

Righteousness Exalts a Nation

by Alan Martin

This sermon emphasizes the importance of righteousness in exalting a nation and the detrimental effects of sin. It delves into the story of Abraham pleading with God for the righteous in Sodom, highlighting the impact of righteousness in preserving a nation. The message stresses the need for individuals to embody righteousness, love, and kindness, especially in a divisive culture, to be the hope and light of the world. It calls for unity, prayer for leaders, and a focus on living out God's love in all interactions.

Scripture: Proverbs 14:34, Genesis 18:23, Ezekiel 22:30, 1 Timothy 2:1, Matthew 5:13, 1 Corinthians 13:4, Ephesians 3:17

Topics: "Righteousness", "Impact of Sin"

Description

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Transcript

34, Proverbs 14, 34. Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people. I like the way the Septuagint translates the second part of that.

The first part is the same, righteousness exalts a nation, but sin lessens any people. It subtracts, it takes away. When you have a perfect God and he's spoken in his perfect wisdom and he's given instructions to follow and he says, follow this and it will go well with you.

When you miss the mark and you stray from his instructions, it is going to go poorly. You'll start losing more than you gain. Where it says, as the scripture that was mentioned earlier, blessed is the people whose God is the Lord, the people of his handiwork, those who serve him and trust him, but not everyone serves the Lord.

And when a nation chooses to forget God, it's not a good thing. I believe it says in Psalms. I think it's Psalm 14 that the, uh, that the nations that forget God will be turned into hell.

And we, we, we don't want that to happen in the nation that we live with. And we are seeing the, uh, a boldness and an openness in defying the things, uh, defiance against things that God has revealed in his word that should kind of concern us and alarm us. But there is a great hope for our nation.

There's a greater, but let me, I want to, that's what I'm going to talk about this morning. And that hope is it's the hope of righteousness. Righteousness exalts a nation.

Not only will righteousness exalt a nation, righteousness in the people of God will preserve a nation. Uh, turn with me. If you have your Bibles to Genesis chapter 18, in the book of Genesis, Abraham was an older man and the Lord came to visit Abraham, the Lord and two angels.

And they were on their way to, to see if the report that had reached the Lord was true about the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. And this is found in Genesis chapter 18. This is the, what I'll start in verse 20 of Genesis 18.

So Yahweh said, the Lord said, the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great. And their sin is exceedingly grave. Keep your finger there because I want us to clarify something.

When, when we talk about the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, we mistakenly associate one particular sin. And that's, that's a misnomer. It's not a sin.

Let me keep your finger there in Genesis 18. I'm going to turn to you, turn for you to Ezekiel chapter 16, where the Lord spells out what the sins plural of Sodom and Gomorrah are. Listen very carefully.

This is from Ezekiel chapter 16. This is, I'll start in verse 48. As I live, declares the Lord, Sodom, your sister and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters had done.

And this was a prophet of the Lord rebuking the people of God. Verse 49, he says, behold, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom. So this was Sodom sin.

Listen closely. This is iniquity of your sister Sodom. She and her daughters were arrogantly proud.

They had abundant food and they live in a prosperity of luxurious self-indulgence. They did not strengthen the hand of the afflicted and the needy. They were haughty.

The, the Greek word is megalos, megalos. You heard of mega a lot. Yeah.

That's where it comes from. Mega. Yeah.

They, they consider themselves mega big. How many times have you heard? This is the greatest nation that has ever been. This is the greatest country that has ever been.

We are the greatest mega. Hey, you haven't even heard the sin that most people associate with Sodom. Hasn't even made the list yet, but the last thing that mentions and they did that, which was an abominable for me.

The first thing that we think about is the last thing in God's list. This is, this is the list. Again, they lived in lofty pride.

They had abundant food and there was a prosperity of luxurious self-indulgence. They didn't strengthen the hand of the afflicted and the needy. And they, they were boastful about how great they were and they committed abominations before me.

Now back to Genesis 18. That's what the Lord came down to see if the report that he heard was going on in Sodom was true. So he in there in Genesis 18 verse 21, the Lord says, I will go down now and see

whether they have done entirely according to without cry, which has come to me.

And if not, I will know that the men turned away from there and went towards Sodom while Abraham was standing before the Yahweh. And then Abraham, and we should be very grateful for this story. Abraham knew the Lord.

Abraham was God's friend. That's one thing it says about Abraham in the book of Genesis is that it's the greatest compliment that could be said of a man. Abraham was called the friend of God.

And with that close relationship he had with God, Abraham opens up his heart and begins to talk with the Lord because he, the Lord has just said, I'm going down there to see if it's as bad as it's come to my, the report that's come to me. And Abraham opens up because Abraham knows he has a relative living in Sodom and Gomorrah, lot, his nephews living there. So Abraham opened up his heart to the Lord.

Verse 23, Abraham came near. Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? You know what he's thinking about? He's thinking about his nephew. If you have to deal with them, are you going to take care? Is it everybody? Is it all or nothing? Then Abraham goes on.

Suppose that there are 50 righteous people within the city. Will you indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the 50 righteous who are living in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put to death the righteous with the wicked so that the righteous and the wicked are treated in the same way. That's pretty bold for Abraham to speak with the Lord like that.

You wouldn't do that, would you God? You wouldn't bring judgment upon a city and just sweep the righteous people who serve you away with the same freedom, just like the wicked, would you? And listen to the Lord's answer. So the Lord said, if I find in Sodom 50 righteous within the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake. That means that because of the presence of righteous people in a place, God will spare the judgment that that place deserves for the sake of the righteous people living there.

In this case, Abraham said 50. But I think Abraham got to thinking about himself. He got to thinking, you know, what if there's not 50? You guys find that phone and whatever it is.

What if there's not 50? What if there's five less than 50? What if there's 45? And the Lord said, I'll spare it for 45. Then Abraham said, what about 40? I'll spare it for 40. Then Abraham started going by tens.

What if there's only 30? I'll spare it for 30. And Abraham was kind of getting, he's getting a sense of how far can I go here? You know, what if there's only 20? The Lord said, I'll spare it if there's only 20 righteous people. And then towards the end, it says, Abraham said this.

Then he said, oh Lord, be not angry. And I shall speak only this once. Suppose that 10 are found, just 10.

And he, and the Lord said, I will not destroy it on the count of 10. If only 10 people, you realize if there was a thousand people in the city and there was only 10 people, that's 1%. Wow.

If there's 2,000, that's a half a percent. If there's 10,000, it's like one-tenth of a percent. I mean, that is extremely small.

And yet God said, I will spare the wickedness of a city for the sake of the righteous that are living there. That's awesome. Is that hope for our country? Are there a lot of things going on in our country that are grievous to God? But does God, does God in his judgment, does he sweep away the righteous with the

wicked? No, he doesn't.

Now think about this story. Let's don't stop. We know the history.

Did God find 10 people living in Sodom? No, there weren't 10, but it didn't end bad. Even though he did, he was not able to spare the city because there weren't even 10 people living there. He sent his angels and he got the righteous out before he judged the city.

So he took care of the righteous either way. He still was fair in his judgment. He didn't treat the righteous in the way he judged the wicked.

Only God knows how many righteous people are in the United States. There's a whole lot more to claim to be Christians than I believe really follow Christ in my personal experience. Jesus even said it himself, many, many will say unto me, Lord, Lord, and in the end he's going to say, depart from me, you who practice lawlessness, I never knew you.

So Sodom and Gomorrah were wiped away. They still don't know this day to where they are. You talk about God being able to obliterate something.

They still don't know for sure today where it is. There's another story that's similar to this. In Genesis chapter six, you remember this, that the earth became very, very filled with wickedness.

So much so it says that every thought and inclination of man's heart was continually wicked all the time. And it grieved the Lord that he had made men. I like to say the word the Septuagint used, the grief means he pondered it painfully on the inside a long time that he had made men.

And I believe like a surgeon that knows that something has to be removed in order to save the rest of the life, the Lord said, I am going to act in a way to destroy life upon the earth. But even then in his decision, when the entire earth was full of wickedness and the thoughts of men's heart were in the inclination of his heart were only evil continually. It says that there was a man, Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

And why did Noah find grace in the eyes of the Lord? Because he was a righteous man. And the Lord saw here's a righteous man. Now, did the Lord spare the earth because there was one righteous man there this time? No.

But did he destroy the man along with the earth? No. He revealed to Noah and his family what he was about to do. And he made a way of escape for Noah.

And Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their three, then their three wives, eight people at all were spared when the Lord brought judgment upon the wickedness of the earth. This is why for you and I, I would encourage you back to that scripture. We started with righteousness exalts a nation.

Sin takes away from it causes a diminishing to any people. This is why the Lord Jesus said this. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and what his righteousness.

And what happens when you seek his first, his kingdom and his righteousness, all these things shall be added, not taken away. And let me tell you, young people, I'll tell all you adults, I'll tell everyone here, you pursue sin and you will lose more in your life than you ever get. You seek the Lord and his kingdom and all these things shall be added to you.

It will go well with you. The blessing of the Lord is upon the righteous. He watches over them.

Blessed is the man who does not stand in the council of the ungodly and walk in the way of sinners or sit in the sea of the scornful. His delight is in the law of the Lord. And in his law, he meditates day and night.

That man will be like a tree planted by the streams of water that brings forth his fruit in his season and his leaf never withers. Whatever he does prospers. But that's not the way it is with the wicked.

He's like the chaff that the wind drives away. The Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. Righteousness exalts a nation.

Now, I want to put this in a very personal way. If God, because we've already read that he is, if he is willing to spare and withhold judgment for the sake of righteousness, then what if you are the righteous person in your family, at your company, in your neighborhood, and the Lord looks upon your life and sees your righteousness. You're serving him, you're honoring him, and he spares the other people around you for your sake.

Could that be what Jesus meant when he said, you are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. And in the midst of his darkness, the Lord sees the light of his people.

He sees the righteous. He sees those who serve him. He sees those.

And as a matter of fact, he wants to see them. He's looking for them. If you have your Bibles and you want to turn there, turn to the book of, back to the book of Ezekiel, where you were earlier, but this time go to chapter 22.

In Ezekiel chapter 22, God's people were in a very bad state. And these are the people who had his wall, the people who had the temple, the people who God had made covenant with, the Jewish people at that time. But they had been very unfaithful.

They continually strayed from the covenant that he made with them. They continually ignored his attempts to correct them. They were very stubborn.

And this is what the Lord says. This is what's going on in his heart. It's similar to the time when he's looking at the earth and he sees the whole earth is filled with wickedness, but now he's looking at his own people.

And what he sees in his own people is very grievous to him. And this is what's going through his mind. He says in verse 26 of Ezekiel 22, her priests have done violence to my law and that profane my holy things and have made no separation between the holy and the profane.

They've not made known the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they hide their eyes from my Sabbaths. And I am profaned by them. Profane means they make my name just common.

They take away, it's like a degrading it. They have degraded my name until it means almost nothing. And I'm afraid that that is too close of a similarity to where the lives of some Christians, that the way some people who claim to have faith live degrades the name of the Lord.

And the people looking at the lives of those who go to church and claim to have faith just think they are a bunch of hypocrites because we lose it. We run at the mouth. We get all frustrated.

And I have seen it and I'm sad to say I've seen it in this place. I've seen Christ go out the window and something upsets you, just gone. Out of the mouth comes the most un-Christlike, unkind, contradictory things.

And I don't get it. I don't get it. We're Christians.

We don't act like the world. We don't respond like the world. And when we do, we're degrading the name of God in front of those who do.

We are to be holy and blameless in the eyes of the world, in our speech, with our countenance, in our attitudes, in our actions. We are to be saints, holy ones, righteous ones. We're to be the example of what it means to have genuine faith and to love God and love each other like Christ has loved us.

But when the entire focus of the church world has been forgiveness, forgiveness, forgiveness, and it turns into, no matter what we do, isn't our God great because He still loves us? When that's all the gospel has turned into and we lose concern about, but how is our lives reflecting upon Him? Is He being honored by our lives? Do our lives confirm the beauty of the instructions in His Word? And when it just becomes, I'm going to go to heaven. I may not be perfect, but after all, who is? When we've degraded the gospel that low, the Lord's name is profaned. And what is He looking for in this situation? He's grieved.

The Lord is grieved with His own people because that's the situation it was here. And He goes on to say, the people of the land have practiced oppression and committed robbery, and they've mistreated the afflicted and needy. They've mistreated the afflicted and the needy.

Let me counsel us here at University of Farm Baptist Church. You know who that would be for us? Who would be the afflicted and the needy? That would be the people who've never been in church before, and they don't come in dressed like we think they should be. Or they haven't been raised in church, and maybe they do things and say things that they have no business saying.

We know better. That's the afflicted. That's the poor and the needy.

Didn't Jesus say it's the sick who need the doctor? You know what we want? We want God to save people, clean them up, make them perfect, and then send them to us already all fixed. And that way none of us have any issues. Nothing ever bad ever happens.

Everything is all clean and in order. You know, it's blessed are those who are kind to the needy and the afflicted. And when we have the opportunity to show the kindness and the grace of God and the goodness of God to those who don't know.

What a blessing, what a privilege it should be. That's what God's heart is. But the people of Israel, they weren't being kind to those who are afflicted and the needy.

And the sojourner didn't receive justice. And listen what the Lord did. I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before me.

In behalf of the land so that I would not have to bring it to ruin. But I found no one. You see the same principle of the Lord? He's the same yesterday and forever.

What's he saying? Just let me find one righteous person pleading for me, pleading for me to be merciful. Pleading for me to forgive, pleading for me to work instead of destroy, pleading for me for my will. Just

one.

I look for someone who's a righteous person concerned with my concerns, who loves my name, who understands what my heart. I couldn't find any. May more and more of us seek to be that kind of person for our family, for our neighborhood, for those where we work.

May we seek to be the kind of person that pleads with the Lord. Lord, you're patient. Lord, you desire men to be saved.

Lord, and may we grow up in Christ so that when something does not go well for us, someone does something that pushes our button, that we would not go into this dumb state of I don't understand what it is and lose Christianity and just act like the world. I'll teach them. What? You do what? Are you a Christian or not? How many years have you known Christ and you're going to do what? You're going to put them in their place? What are you? What have you learned? I don't get it.

It doesn't make sense to me. You bless those who curse you. You do good to those that hate you and if they're spitefully using you, you pray for them.

I do not get it. I insist that the members of this church not act like that. You don't put people in their place.

You don't go off on them. You don't react like that. Put yourself to death.

Put your anger to death. Put your frustration to death. Take it off of you.

Don't take it out on others. Be a Christian. Follow Christ.

This place should be a sanctuary of peace and love and mercy and rest. I was talking with a brother and he kind of knows this is something because it's something he can relate to. A lot of us have had to deal with a lot of us have had to go through chemo because something in our body is cancerous.

And we have a choice because sometimes we're human. We have two legs and we have an enemy and he tries to stir us up with each other. He tries to get some attitude and the more people he can get involved, oh the better it is.

He loves it if he can put us at each other's throat. It's like and it can be hidden like cancer cells eating away at the body but when cancer is discovered, what do you do? You treat it, don't you? You treat it. You treat the cancer.

You don't kill the patient. You either radiate the area. You treat the disease.

So you know what we have the opportunity to be? We can either be the cancer. We can have the attitude. We can be disgusted.

We can be frustrated. We can put people in their places. We can have the pride and the arrogance to think we we know better or we can be the chemo.

We can be the response for God to save the individual when we see a cancer. When something that's not right, when something that's harmful for his body, we can be the white blood cells to go and try to rescue that person from what's potentially harming them because you know when someone is missing it badly and they're reacting out, you know they're sick. They're sick.

They're spiritually sick and we have the opportunity to either get sick with them and be just a big problem or to respond in grace and bring healing and preserve unity and to honor the name of the Lord because that's what Jesus said. By this one thing, all men will know you're my disciples. One thing.

If you love others the way I have loved you, that's all. That's it and the man who who's doing that, it's what the bible says. The man who loves others like that, that man knows God.

So let's ask yourself this question. Ask yourself this question. Do you know scriptures or God? Do you know facts or do you know God? How do you know? What happens when something doesn't go your way? What comes out of your heart? Knowledge puffs up and puffs up is pride and pride only causes contention, strife and if strife is what comes out of you, I would say this.

You don't know love. You know facts. You know scriptures.

You know information. When patience comes out of you, when kindness comes out of you, when mercy comes out of you, you know God because love is patience. We were talking this morning.

Someone said, I just don't have patience. I need patience. I said, no, what you don't have is love because love is patient and if you're impatient with someone, you just lack love.

You just think you love because love is kind. Love does not boast. Love does not envy.

Love does not keep a record of wrongs and if that's going on in your life, you just think you have love and you don't and if you don't really love, you don't know God. Beloved, let us love one another for love is of God and everyone who loves us is born of God and knows God. He who loves not, in other words, the impatient man knoweth not God.

The man who is not kind knoweth not God. The man who keeps a record of wrong, the woman who keeps a record of wrong knoweth not God because God is love and God is kind and God is patient. This is, we are in the midst of a toxic, divisive culture and I'm afraid it's worse than COVID.

More of us have been infected and exposed to it and are carrying it, a seething anger, an irritability, a quickness to get aggressive and I want to caution you, I want to caution you, that is beware. This is not the time for that. Now is the time for us to be the salt and light of the earth, to be peacemakers, to let no unwholesome talk proceed forth from our mouth, to not be argumentative, to not be combative, to not be arrogant, to determine that we are going to love everyone like the Lord Jesus loves us and that includes anyone who disagrees with us or anyone who's promoting their thing.

Listen, we had two accounts. Was the Lord able to take care of what was going on in Sodom and Gomorrah? Yeah. Did the Lord able to take care of what was going on in the entire earth? Then we don't need to get our pants in a wad over what's going on, do we? The Bible says do not fret because of the wicked.

Don't fret over it. God knows what's going on and if he chooses to allow it, we have a role. We have a role and it's interesting.

I would have not known this thing because God is able to direct us in ways we don't even understand and today's message and what's been on my heart goes right back to something that I've been speaking about for us. If you want to turn there, turn to 1 Timothy because God doesn't change. He's the same yesterday,

today, and forever and this is what I found in 1 Timothy.

The very heart of God, our role in today's society. God is still looking for the person to stand in the gap. God is still looking for a group of people who are righteous so that for their sake, he can spare the rest of the culture that those people are living in.

Listen to this verse, 1 Timothy chapter 2. First of all then, I exhort that petitions and prayers and requests and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings, and all who are in authority so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and sincerity. Do you see what the Lord's saying? His heart hadn't changed. I want there to be a people that are praying for everyone in a position of responsibility.

I want there to be a people who lift up the president, the executive branch, the legislative branch, the judicial branch, on the federal level, on the state level, state legislatures, state courts, on the city level, city councils, municipal courts, men in position of authority, the chief of police, sergeants, lieutenants, those responsible for carrying out the law, those responsible for making law, everyone in a position of responsibility. I want a people lifting them up, lifting holy hands up in prayer so that my people can live a peaceful, quiet life. The heart of God is that, that he will spare a nation for the sake of his people that are living there.

So you know what the hope of America is? Church. We are. We're the hope of the world.

We are the salt of the earth. We are the light of the world. We are the ones who desire peace for all, even those who think we're the bigots and we're the intolerant and we're the judging.

All I desire for all of those who think that of me, I desire that they come to know the Lord. I desire that the kindness of God would lead them to repentance. I'm not their enemy.

Flesh and blood is not my enemy. I don't want to fight them and neither do I want to force my belief on them. I will stay very hopefully humbly and carefully what I believe.

Yes, if God has said it, that's what I believe. I'm not trying to be an argumentative. You know, that's just, it's just what I believe, but I'm not against you.

What if someone who lives the exact opposite of God at all? What if they're neighbor? What if they're my neighbor? What am I to do? Love them, pray for them, be kind to them, treat them, do unto them as I would have them do unto me. That's what we're called to do as believers. And so my desire for us today, this church, our family is again, I want to call you to this, to perfect unity.

I appeal to you. Is there anybody here that you're carrying some little resentment, some little attitude, some little, something that is less than the pure and perfect heart of God towards them? I'm asking you, take it out. That's, that's the log in our eye, wouldn't it be? Can you imagine the big log in the eye? Here, let me help you get your little speck out.

I'm saying, let's search out, let's get the log out of our eyes. So that our, remember like the surgeon, you know, when that, when that surgeon walks through the door like this, why is he walking through the door like this? What has he just finished doing? He's, he's finished making sure there's no contamination on his hands. I want men to lift up holy hands without their attitudes, without their prejudices, without their religious bigotry, nothing but hands that have been cleansed by the word of God, hearts that have been purified by the word of God, hands that are ready to help carefully, lovingly, tenderly, hands that will, that

seeking to only remove the problem, not the person.

That's what we need to be. I believe if we devote ourselves to that, if we, if we devote ourselves to becoming rooted and established in love, then we'll have power together with all the saints to be able to grasp how high and wide and long and deep is the love of Christ. And that's what's going to bring us to a fullness.

Because I have found and I'm still finding greater and greater joy in looking to the heavenly father when I'm seeing something that is a potential problem. I do not want to react in natural, natural fear. This is something that about me, I'll just tell you me, I'm, I'm human like you are.

But when something that I can see something that is visible unsettles me, it means that the visible has more power over me than the invisible. Now, visible things are temporal, material things here. And God is invisible.

So, I recognize something in me. If I allow something that I see to unsettle me, it's because I'm more conscious of what I can see with my natural eyes than I ain't, who I cannot see. If I had more awareness of the invisible, the visible wouldn't bother me as much.

And this is a secret we can see in our Lord Jesus. Our Lord Jesus would accept dinner invitations from people who were trying to kill him. And he would lie around with men that he knew were trying to trap him in every single word he said and eat with them.

That's pretty common. You know how he was able to do that? He was so much more aware of the presence of his father than anyone else around him. I want to live like that.

I want to know what it's like to walk like that in this life. I'm not going to get to learn that in heaven. There's not going to be any trouble there.

There's no problems in heaven. I want to learn how to walk in the Spirit of God and be led by the Spirit with God with me now and be at peace and full of his joy and at rest and quiet and tranquil in this world. Because that's a remarkable.

And I want to help us find it. I want that to be our goal together. Because I think the more of us that come into this and begin to walk in this and develop this maturing Christ in this way, that's what's going to get the world's attention.

How many of you can think right now, can you think of a person that you never see them complain? Never. They never complain. They never murmur.

Not a gas crisis. Not the news. Not the lack of traffic.

Not anything at work. Never. Never.

If we walk like this, we won't have to speak a lot. Christ will shine from our life. It will just, we'll be radiant.

We'll be radiant in that way. All right. I want that to be our goal.

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