

The Nature of God (High Quality)

by Paris Reidhead

God is not pleased when we allow sin in our lives, and it exposes us to the ravaging tax of the enemy, but He desires for us to deal with sin and seek His protection and blessing.

Duration: 37:40

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Ezekiel 33:11, Matthew 6:33, John 10:27-28, Romans 6:14, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Hebrews 12:1-2

Topics: "Character Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on Ezekiel 33:11, which emphasizes God's desire for the wicked to turn from their ways and live, rather than facing death. The sermon explores the three-fold testimony found in scripture, which reveals the nature of God, the nature of man, and the nature of sin. The preacher highlights the importance of hating evil and having a conscience that is offended by sin, as it allows for God's protection. The sermon also addresses the possibility of believers falling into sin and the idols that can lead them astray, such as the worship of Ashtaroath and Baal.

Transcript

And it is the 11th verse that shall engage us. Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel? Every scripture that is from the heart of God, aimed at the heart of men, carries with it a three-fold testimony.

First, it tells us about the nature of God. Certainly this verse does. Secondly, it tells us about the nature of man.

And thirdly, it has something to say about the nature of sin. Now, this verse is certainly doing that, as did the one last Lord's Day that engaged us from 2 Chronicles 7, 14. If my people, which are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked way, then will I hear from heaven, then will I forgive their sin, and then will I heal their land.

Now, God speaks to each generation in terms of its specific needs, but he also speaks in terms of eternal principles. Whenever your understanding of the word of God obscures the principle, as you see the particulars that are associated in the use of it, you have done damage to the scripture. This is a principle, or these are principles rather, that are eternal and unchanging.

The first thing that you see as you read this text is that there's always the possibility that people that have made a good start should fumble, should fall, should fail, and should sin. I think this is patently clear. I believe it's the reason why in Hebrews we have such a verse as, He's able to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

And again we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. God is a great economist, and he never provides what isn't needed, and he never warns when there isn't danger. And consequently he has stated in the context that if a person who is righteous fails and falls into sin, that the previous righteousness doesn't in any wise eliminate the necessity of dealing with the present sin.

And the first thing then we have to see is that God realized that you and I would not always take the provisions that he'd made, the grace that he offered, the escape that he provided, that we would be tempted and would always live in the possibility of yielding to temptation and the capability of sin. One of the neglected doctrines of the church, and the church has suffered no end because of its neglect, is that of the perseverance of the saints. I think it would do well, do you well to read this and study it, use any source you have and secure what you haven't.

In order to acquaint yourself, for instance, what John Calvin taught. Frequently we hear Calvin as though he propounded antinomianism. You know what I mean by that, I'm sure.

Anti, against, no mosque, the law, a teaching that after a person was forgiven, Christ had saved him from the necessity of keeping the law and obeying God and pleasing God, and that because he was forgiven he had a license for sin and he could do what he wanted to do. Now this is antinomianism. Historically it's been condemned as heresy through the centuries and it's been unfortunately attributed to John Calvin.

Now I'm no particular defender of Calvin. He was immortal, lived, died, and his mistakes have lived after him and his blessings have continued, but the fact still remains that this is not what he taught. But one of the doctrines which characterized his teaching was that of the perseverance of the saints.

And he stated it in this way, that God preserves the saints by causing them to persevere. And we need to understand that when the Lord Jesus said, My sheep hear my voice and no man shall pluck them out of my hand. He also said, My sheep hear my voice and they follow me and no man shall pluck them out of my hand.

And the characteristic of the sheep of the Lord is that they follow the Lord. They follow him. And so when God brings you out of death into life, he gives you a new heart and a new nature and a new spirit.

And he makes you a new creation. And the characteristic of this new heart is that you ought to please God. And it's this new nature that you hate sin.

And that this new spirit is that by his presence you're enabled to do what your new heart and your new nature dictates, namely to please God. There's provision made by the Spirit of God. We see this in Ezekiel 36 chapter.

We've dwelt on that in the past. He said, I take away the heart of stone and I'll give you a heart of flesh and I'll put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes. God has made provision for his children to please him.

He didn't only give you a desire to please you and withhold ability. If he had done that it would have been the cruelest of mockery. To have given you a new heart which says you want to please God, a new nature which caused you to hate sin, and then have not provided that which was necessary for you to fulfill.

Your desire of your new heart and your new nature would, I said, have been the cruelest of mockery. It couldn't be attributed to God. If he gives you a new heart and a new nature, then you have every reason to believe he's going to give you a new spirit.

Wherein by the presence of this new to you spirit, even the eternal God himself, you will be enabled to please God. But the fact remains that whereas the Bible makes it abundantly clear that there is victory for a child of God, there is provision, there is power for us to live a life that pleases him. That we don't always do it.

That overtaken in the fault on the one hand, led aside by desires on the other, or shackled by our ignorance, or by some other pressure from within or without, a child of God can fall into sin. Now there's no question but what this is a possibility, and furthermore there's no state of grace where it won't be a possibility. And as long as you live, as I live, we're going to be subject to this temptation and to the capability of sin.

There is no work of God in this which this book speaks, and I know of none other elsewhere, there is no work of God which will immunize you to temptation and keep you from that place where you can sin if you choose to. But by the same token the scripture says there's no temptation overtaking you, but such is common to man and he will with the temptation make a way of escape. So there's no sin that now besets you that must continue to govern you.

He has provided victory. But what this text brings us to see is that there's always the possibility of a child of God falling into sin. Now we are to realize that there's an application to the impenitent, to the world outside, and we'll make that later.

But right now I hear the voice of God as he pleads with these that are in covenant relationship with him. He pleads with Israel, he pleads with the nation, he pleads with these that are the heirs of the promise. And they've been led aside in the same way that everyone is led aside.

We've spoken to you about the three idols that beleaguered the Israel and tripped them up and caused them to come under God's justice and punishment and wrath. The worship of Ashtaroah, the lust of the flesh. For Ashtaroah was the deification of the female and the license to sex indulgence outside of the will of God.

The worship of Baal, which was to placate the evil spirit so that there could be prosperity and sufficient money to get what one wanted. It was equivalent to cheating and lying. He that would do, be dishonest in business, is actually worshipping Baal in its effect.

Whereas he may not ever go to an idol and offer incense, yet still it was to keep the law of economics and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship that was involved in Baal worship. Then the worship of Moloch was for the sake of securing position and place and power. And again it was to secure that which wasn't properly earned and fully deserved.

And so as you consider the worship of Ashtaroah, of Baal and of Moloch, these being the three primary avenues of idolatry that brought Israel under such judgment. You will recognize that this is going to be the

area of conflict in your life. And if you would take the Christians that have backslidden, and I'll use a term that's appropriate to some, but nevertheless one that God was pleased to use, and I think it would be expressive of having gone back from some state of fellowship and consciousness of his presence to a place where one is out of fellowship.

If you check into the Christians of the twentieth century that backslide or that go back from some place they've had with God, almost invariably you will find it is specifically to one of these three areas that we've touched on. The lust of the flesh and how many times Christians have been just ruined here in this area. And we must recognize that it's being a constant assault.

Our whole nation seems to be given up to idolatry in a far worse sense than Corinth or Athens that Paul condemned. For every newsstand and billboard and everything that you see or hear seems to be but the hymns that are dedicated to the worship of the modern twentieth century Ashtoreth. And this is an area that assaults the Christian.

God is just as concerned when his children read that which is forbidden and they think that which is forbidden and talk that which is forbidden by him because of his high desire for his people as he was when Israel went out of the temple of Ashtoreth which is a grove dedicated to the worship of Ashtoreth. And then we discover that the other area is that of things, the worship of Baal. Now we don't have temples set aside for Baal worship in America but nevertheless we realize that though if you read the newspapers, the magazines that things become the symbol of success.

That these are status symbols and to possess them is to prove that one's achieved and one has place and then it becomes an obsession to get certain status symbols and so we find that the whole of passion is in on this order. There are people today in this city that are madly consumed by an obsession to be in the latest passion and mood and in so doing they are bringing themselves into the place where their approval and their happiness comes not from something within and a relationship to God but from without. And my dear, whenever your happiness depends upon the applause of another or the approval of another, you've placed it in very treacherous hands because they could do your, it's too flimsy of support for your happiness to let it rest in the hands of others.

And so this is the worship of Baal and you are going to be tempted in this direction. You're going to be tempted along the way to allow yourself to become enamored enamored with the thought that perhaps if you bend here or twist there or turn in the other that something's going to happen that's going to make you a happier person. Obviously everything we do we do with some misguided idea or properly guided idea of happiness.

Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness isn't only assured us in the Declaration of Independence but it's put into us as part of the very structure of our personalities and our beings and what you do, you do essentially to be happy. You do because you think that if you take this you'll be happy or if you do that you'll be happy. Take the third and just dwell on it a moment.

You're going to be tempted to get some position. You're going to feel that if you have some honor given to you, some position afforded you that you're going to be a happier person. Oh what a delusion this is.

What a terrifying delusion this is. I saw a sign years ago and I haven't forgotten it because of the truth implicit in it. It said work hard 8 hours a day so that you can get to be boss and work 12 hours a day.

And seemingly this is about the only real effect that comes from the promotion. Greater responsibility and greater difficulty. During our recent prayer conference in White Plains one of the pastors got up and he said you know the pastors of big churches don't have any problems.

And here he was sitting in some suburban rural community with a small group of people who every one of whose home was in ten minutes of the parsonage and he was able to live there with them and happily and he just felt somehow that if he had been pastor in what he called one of the large churches I really don't think there are any in our society but if there were that he would be happier. Oh if we could understand that position is just one of the snares that's been given by the God of this world to drive us from that place that God wants us to be. And so his people if they say to your people to my people God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked but that the wicked turn and live.

Now you say what does this have to do with me wicked. I'm not among the wicked. My dear when regardless of what state of grace you may be and how many years you've been forgiven when in your mind and motive you have the intention to defraud God of the right that he has in your life this intention causes you in that state to be wicked.

Do you see? Regardless of whether your past sins are under the blood wickedness is not a state here of this not a state of relationship it's a state of attitude. The wicked is that attitude the wicked attitude is the one that wants to get something out of the will of God to experience something out of the will of God to be something out of the will of God and in this it becomes wicked. And we've had a tendency you know as Christians to think of the wicked as being outside the church doors and they are but I'm trying to press upon your heart today that the God is speaking to a people in covenant relationship with him and he is saying it's the wicked.

Now when you and I find ourselves being drawn by gravitational pull within or from pressure without towards God which God held to be worthy of the direst judgment do not think that because of the passing of the centuries God's attitude has changed. If for instance you want an experience outside of the will of God do not think for a moment that because your name is on the church roll and you're a professing Christian that it's less wicked for you than it would have been for someone that would have been under the sentence of death because of it. Never.

It's equally heinous in its nature and it's this nature that we've got to see and recognize and understand. Now if this is the case and we see this and recognize this as a valid principle of the truth and the work of God then we're going to know that it is God's intention and God's purpose for his people to deal with that which he condemns the same way that he expects his people to be faithful in dealing with the sins of the unsaved out in the world. This is what you must see if you're to see the message that God has given me today.

When you allow or I allow in our lives something that breathes him whose name is holy it's no less wicked because we are called by his name. It's no less wicked. It's no less wicked for the child of God for instance to have bitterness and strife to have anger and wrath and malice than it is for the demons to have bitterness and strife and anger and wrath and malice.

Anger and wrath and malice has not been mitigated or ameliorated or somehow made less noxious because it occurs in my heart than it does in the heart of a demon. When it occurs in my heart it is identically the same thing as the one that occurs in the heart of a demon of the pit. You see when a lie occurs in the heart of a professing Christian it is one less disastrous or evil in its effect than when it

occurred in the heart of Satan who is the father of lies.

And this is what God wants us to see. We must call things by their name and deal with them as they are. Now when this happens the fear of God the proper wholesome fear of God develops and a right regard for the way in which our lives are to be related to him develops.

If you are prepared to say that when sin occurs in my heart it is equally heinous as when it occurs in the heart of anyone anywhere there will not be a tendency to excuse it there will not be a tendency to pass by it and there will be the proper means of dealing with it and God then can bless. Now notice what he said. As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

You say, but I'm a Christian and you're talking primarily to Christians. What do you mean about death? Do you remember what Paul said to the church at Corinth? They had abused that holy institution of our Lord's appointing, the communion table and they came drinking, eating, and gluttony and when he wrote of it he said this For which cause many are sick and some sleep. Now this has been interpreted by commentators for centuries to mean that God realizing the incorrigibility of even his children that they were not prepared to deal with it was simply prepared to allow sickness to come because they'd given place to the devil and it had come and some of them had died because of it.

As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Do you actually realize, dear child of God, that if you allow unconfessed sin in your life that you have made it impossible for God to protect you? Do you realize this? That there's a sense about the Christians the angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him.

Them that fear him. And this means that because we fear him we hate sin and hate all kinds of sin and when it occurs we deal with the thought as though it were the finished deed and this brokenness and this confession, this attitude in our heart toward sin erects around us a wall. But that when we allow sin in our life we have tied God's hands and make it impossible for him to protect us because he's got a conflict going on.

He's got a conflict between the God of this world, Satan and when you allow in your life the thing that God casts Satan out of heaven for and sends demons to hell for and sinners to hell for when you allow in your heart dishonesty, cruelty, lust, selfishness whatever it is then there's an argument going on in the courts of heaven and Satan is coming and saying now look you can't protect him, you can't protect her because this person has done the same thing I did and you cast me out of heaven for it and you've bound us in chains for it and you're sending these to hell for it and you can't protect him as long as that attitude continues. This exposes the body, this exposes the mind this exposes the home and the family this exposes everything to the ravaging tax of this enemy. As I live, sayeth the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

God is not pleased when we allow ourselves to have cherish an attitude which exposes us to what the enemy can do to us. God has no pleasure in this chastisement he has no pleasure in this grief he has no pleasure in what results from it. God does not want to see his children bruised he doesn't want to see us hurt there's a law however, an unalterable, unchangeable law that when a person who names the name of Christ a person who's been born of God God allows him to go unjudged and unforsaken and unconfessed and uncleansed he has absolutely opened the doors of his life to everything that the enemy can do.

And I believe it's imperative that we should realize that this conflict is going on. It's not just a matter of the disease germs in the air it's not just a matter of cars going down 43rd street that could jump the curb and go into a saloon and offend someone against the bar as happened in this tragedy just last Saturday or Friday. This isn't the only thing that can happen we are in conflict with organized conspiracy against the children of God governed by an intelligent being, Satan with a host of evil spirits that are at his bidding and they're constantly in conflict with the children of God going about as a roaring lion seeking whom they may devour.

And when you allow in your heart and life sin you have absolutely tied the hands of God from protecting you. The angel of the Lord in Canberra did not fear him. Let me repeat it.

And the fear of the Lord is to hate evil. Now if you want the protection of God if you want the encircling wall of Jehovah Nissi if you want God to be on your side then it's absolutely imperative that you have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men. Otherwise the gate is left open the door is off the hinges it's like Jerusalem with the gates burned anybody can come in any place they wish.

Now this is why God says he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked it isn't something that he himself is going to impose though he must if it's undealt with. But it is the natural consequence of a morally responsible being violating moral principles that which ties the hands of God from affording the protection that he's prepared and willing to give to his own. And so if it was true that day that some, many were sick and some slept early demise, early death because of the sin at the Lord's table then you can understand what this means.

I have no pleasure in the early death of the wicked. Now let it be understood by us that there's another application to the unsaved. But I want you to see another aspect of death.

If life is a person then to live is to have fellowship with this living person. We read the scripture says he that hath the son of life and then it tells us because life is in the son. And if we have walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship one with another.

I can't conceive of anything more utterly distasteful and unpleasant, unhappy and difficult than the Christian life without personal conscious fellowship with God. And I have known in times in the past when this fellowship was broken and oh what a cross, what a thing it is and if one is sensitive to fellowship with him they're aware of when it's broken and consequently we ought to have the greatest concern. This ought to be its own real incentive for you to keep a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men so that you can ensure continued fellowship with God.

Doesn't make any difficult, any difference how difficult the situation may be. Doesn't make any difficult, difference how many problems you may have. As long as he's with you in the furnace the fire isn't hot.

But oh my friend if you're standing on ground in the sunshine with a cool breeze off the mountain and he isn't there it is a furnace. If you've ever known fellowship with him. And this is living death.

To have known fellowship with God and to have breathed the Spirit and had that fellowship broken. And so it ought to be that there's this great sensitivity on your part to that continued conscience, constant fellowship with him. And this ought to be its own reason that the moment that you grieve him you ask your heart, Lord what is it? I sense that you're grieved.

I sense that this doesn't please you. What is it? And deal with it on the spot because he'll tell you on the spot. And if you've been in fellowship with him you'll know when it's broken.

And if you know when it's broken you're nearer than you'll ever be again to fixing it right there. This is living death. Let me see something else with you in it.

I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways for why will you die? You'll notice that there's a quality of freedom here. Almighty God who says as I live, speaking of his eternity and with his eternity is all of his other attributes his omniscience, his omnipresence, his infinite power, his omnipotence his infinite wisdom, his omniscience everything that God is is expressed in this word as I live.

And the eternal God is speaking to men and he is saying turn ye, turn ye for why will you die? Do I speak to someone that knew better days with the Lord than today? If this isn't the happiest day in your Christian life you've ever had if you haven't had sweeter fellowship already as you go to work in the morning than you've ever had before if there hasn't been a sense of joy that this is another day that you can walk in closer to him than yesterday well, put it this way dear friend if you ever were here in your relationship with God in your love for God, in your hunger for God in your burden for soul, you were here and now you're here do you know what's happened?

You've backslidden you've gone back from here to here however imperceptible it might be to your friend God knows and you know that you're not where you once were now you ought to have been here yesterday and here today and here tomorrow in your relationship it ought to be an enlarging, expanding, enriching relationship with him if it isn't, something's happened you've gone back and if you've gone back from here to here it's not going to be hard for you to go back from here to here and from here to here and from here to here and it's going to be a continual retrogression until you deal with it now what are you waiting for to deal with? what are you waiting to have happen? some people are praying for revival you know what they mean by revival? an emotional atmosphere that compels them to do

the thing that they've been unwilling to do when they didn't have an emotional atmosphere but they knew they should have done all the time but this isn't revival in my sense because this would be a compulsive thing this would be coercive whenever you do something because you have to do it and the emotional atmosphere or some other psychological pressure makes you do it then in that sense it's not a moral action a moral action has to be a free action if you're forced to do it there's no benefit or virtue in your doing it this is why I believe so firmly in a government of freedom of the individual because only where there is the freedom of life can there be the development of virtue and when a person is compelled to carry chains then his abstinence from certain things is not proof of virtue

but simply proof of a good locksmith and blacksmith and so it is that if God makes you there's no benefit in what you've done and so here Almighty God the one who has the power to point a finger and send constellations into the sky burning in their face and following their orbits Almighty God stands and holds out his hand to omnipotent man in his own realm and sphere and says, as I live, says the Lord I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked but that the wicked turn and live turn ye, turn ye for why will you die God gives the quality of freedom to your action he allows you to face the issues and the consequences and dear child of God if you've been born of him past and after life and have not had some injury to brain tissue or some damage to your nervous system so that you've lost

contact with reality if you understand words that are being spoken today then you have moral responsibility to act upon those words to act upon that truth and I believe that there will be for you no greater incentive or moral pressure than your now feeling that you ought to the sense of oughtness is the voice of God calling to action I ought to get this right I ought to settle this I ought to get this clear I ought to get this clean I ought to break I ought to bend and that sense of oughtness is the voice of God to your heart telling you the course that you should take and I do not believe there will ever be from God more moral emotional pressure than your feeling when you are aware of what you ought to do now when you do what you ought to do then your move is to allow God to move toward

you and he could meet you but if you're waiting for a moral quality of atmosphere in a meeting sometime when you're going to be forced to do the thing you've known for a time you ought to have done then be sure of this that what you do because you're forced has no moral virtue, no moral quality to it at all it's what you do because you know you ought to do it you've heard him say turn ye turn ye and you have the complete power not to turn but you choose to turn you choose to bend you choose to break you choose to bow this is moral this has spiritual quality to it this releases God to meet you now hear it again as I live, saith the Lord I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked I speak to the unsaved you that have never been born of God this is God's word he doesn't want you to perish

God's not willing that any should perish I speak to the Christian who forfeits so much as I live, saith the Lord I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked but that the wicked turn from his way and live turn ye turn ye or why will ye die oh Christian friend, why will you go in living death without the joy of the Lord without the blessing of his presence without release without him and his fullness why will you go today's the day, now's the time and God's appealing to you to do what you ought to do just because you ought to do it and he leaves you free and I must leave you free let us pray our father to the ones who turn, thou dost offer forgiveness to the ones who turn thou dost offer pardon to the sinners that come with their mountains their enormous world of guilt thou dost offer

cleansing and eternal life to the child of God who's allowed that to come into his life which grieves thee thou dost offer forgiveness and pardon if we're but willing to come as thou hast bid us taking sides with thee against ourselves acknowledging, confessing our sin then we can know life which is the consciousness of thy presence and the joy of thy fellowship can know life father we pray today for those that had a name to live known better days and in some sense have backslidden today gone back from where they were and they've not called it by the name wickedness and seen how thou didst see it oh that somehow the Holy Ghost has shown it this morning guide us now as we close dear friends to enforce moral action and not to give opportunity for moral action is derelict I'm going to ask

this of you today any of you that feel that God has said now I want you to act on what you've heard be wise remain seated where you are while others have gone the choir's left just remain seated and then after the others have gone I'll see you we'll go together into the room to my right and we can have a time of prayer together we're going to stand have the benediction in just a moment and then if you would like to remain you stay remain seated and quietly in prayer and we will have a time of prayer after the choir is retired shall we stand now Father we thank and praise thee for thy love thou hast given thyself and thou hast asked for brokenness and honesty and turning and in reward thou hast given thyself the fullness of thyself we pray today that there may be hearts that are stirred by

thy spirit with such an intense deep desire for better days days they've known in the past that they can't leave they'll just have to remain seated and then can meet thee as we seek thee together now may thy

grace and mercy and peace be and abide upon us now and until Jesus comes again Amen

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