are right with God, there is still the battle. God said, "You be like I am." —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### **A FINAL PRAYER**

Close your study by making Pastor Chuck's prayer your own.

*Father, I thank You for power that comes from Your throne, that You don't keep to Yourself, but You grant us the ability to be like You are. You know that we long to be like You and to walk in the light as You're in the light. Give us a refreshing zeal to live a life that is different, morally excellent, ethically beautiful, and spiritually free of deceit. In the name of Christ. Amen.*

### **ENDNOTE**

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Marshall F. Davis in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 1987, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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