

The Greatness of God (Isaiah 6) - Part 2

by Paul Washer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility, obedience, and serving God, and how these qualities are demonstrated by the seraphim and Jesus Christ.

Duration: 1:24:02

Scripture: Isaiah 6:2, Luke 5:8

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "God's Sovereignty"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in the preaching of the gospel. He acknowledges that preaching alone cannot bring about salvation without the Holy Spirit's intervention. However, God has promised to bless the right kind of preaching and use it as a means of salvation. The preacher also highlights two reasons why people often feel empty: their focus on themselves and their pursuit of their own will. He encourages listeners to shift their focus to the infinite glories of God and to surrender their will to God's, which will ultimately bring fulfillment.

Transcript

...passage in the scriptures where a reference to the seraphim is found. Now the word seraphim literally means the burning ones. The burning ones.

Now Stanley Horton says this, and I think it's absolutely wonderful, their purity was indicated as they reflected the dazzling brilliance of the glory of God to such a high degree that they seemed to be on fire. Now, there's something about this statement that you must, when you hear it, you must go back and understand a few things that are so very important. Now just listen to this one part.

Their purity was indicated as they reflected the dazzling brilliance of the glory of God. Now notice this, they are the burning ones, but it is not a fire that flows from them. They are not the source of this light, they are not the source of the heat, they are not the source of the burning.

They only seem to be burning in that they are mirror reflections of the glory and the holiness of God. Now just imagine this, they are burning with holiness, but it is only a derived holiness, or a dimly reflected holiness. If these seraphim are so splendid in holiness that they literally seem to be on fire, you must understand that they in themselves are still just a dim reflection of the true holiness of God.

If you cannot behold them, and you cannot, then you most certainly cannot behold Him. And if they are holy, and their holiness and purity is such that it's almost terrifying, then realize that their holiness and their glory is only a dim reflection of the One seated upon the throne. And the One seated upon the throne is the One who became incarnate and died on Calvary for you.

Now, I want you to think about something before we start talking about the response or the reaction of these seraphim. I want you to think about this. It's my opinion from Scripture that they are the greatest of all created beings.

The absolute greatest. And other ancient theologians would agree with me on this. And how do we know that they are the greatest and the most holy? Because of their proximity to the throne of God.

There is no creature, it seems, closer in this vision to the throne of God than these seraphim. And so when we come to understand their reaction of covering their faces and covering their feet, we must understand then something of the splendor, the majesty, and the power of the One seated upon the throne. And then we look at these seraphim and we can gain a lot of lessons from them.

About the proper way to present ourselves in the throne room of God. About, again, recognizing that we are children, but not being so nonchalant and being very careful how you use the name Jesus. Now, Charles Spurgeon says something that I just love.

And I want to read it to you. He said, you asked me to tell you something about these seraphim. How can I? They've covered their faces and covered their feet.

He said, since nothing is to be seen, what can I tell you? Neither would it be right for us to speak concerning them, for manifestly it is their desire to be hidden. They are the ones that have covered their faces. They are the ones that are covering their feet.

For their own purpose, for their own reason. Who will violate their wish to be concealed? They cover their faces, they cover their feet, and therein they did as good as say to us, look not on us, but look on Him who sits upon the throne, whose attendance we are. Now notice their proper attitude.

Don't look at us! It's wrong to look at us in the presence of one who is seated upon the throne. If you have any reason at all in you, turn your eyes away from our dimly reflected glory, and turn your eyes upon the one seated upon the throne. There is a sense in which all men should see our good works and glorify the Father who is in heaven.

Jesus teaches us that in the Sermon on the Mount. There is another sense in which our attitude ought to be, not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thee be the glory. We minister before Him, but we are nothing to look at.

Not in His presence. Not in His presence. Now let me just stop here for a moment, because there's a lot of youngsters in the crowd.

There is a sense, I suppose, in which we could say a certain individual was a great man of God. That statement, though, should always be in past tense. We should always wait until they die.

Because you don't know what's going to happen to them before they die. They might show themselves as unconverted. The man who wrote, I believe, In His Steps, which is a wonderful book, returned to the world

after he wrote it.

So there's another sense in which we should never say, he was a great man of God, or he is a great man of God, or she was a great woman of God, or she is a great woman of God. There are no great men or women of God. There are only pitiful, weak, sinful people who have a great and a merciful God.

And that's the way we should always look at it. I'm always fond of saying, if someone comes up to me and says, boy, that was an insider, that was a wonderful sermon, I just always say, rocks and donkeys, rocks and donkeys. God still speaks through rocks and donkeys.

Because that's the way it is. Now, for some of you young people, you need to realize that you need to set your sights on sanctification. You need to seek to be holy, as He is holy.

But also realize this, so many young people get it into their mind when they see someone preaching, a pastor or someone preaching in a conference, they think to themselves, yep, that guy, he's reached some level of spirituality. And because of his spirituality, God is using him. That is not true.

I'm sorry, it is simply not true. Do I hope in my own life to be sincere in my following after the holiness of God? Yes. Do I desire to pray as I ought and read the Word as I ought? Absolutely.

Do I desire to love as I ought? Yes. Am I broken over my failure? Yes, and hopefully more as I grow. But have I, or this pastor, or even men such as John Piper and John MacArthur and the Charles Spurgeons, have they reached such a level that, well now God is able to really kick it in force and use them? Absolutely not.

Men are always struggling men. But God is good. As a matter of fact, I always say salvation is the only thing I ever qualified for.

After reading 1 Corinthians chapter 1, you'd come to understand. You see someone being used of God, you'd say, well that's rather an ignoble man because that's the only type of men God uses. So we learn a lot from these attendants that don't look at us.

As a matter of fact, young man, one day when you preach and God moves in a congregation, let's say that many people are converted on that day. If you have a proper attitude about it, you will be as Peter was in that boat. He saw the miraculous.

He was privy to see Christ bring in a great catch, a miraculous catch. He falls down and he says, depart from me, I'm a sinful man. And what he's almost saying is, this isn't right.

I shouldn't be here. I shouldn't be the one who saw this. Someone else should have seen this, but not me.

I'm not worthy. And when you preach and God begins to move, you want to go hide somewhere afterwards. You want to crawl up in a fetal position in a corner and say, away from me, Lord.

You should not have used me to do this. It's a proper understanding of the Lord and who you are. That you will always and forever be only one thing, a recipient of grace.

And you should be forever pointing unto Him. But then again, there's great power in that. If the devil were to walk in here right now, I mean just walk in where everyone could see him.

And he were to begin to accuse me. He could falsely accuse me, but he could also point out many failures in my life. He could.

Now where would be my defense? I would have to say, devil, many of the things you've said are true, but since you're a non-omniscient, you don't even know the half of it. So where is my defense? Where is my power to stand? It is on this. It has never been about me.

It has never been about my virtue. It has never been about my merit. I stand upon the virtue and the merit of Jesus Christ, my elder brother.

It has never been about my power. It has never been about anything. It has all been about His perfect work.

And if you do not leave, I will call Him. And with Him you do not want to deal. And you know that very well.

So see, there's great strength in the midst of our frailty, if it is all of grace. And if it is all based upon the perfect, finished work of Jesus Christ our Lord. Now you say for a moment, but brother Paul, if it's that way, then people will just sin.

They'll just take salvation nonchalantly and they won't care about holiness. If it's that way, they'll say, let us sin that grace may abound. No, unconverted church members will say that.

But true Christians, when they hear that it is all of grace, they go, then I want to follow Him. Then I want to be more like Him. Then I want to please Him.

Now, they stood above Him. And for some translators, this poses a problem. I mean, here is God in the throne room, and the seraphim are above Him.

Now another possible translation is this, that the seraphim, as Dalich says in his Old Testament commentary, he writes, the seraphim should not indeed tower above the head of Him that sat upon the throne, but they hovered above the robe belonging to Him, of which the hall was filled. So it's also another possible translation, that what it's saying here is not that they stood above Him, but they stood above it. Now, but I want us to look at two different things here.

First of all, there is a possibility that it is saying that they stood above it. They hovered above the throne, and not above the head of the Son of God seated upon the throne. That is a possibility.

But it's an unnecessary concern of ours. Why? Remember what I said. His throne is lofty and high, above all competition.

You see, these little kings, and these little princes of our world, they made rules like, never turn your back on a king. Death penalty, if you did that. You never stand higher than the king, and that's really a problem if you have a real short king.

You never set anything above the king. In some countries, as of our own, we never bow our flag lower than anybody else's flag. But when you know who you are, when you know there's no competitor, when you are completely secure in your settled sovereignty, it doesn't matter.

Not at all. And I think that's a more appropriate truth. Who cares if the seraphim are hovering above Him? They hover above Him, covering their faces and their feet.

They know. And more importantly, He knows. There are no competitors.

And in the same way, the kings of this earth can come together and build another tower of Babel. They can set their thrones as high as they want to set them, and the Son of God will strike them down. He has no competitors.

Now, we go on. It says they have six wings. Six wings.

And I want us to learn a great deal from this. Rawlison writes this. The general idea of six wings was probably rapid flight, the carrying out of God's request with speed and swiftly.

But in the Divine Presence, now listen to this, it's very important, the wings were applied to a different use. One pair veiled the seraph's head from the intolerable effulgence of Divine Glory. Another concealed the feet, soiled with various ministrations, and unmet for the all-pure Presence.

And a third pair alone sustained the seraph in mid-air as he hovered in readiness to depart on any errand on which Jehovah might send him. Now, the six wings normally represent swiftness and flight of service. I mean, God merely speaks it, and they're going to do it.

Which is the way all of us should be. Ready. Attendance of the throne of God.

We are attendants, we are servants, and we are servants above all things to God more than men. And that is very important when you are in a ministry. Because if you begin to do primarily service to men, then you become pragmatic and no longer biblical.

And you begin to do things to please men, supposedly help men, you become humanistic, and eventually no longer biblical, no longer bringing glory to God, and no longer helping men. You don't do things because they work. You don't do things because they supposedly help or meet the felt needs of men.

You do things primarily because God commanded them. Well, if we preach this way, no one will come. Well, then they don't come.

Well, if we believe these things, people will become angry. Then let them be angry. If we don't have certain things in our church, then people won't come.

Is what you're telling me? You've got to offer them something other than Jesus so that they'll come? Well, if you have to offer them something other than Jesus so that they'll come, you'll have to keep offering them something other than Jesus so that they stay. Because when the next big circus for Jesus or Six Flags Over Jesus arrives in town with the big show, they're all going to leave your church anyways. They are attending Him with six wings.

Ready at any moment. And never forget this. Obedience delayed is disobedience.

They are moving because it is their joy to do His will. It is their food. It is not just a duty.

Because when you see who He is, when you catch more and more of who He really is, then all duty is transformed into privilege. It is a privilege that I can even know something of Him. It is a privilege that I'm brought into His counsel.

It is a privilege that I'm brought into His service. This is not a duty. It is a privilege.

It's not just something demanded. It is something given. It is an honor to do His will.

To be a servant of the Most High. Now something you need to understand about the Incarnation that's very, very important, that a lot of people misunderstand. They will say, well, Jesus came not to be served, but to serve.

And He was a servant of men. There is a sense in which that is very, very true. But what you need to understand something, is He was primarily, primarily, and especially from the Old Testament prophecies, He was primarily the servant of Yahweh.

And not primarily the servant of men. He took on flesh to serve the Lord. As a matter of fact, the Jehovah's Witnesses, I prefer to call them the Jehovah-less Witnesses, the Jehovah's Witnesses, they claim to be God's Witness.

I want to tell you something, God's only had one Witness. And it's His Son. Only one perfect Witness.

We witness of Him, but as John Flavel used to say, I write as one who writes by moonlight. And that is, I do not see clearly. But He's had one Witness, one final Word.

And it's His Son, Jesus Christ. And if we want people to know God, we direct them to Christ. But what I want you to see, is that He was primarily the servant of God.

Now, it's not in our text or anything, but let's just rip over there real quick to Philippians. I want to show you something. Philippians chapter 2, verse 5. Have this attitude in yourselves, which is also in Christ Jesus, who although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men.

Now, taking the form of a bondservant, the Old Testament idea of the Messiah coming, is not this low office as God's slave, but is this high office of the servant of the Lord, who comes to do the will of the Lord as a man, to fight the battles of the Lord, and to triumph over all things. Now, He humbled Himself and became a man. And He did serve the Lord, in the sense of the doing of His Father's will.

But it wasn't in a slavish, lowly servant manner. He was primarily the great, and much talked about in the Old Testament, servant of Yahweh, who comes to do His will. Now, notice something that's very, very important here.

It says in verse 8, being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient. Now, just listen. He humbled Himself by becoming obedient.

Do you know what that is? That's proof of His deity. That right there alone, by itself, is proof that Jesus Christ, the Carpenter of Nazareth, was God in the flesh. You say, how does that prove anything? Is it an act of humiliation on the part of an angel to obey God? No.

It's privilege. Does a man have to humble himself to obey God? No. It's privilege.

But when God takes on flesh, and makes Himself subject to His own will, that is an act of humiliation. That is an act of humbling. Also, He became obedient to the point of death.

Men are not obedient to the point of death. Men are supposed to die. They're condemned to death.

It's not an act of obedience. Another proof of His deity, He died through obedience, by obedience, for obedience, in obedience. There is another sense in which, do you remember that in the Old Testament there was a slave? It's the year of Jubilee, or whatever, or He has served His years.

But as He's been working as a slave, He has married, and He has children. Now if He set out free as a slave, He leaves behind His wife and His children. Or, what can He do? He can go to His Lord, His Master.

He can say, I love you. I love my wife. And I love my children.

I choose to remain a servant. And there He is taken over to a threshold or a door post. He stands against it.

And an instrument is used to pierce His ear. And He makes Himself a servant, forever. The old Puritans said this of the Son of God.

I love my wife. I love these children that You have given Me, Father. I will make Myself a servant to redeem them and to bring them to Me.

And then He lives out His life to do the will of God. His food was to do the will of God. The food of Heaven is not manna.

It's the will of God and the doing of the will of God. Why are Christians in America, even Christians, real Christians, not just the fake ones. The Christians in America, we are the fullest, most protected, have more stuff, more Bibles, more theology books, more everything than any Christian ever in the history of the world.

And yet you go into a Christian bookstore and almost all the books are written about how empty we are. Why are we empty? For the same reason these seraphim are not empty. For the same reason that Jesus Christ, though persecuted, hungry, tired, and in anguish, was never empty.

He said, because I have food to eat that you know not of. My food is to do the will, the One who sent Me. Why are we oftentimes so empty? Two reasons.

Well, now let me put it this way. We are bored, for one reason. Our eyes are focused on us.

To be honest with you, we ain't a whole lot to look at. Instead of focusing upon the infinite glories of God and being mesmerized by His beauty and power. And then we are empty because we are doing our own will.

We think we will be happy if we do our own will. If we chase the American dream If we get the right career. If we find security and have good insurance and all these other things.

We think that that will fill us. Once I get all this done, once I get my college behind me, once I get my career established, once I get married, once I get the kids out of the house, once I get this. No.

Once you give yourself holistically to the will of God. Once you use all six wings to fly. Every part of you.

To fly. That was an old word that's still very, very proper. A lot of times when we think of flying, it's just, well, we are going to get an airplane or a bird that flies.

But the word to fly also indicates just a rapid movement. We need to fly to the will of God. Fly to Him.

Fly to obedience. And that's what we can see here with these angels. And more so, this is what we can see with Christ.

And that is one of the reasons in our lives that we are not as full as we ought to be. You see, it all begins again in the mind. When you believe lies about reality.

When you believe that the world is a certain way. When you believe that you need certain things in order to be happy. Are there certain things that can really fill you? But all these certain things are defined by the world, designed by the prince of the power of the air, and not according to the will of God.

You have bought in to a bill of false goods. A false bill of goods. And it will not fill you.

That's why Romans 12, verse 2, is telling us we must constantly renew our minds. Because if you're not constantly renewing your mind in what is really true, what reality is all about, and what God's will is, you will get distracted. And when you become distracted, you will get deceived.

And when you're deceived, you will be empty. And there will be no meaning to your life. That is if you're a Christian.

Because if you're not a Christian, you'll be able to go out there in the world and enjoy it. Until you die. I forget what Puritan it was, but they definitely don't talk like this anymore.

This is what he said. The ungodly prosper in this age in the same way that the farmer will fatten up his cows before slaughter. So God will prosper the wicked until the day of destruction to bring their downfall and make it that much harder.

I know that's not really contemporary Christian thought. But it's true. But I want to point out a few things also here.

That they cover their faces always in most cultures. That's an idea of honor. It can also be an idea of shame.

That I have nothing to show you in light of this One before whom I fly. There's nothing in my face. Hiding His face in honor.

Hiding His face. Realizing and demonstrating. Don't look at me.

Look at Him. There is a real sense as individuals we need to mimic that. Don't look at me.

Look at Him. As a church, collectively, we need to mimic that. It's not about us.

It's about Him. We're pointing men to Him. Another thing, they cover their feet.

Very, very important. R.C. Sproul points out that feet have always been associated with clay and creaturehood. The fact that what they're doing is that they're acknowledging as splendid and as blazing and as powerful as they are that they are not God.

They are a creature. Now there's something else that I want to point out that I think is very important. They have six wings to fly.

Six wings to move in service to God. But there are times when at least two-thirds of those wings are retracted for other purposes. The purposes of being in the presence of God and worshipping.

Now, the greatest enemy to worship is the ministry. Martha, Martha. We have such a tendency to find our worth in doing because our minds are so messed up in this area.

Our worth in doing. We think that busyness, that activity, that success, that going out there and accomplishing something is what we ought to be doing always. Well, it ought to be what we're doing sometimes.

But it is very important to take the effort that we would use in ministry, the effort that we would use in doing the will of God in service, retract those wings, stop and worship and use that effort to glorify and honor God in private worship. Most of you, some of you young guys are thinking about going into ministry. Young girls are thinking about going into ministry.

Some of you older people are already in the ministry. You're doing things in your church. Maybe you're in full-time ministry.

You need to retract those wings. You need to stop doing so much and just sit down and worship. You see, one of the most important things you can ever come to understand is this, God does not need you.

I know it's almost impossible to believe, but He does not need you. As a matter of fact, if you really want to get biblical about this, you're like a handicap. He actually calls you into ministry to make the task harder so that He gets more glory when He accomplishes it.

He does not need you, but He has called you to be obedient. And so with all your fluttering around, retract those wings and lay before Him in worship. It is not doing stuff.

It is doing the will of God. Now, let me share with you something that will help you later on. You hear so many people, so many ministers and pastors will say things like, well, you know, I just don't have time to worship.

I just don't have time to study. There's just so many needs. Now, how wrong is that? First of all, you're going to go out there and meet needs.

In whose strength are you going to do it? You're cutting yourself off from life, from the fountain of life and power and wisdom and everything else to go out and minister to people with an empty bucket. That isn't going to help. I don't have time.

I saw this cartoon the other day, not a cartoon, but I guess just a drawing in the newspaper. And it had this guy, and he was at the doctor, and the doctor told him, you need to work out. And he started working out.

And he said, I don't have time to work out. And the doctor said, well, do you have time to die? Because if you don't work out, that's exactly what's going to happen. I don't have time to worship.

I don't have time to sit. Oh really? Christ does. He's seated upon a throne.

He's absolutely in control. He sustains everything that is with a word. Not like the mythological Atlas who's just straining under the weight of the world.

Christ holds up an infinite number of worlds just with a word. Effortlessly. So you have time to obey God's will.

Men who do not have time to worship, men who do not have time to do the little things in Christianity are building their own kingdom rather than doing the will of God. I'll give you another example. I have offered my wife on the altar of ministry, I'll hear people say.

I don't have time for my family because I've just given my things to God. You are a fool. Just an absolute fool.

Because you know what you're saying. You're contradicting Romans chapter 12 verse 2 that says the will of God is perfect. What you're saying is this.

The will of God is not perfect and therefore I have to disobey God's will with regard to my wife and family in order to fulfill God's will with regard to the ministry. You are accusing God with statements like that. You have time to do everything He's commanded you to do.

But you don't have time to do everything He's commanded you to do and everything you want to do necessarily. And remember, you do not have to live up to the expectations of other men whose expectations are usually carnal, worldly, sensual and wrong. But you are required to do the will of God.

One of the greatest things I learned actually from John Wesley. Every time someone asked me to preach, I'd say yes. That's why they don't even let me schedule my own schedule anymore.

But John Wesley said this. Every time someone asked him to preach, he would say yes because he believed it was God's will for him to go every time someone asked him to preach. And then one day, two people asked him to preach in two different places at the same time and he figured out at least one of them had to be out of God's will so it's not God's will to preach every time someone asks you to.

Because there is times to worship and to just be with Him. This world does not need a lot of busy Christians who have no understanding of their God and no other worldliness about them. Now what do I mean by that? The Christian, in his life, there ought to be something of the supernatural.

There ought to be an other worldliness to his life. You know, you hear the statement that was actually, I think, the devil invented this one. You're so heavenly minded, you're no earthly good.

That's a lie. The most heavenly minded people that have ever walked this planet have done more good for the earth than all the earthly minded people put together. George Muller, who I have read extensively, his diary, and think, one of the most heavenly minded men on the face of the earth and cared for 10,000 orphans.

Frank Lombok, his sole goal in life, if you ever get a chance to find his diary, it's not published anymore, you have to find it in an old used bookstore. Frank Lombok had one desire, this was his goal, to spend one entire day without one thought except that of Christ. He said he never achieved it, but that was his goal, and he taught all the islands of the Philippines to read.

You go to the Philippines right now, even the kids still know about Frank Lombok. He taught them to read so that they could read the Bible. He was heavenly minded, and he was earthly good.

The problem is, we're so earthly minded, we're no heavenly good. And we run around doing all sorts of things. Remember this, it's what I tell young preachers, but it also applies to every believer.

We are in a sense, we are not movers and shakers, we are not marketing agents for the Gospel. We are prophets, and we are people who stand out there just like Ezekiel in that valley of dead bones, and we must speak as prophets and nothing is going to happen unless the supernatural wind of the Holy Spirit blows upon those bones and raises them from the dead. There is that element about our life.

I have met many different men down through my years of preaching. Men of different sorts of theology. Men who were just wonderful, powerful preachers, sovereign grace men.

Other men, Wesleyan holiness like Leonard Ravenhill and others. And then some things they were not in common, but in one thing, when you talk to them, there was something in their eye. There was something in their heart like they had been somewhere you'd never been.

There was an otherworldliness about them. This stuff was real. And it was a little spooky.

But you knew that you were talking to someone who knew the one he was talking about. And so these great angelic creatures are there. They're there.

And they worship. Isn't it amazing that God would take the most powerful creatures? That I suppose these guys could preach the gospel a lot better than you or I. I mean, they'd probably have a much more effective ministry on this earth than we would. I mean, a seraphim come down from heaven, start preaching the gospel.

I mean, it's going to make CNN. But notice he uses the most powerful creatures, most intelligent creatures, the most holy creatures, just for him. Just for worship.

I'll tell you something. And here's another little philosophical ditty that will help you. Especially if your ministry isn't gigantic.

Why would God make the most beautiful rose he has ever made and plant it in the middle of a forest through which no man or angel ever walked? How could God get glory out of the most beautiful thing he ever made if no one else saw it? Well, in this way. He sees it. He sees it every day.

And he glories in what he's made. I would submit to you that we are going to be very surprised when we get to heaven. Some of the most precious ministers and Christians that were truly in the counsel of God and were a pleasure to him.

No one knew. No one knew. He kept them for himself.

Women that no one knows that live for hours a day like Anna in the temple in the presence of God praying and interceding. Duncan Campbell in the great revival there in the New Hebrides. He attributes to the praying of two elderly women.

So don't you concern yourself about being in the limelight. Don't you concern yourself with doing great things. Concern yourself with being conformed to the image of Christ and dwelling in His presence and having His favor upon you.

And to the wind with everything else. Choose the best things. The most excellent things.

Not just the good things. Now, and with two he flew. The greatest angels in glory were at the beck and call of the Son of God.

Are you at the beck and call of the Son of God? If He beckons you, do you come? If He says run, do you run? If He says walk, do you walk? If He says stand and do not move, are you mature enough to stand and not move? John Calvin writes, The two wings with which the angels fly mean nothing else than their ready and cheerful performance of the commandments of God. Now look what Calvin says. Ready and cheerful performance.

Not like the disciples who Jesus is going to Jerusalem and they're all convinced that He's going to go there and the people just want to kill Him, but they say, well, we'll just go with Him too and die. That's the way oftentimes I do the will of God. I'm not kidding.

I am such a pessimist. I'll obey, but it's like, okay, I'll go and be destroyed. It'll be fine.

It's like my pastor gets so mad at me. He goes, don't you ever think God might just want to be nice to you? Why has it always got to be martyrdom? But even if it is martyrdom, the ready and cheerful obedience to the will of God. If you ever get a chance, read the love letters.

I call them love letters. Between Christopher Love and his wife. I think they're entitled A Spectacle to God.

I'm not sure though. It's been a long time. Before his martyrdom, she writes him in a way that just makes your jaw drop open.

She's saying, now listen, your martyrdom is drawing near. He's in prison. She said, don't you back down and don't you sin against God by worrying about your wife and your children.

Is not God the husband to the widow and the father to the orphan? She writes him right before his death, the night before, she writes him a letter and she says, husband, they will sever you from your physical head but they will not sever you from your spiritual head. And then she goes on and she says, tomorrow morning when thou wakest and when you dress thyself, you are dressing for your wedding day. Rejoice! Wow! The cheerful obedience.

You can't talk like that lest you've been in the throne room of God. That's why you must know Him. Dwell with Him.

Let me just read to you something by George Swinock that I really just appreciate. All creatures compared to the Son. He is so excellent that even angels veil their faces in His presence.

The excellent cherubim and seraphim who are spotless in their natures and faultless in their lives, who are the highest and most honored and most ancient house of all of creation, who as His special friends and favorites are allowed to wait on Him continually, to behold Him face to face, and to enjoy Him fully and perfectly. Yet these angels veil their faces before Him as it were ashamed of their starlight in the presence of the Son. Now, may I ask you a question? I ask this question all the time.

Where did the stars go? Where are they? Did someone gather them all up in a basket and put them in a closet somewhere? Where did the stars go? Did they move to some other part of space? No, they're all there, aren't they? Why can't we see them? Because of the glory of the Son. The Son is so bright you can no longer see the stars. That's why these angels are covering their faces.

And in a sense, that's the way we should be. But there's another thing. It's also very special.

Why is it and how is it that you can see the stars at night? Because of the pitch, the darkness around them. That is why preachers must preach about sin. Because you cannot appreciate the stars of God's grace apart from understanding the radical, pervasive depravity of men.

You cannot appreciate what Christ has done unless you understand He has done it for exceedingly wicked men. And that is why we preach about sin. A young man asked me one time, Why do you preach about sin so much? And I said, So that you'll love God.

He said, What do you mean? I said, She loved much because she's been forgiven much. And she knew she'd been forgiven much because she knew how sinful she was. I were to hand you a ham sandwich right now, you may say thank you, but it wouldn't be that big of a deal.

There are places on this planet where I could hand someone a speck of that meat and they would kiss my hands with tears for it. Because they are so needy. When men recognize their neediness, it is only in that context that they come to appreciate what God has done for them in Christ.

And that is why if you go to a church that doesn't make much of sin, I can tell you that the Holy Spirit is not working among you. You say, Well how can you say that? Because the principle, one of the principle ministries of the Holy Spirit, that when He comes, He will convict the world of sin. So if you're in a church that doesn't talk about sin, the Holy Spirit isn't saying much.

So much for all this seeker friendly stuff in these churches where we don't talk about sin because we want to be positive. Or we don't want to talk about hell, we just want to talk about the words of Jesus. That is such a lie.

Do you want to know why? I'll tell you why. If you study the Old Testament, you learn almost nothing about hell. If you study the epistles, you almost learn nothing about hell.

Everything we know about hell, we know from the words of Jesus. Because He talked about it more than everybody combined. Now He says, They were ashamed of their starlight in the presence of the sun and their drops in the presence of the ocean.

To cover the face is a sign of or fruit of bashfulness. Something that we no longer have the ability to do it seems. To be bashful.

It's amazing. My pastor, Brother Knoblet, Pastor Knoblet, he's two years older than me. We counsel together.

I ask his advice. He asks my advice. I walk up to him in a public setting.

I say, Pastor Knoblet, I see these young boys walk up to him, sixteen years old, twenty. Hey Jeff, I'm going, what's your problem? You don't talk to him that way. Do you see? Because there's no authority, there's no respect, there's no hierarchy, there's nothing in our society.

We respect no one. It's almost become impossible that we show respect to God. Bashfulness, as in Rebecca.

Remember Rebecca? She covered her face, lowered her head. The face of an angel is void of all spot and wrinkles. It is full of beauty and brightness, a most excellent face.

Yet this face, as excellent as it is, they cover, as it were, ashamed of it, before that God who alone is excellent. Now, I want to say a few things that are very, very important. One called out to another.

Now here they are in heaven, and one is calling out to another. The idea of continuation is communicated here. One kept calling out to another, as in Revelation 4, 8, where we read, and day and night they do not cease to say, Holy, Holy, Holy.

It is a continual theme in that celestial church, in that celestial choir. It is a continual theme of heaven. What is Holy, Holy, Holy? Let me ask yourself, is that a continual theme in our lives? Let me ask ourselves.

In this modern day circus called churchianity in America, is that the theme? No. It is hard to have a theme like that when you are all sitting there worshiping with a Starbucks coffee in your hand. You know nothing of holiness.

Drink your coffee in the presence of a president. I dare you. You will see what kind of fool you look like.

You are going to do that in the presence of God? Well, we want to be casual. There is nothing casual about coming into the presence of God. Talk to these angels about being casual.

Casual will get you killed. Ask Isaiah. I wish that song came out a few years ago.

I just wish God was more like us. No, you don't. An omnipotent being with a heart as corrupt as yours, that is what you want.

It is the constant theme. Dalich writes this, While these seraphim hovered above on both sides of him that sat upon the throne, and therefore formed two opposite choirs, each arranged in a semicircle, they presented worship to him that sat upon the throne. The meaning is not that they all lifted up their voice in concert at one and the same time, but there was a continual and unbroken response in song.

One commenced and the others responded. It's like when we sing the song, you know, Sing hallelujah to the, sing hallelujah to... That's what they're doing. Holy on this one side, and then the other side echoing, Holy, holy, holy.

From every square corner of heaven is coming out the theme, He is holy. If you want to know the chief characteristic about God, it is His holiness. Holiness, in a sense, is more than an attribute.

It is something even distinct from those things. And I'm going to explain that in a moment. The word holy, now I'm going to read some notes here I have down, because I just want to catch everything.

The word holy comes from a Hebrew word which communicates. Now listen to this. Separation.

Now, listen to me very carefully. What does it mean? Now this is just a question. You answer it in your own mind.

What do you think of when you think God is holy? Most people think purity, right? Sinlessness, right? He doesn't sin. He's pure, okay? Then what do you think about when you think about righteous? Well, He's

sinless. He does everything right.

Well, then what's the difference? Most people wrongly define holiness. They wrongly define it as moral purity. Now it includes moral purity, but the principal idea of holiness is the idea of separation, apartness, uniqueness, the uniqueness of God.

And that's the whole idea with the model prayer that Jesus gives us in Matthew 6. How would be thy name? That thy name, thy person, be treated as completely, infinitely distinct from every other creature or thing. Okay? Now hold on to that thought for a moment. It refers to that which is set apart, separate, unique, in contrast to the common and profane.

In the Scriptures, the holiness of God refers to His uniqueness, His transcendence and separation. In the midst of all of creation, He stands alone. No one is like Him.

No one. And no one can be compared to Him. To compare the Son of God with even the most splendid created being would be infinitely more absurd than comparing a minuscule spark to the midday sun.

He cannot be compared. Now, let's look at a few things. Who is more like God? The seraphim flying in His presence or a worm crawling on the ground? Which one is more like God? The answer is, neither.

You see, God is not like us, just bigger and better. He is not like us at all. And as glorious as that seraphim is, He is no closer to being like God than the worm that crawls on the ground because no one is like God.

No one is close. Alright? I'm taller than the pastor. But it would be absurd.

Pastor, please, for a moment, stand up. I am taller than the pastor, but it would be absurd for me to boast that I'm closer to the Son than He is. I'm closer to the S-U-N than the pastor.

I'm taller. It's absolutely absurd. Because the Son is so far away, we don't even talk in that kind of language.

No one walks up to someone else and goes, hey, Shorty, I'm closer to the Son than you are. And even more so when we talk about deity. To say that God is holy is to say that no one is like Him.

And it's not just a quantitative difference. It's not just a difference of bigger and smaller. It's a qualitative difference.

He is not like His creation at all. That's what it means when the Bible says He is holy. Now let me give you another example.

Moses is being sent to Egypt. And Moses needs a little bit of validation here. He says, who are you? And God says, I am who I am.

Now, let's say that a Martian comes down to Dawson, Georgia. I understand that there are several that are already here. A Martian comes down to Georgia.

And he walks up to me. And he says, who are you? I can say, well, I am like Him. And I am like Him.

And in a sense I am like Her. I can point to about six billion examples of me. You want to know who I am? Look around.

There's all kinds of examples, illustrations. You can learn just about everything about me by looking at somebody else. God says, I am who I am.

There's no one to look at. There's a sense in which God does not say, I am like Him. Or I am like Her.

Or if you want a reference point to understand what I'm about, look at them. Because there's no one to whom He can compare Himself. There is no one His equal.

There is no one in His class. He is totally and completely unique. So therefore He could never say to Moses, Moses, I am like Him.

But He can say to us, when we ask Him, God, who are you? He can stretch forth His hand and say, I am like Him, Jesus of Nazareth, who walked on this earth 2,000 years ago. Anyone who has seen Him has seen me. But what I want you to see is that holiness is not just about moral purity.

God is holy in everything that He is. He's holy in love. That doesn't just mean that He's morally pure in His love.

That's a righteous love. What holiness means is, His love is not like anybody else's love. When you say that God is great, it is not like saying a man is great, or an angel is great.

It's a completely distinct category. And that's what makes the holiness of God so awesome and causing us to tremble. For example, I deer hunt.

And let's say I get up at 4 in the morning and I'm walking through a corn field. It's very dark, very cold, and I'm miles away from anybody. And I've got a choice.

I can meet a 6'8", 300-pound NFL football player who wants to beat me up, or I can come face-to-face with a Martian. Now as you know, Martians are only about this tall. They weigh about 30 pounds soaking wet, their arms are about this big, long fingers, and they're not that strong, from what I understand.

So why on earth do I choose the football player over the Martian? Because the football player is at least like me. I know what this is. It's like me.

He might pulverize me, but at least it's someone like me. I'm dealing with something I know and I understand. This thing, I don't know what he's going to do.

He might slime me, he might shoot me with a ray gun, I don't know what he's... because he is not like me. I know nothing of this. This is not in the same category.

Now that's a terrible, pitiful illustration. But when we come into the holiness of God, we're not dealing with one like us. Now that causes trembling, but that also causes great comfort.

I would hate to know that there is an omnipotent being who's like Paul Washer. Because I would assume that he would quickly turn into something that would make Hitler look like a choir boy. I take great comfort in the fact he does not have my frailty, neither physically nor morally.

He is not depraved, he is not corrupt, he is not all these things that I have been and struggle with. Now, I want to go on with this thing about holiness. The threefold declaration of the Son's holiness is the strongest form of superlative in the Hebrew.

Really glad I had that in my notes, because I forgot about it. If you and I want to emphasize something, we will say it boldly. If we're writing it, we may write it in bold letters or capital letters or mark it through with a yellow marker.

In the Hebrew language, when they want to emphasize something, they use what we call a Hebrew parallelism. For example, let me make up a proverb for you. The wicked shall not dwell in the land, the wicked shall be destroyed.

Now just think about it for a moment. I said the same thing twice. The wicked shall not dwell in the land, the wicked shall be destroyed.

I said the same thing twice, I've changed it just a little bit. The second phrase defines something of the first phrase and both of them are put together for emphasis. That's the way a Jew emphasizes something.

The book of Proverbs is just very common that way. Or the boast of Lamech when he says, you know, I've killed a man, I've struck a man, I've killed a young man. He's not talking about two people, he's talking about one person.

But he's using it as emphasis, as a way to emphasize what he's done. But here, notice, holy, holy, holy. Notice that the Scriptures never say God is love, love, love.

Notice that they never say He's merciful, merciful, merciful. Notice they never say nice, nice, nice. Holy, holy, holy.

So when we think about God, the controlling thought in our mind ought to be not my good buddy or me and Jesus got our own thing going. The primary thought ought to be totally separate, totally unique, not like any other, not put in a category with any other. Now, Charles Spurgeon writes, Being pure in heart, they, the seraphim, gazed on the Lord with open eye and adored His holiness.

Their whole souls were filled with the contemplation of that one all-embracing attribute and responsive song. They said, each one to his fellow, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. This is the supreme glory of Christ that in Him is seen the holiness of God.

Charles Hodge writes, now just listen, Seraphim round about the throne cried day and night unceasing, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. Giving expression to the feelings of all unfallen rational creatures. Now, what does that tell us? Any unfallen rational creature as opposed to a depraved insane creature, the thing that they are most going to know is that God is, and that God is holy.

Now compare that to our culture. Charles Hodge is saying that a moral creature or an unfallen creature and a reasonable creature, one that is rational and can actually think with his mind, the one thing that is going to control all his thought life and his actions is that God is, and that God is holy. Now look at our culture.

And then ask yourself, what's the cure? It is not political. It is not just meeting felt needs. It is radical transformation through the preaching of the gospel and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit that destroys this insane depraved reality and rebuilds a genuine biblical reality of who God is and who we are before Him.

That's what will cure the culture. And it's the only thing. Now realize this.

Paul the Apostle, on the road to Damascus, what happens? His view, false view of God, reality, himself, his false view of everything is pulverized. It's disintegrated in one fraction of a moment when Christ appears. So that he sits without water and without food for three days.

And why is he there? He's there because literally everything he knew about reality was proven wrong in one moment when he met Christ. His entire way of thinking was destroyed. It's like you waking up tomorrow morning and realizing that you have lived in a parallel universe and this world is not even real.

It would be such a shock that would throw you into convulsion. That's what this world needs. Through the preaching of the gospel.

But know this. You can preach the gospel to every creature on the face of this earth and you can preach until you are blue in your face and they lay you in the grave. But apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit of God, nothing is going to happen.

Can these bones live? Only by the Spirit of God. But God has also promised that he will bless preaching. The right kind of preaching.

And he will use the foolishness of preaching to enact salvation in the hearts of men. Now, I know I've gone on for a while. Let me just conclude here.

Don't worry about me. I'm not tired. Now, I want to read something that I've written here.

It's very important. He is the Lord of hosts. Before I do that, let me go to another thing that I want to talk about holiness.

I want to keep on holiness for just a minute and then we'll get to lordship in the next meeting tomorrow. When we talk about holiness, I want to read to you a quote from Robert Raymond to prove something to you. When Isaiah saw this awesome scene and heard these four creatures singing, he was immediately struck with his immoral purity.

Right? Unclean man. Unclean lips. But what is often overlooked is that the seraphim are sinless creatures.

And yet in the presence of God, they also feel it necessary to cover themselves all over by their wings. Clearly for them, God's holiness was His separateness from them. His transcendence over against their creatureliness.

Now, what do I mean? People will look at Isaiah's reaction. He says, Woe is me, I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips. And they say, he said that because he was not morally pure and God is morally pure.

That's what holiness means. Moral purity. But then explain why the angels, who had no sin, also covered themselves in shame.

The emphasis here is not just God is morally pure and men are not. The emphasis here is God is not like anyone. His glory, His power, His person, so transcends the most splendid creature that they have to hide.

So I want you to see that just because you get to heaven and you're perfect and glorified, it doesn't mean that this concept of holiness will be diminished. It doesn't mean that then you and God will be buddies and play football together in heaven. There will always be this sense of otherness.

And the more you know Him, the greater will be the increase of this feeling of otherness. It's very important that you understand this. That it's not just about sin.

Let me give you an example. I've written here that the holiness of God often refers to His moral purity. But it's not to be limited to that.

He is holy, separate, transcendent in everything that He is. Now listen. The triune nature of God, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, is an expression of His holiness.

His triune nature is an expression of His holiness. Why? There is no other being so incomprehensible, mysterious, and wonderful as He is. To say that God is spirit is an expression of His holiness.

Why? There is no other being so free and unhindered. The truth of God's perfection, eternal nature, self-existence, immutability, omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience are all expressions of His holiness. He is holy in His omniscience.

No one knows as God knows. He is holy in His righteousness. No one is right as He is right.

He is holy in His triune nature. No one is as mysterious and glorious as Him. Holiness is a thing that is overarching, that encompasses everything that God is.

In everything He is, no one is like Him. You say, well Brother Paul, then why is holiness and sinlessness so often mentioned together? For this reason, if you want to know the way in which God is most different from His fallen creation, with regard to sin, the one thing that most marks humanity is what? Sin. And so in contrast, the greatest separation between us and God is moral purity on His behalf and moral impurity on ours.

That's the thing that most stands out. I suppose to these angels, they did not robe themselves in their own wings because they thought we are unclean or we are filthy or we are this, as Isaiah did. They robed themselves in their wings because we are not like Him.

His glory eclipses everything that we are. You see? So we walk in this. We have these ideas about God.

One thing that is very, very important that you understand here, when we talk about sanctification, you know what that is. Justification is that you are freed from the condemnation of sin. Sanctification is a progressive work of God where He frees us from the power of sin.

He matures us. He conforms us to the image of Christ. When you read a lot of times books about sanctification or how to grow in Christ, what are they? They are books on principles, aren't they? How to do this, how to do that, how to do this.

My dear friend, you get a glimpse of who God is and it will help you in regard to sanctification. It won't be little principles or little three-step things you can do in order to grow. The more you understand who this God is, you are transformed from glory to glory.

It begins to not be a principle but a controlling reality. Let me give you an example. You take a man who has just an absolutely wonderful wife.

I mean she is just perfect. And you look at his behavior. And I mean he is a great husband.

He is just a great husband. You say, why are you a great husband? Now this isn't necessarily a biblical answer but this is just an illustration. Why are you such a great husband? Well, look at my wife.

How can I do anything else? Just look at her. Look what she does. Look who she is.

Look how beautiful she is. The way she treats me. How else can I respond? Look at this woman.

Yes, another guy who buried Godzilla doesn't have the most wonderful wife in the world. But he is acting pretty good. And you say, why are you acting this way? Well, it's a part of principle.

I mean I know my wife is the way she is but in principle, as a man of principle, I need to act this way regardless of how she acts. Now that's true. But now look at the difference.

People, Christians, who are caring about a certain morality sincerely and you ask them about their morality and you say, well this is the way I should be. To be a principled, correct Christian, there are rules and I need to follow them and what's the right thing to do? Now that's true. But what about the one who says, yeah, but just look at my God.

Look at who He is. Look what He did for me. When Paul talked about his actions, he said, I am constrained.

It wasn't a principled thing so much as he was constrained because of what he knew about God and what God had done for him in Christ Jesus His Lord. And that's the same way. I can tell you this.

We homeschool. Homeschooling can be extremely dangerous. Raise up a bunch of little Pharisees.

And I love homeschooling. I homeschool. So all you homeschoolers, don't get together and lynch me after I finish here.

I had a pastor call me out in Texas one time and he goes, I want you to come preach to my church because I think a lot of them are lost. And I said, well what makes you think that? He said, they're all homeschoolers. And I said, well brother, I'm going to homeschool.

And he said, yeah, but here's the problem. I've got people in my church that if you asked them to stand up and give their testimony, he said, I think they'd stand up and say five years ago I discovered homeschooling. Anytime your banner is anything other than Jesus Christ, you're in a whole lot of trouble.

And the point that I'm making here is we do not do morality for morality's sake. We are not doing morality just to be the salt of the earth. We are not doing morality because it's the right thing to do.

We are doing morality just as a response to the glory of God and the greatness of everything He's done for us in the person of Jesus Christ. If we're not doing it for that reason, it'll burn in its idolatry. It's for Him.

Everything for Him. Everything. There is a sense, and as you grow in maturity, this is what will happen.

There will be a transference of confidence. As you grow in maturity, you will come to confide less and less in you. You will see that it's absolutely a frivolous, useless endeavor to trust in you or in your own piety or wisdom.

And there will be a transference of trust and hope in Christ. And when that happens, and as that happens, you will become a more consistent believer. Because instead of your faith and your life being established

upon your piety, which goes up and down all the time, and thus your hope, your confidence is in the perfect, finished work of Jesus Christ that is immutable, that never changes.

So you are steadfast. As your transference of faith and confidence is transferred from yourself to Christ, you become more steadfast and mature in the Christian faith. But also, as you are driven less by this idea of, I do what I do because it's the right thing to do, and driven more by, I am constrained by the love of God in Christ.

I am constrained by the love of God in Christ. And it is for this reason, and a few others, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and a new nature, it is for this reason that we can say that in one sense, the Christian is under law. It's to obey laws.

But there's another sense in which we're almost not even under law, because it doesn't even seem to come into play, because our natures have been so changed and we're so driven by what God has done for us in Christ, that it's not a legalistic setting out to do right things. It is simply being constrained to follow Him because of His glory and the love He manifested toward us in the cross. Transfer this idea to your children.

If you tell your son to do something and he goes, and does it, he has not obeyed. And there is a sense in which when you and I obey Christ, but not with a cheerful readiness, we have not obeyed. It's not about just doing the right thing.

It's about responding to His glory and to His love. Let's pray. Father, thank You for Your Word.

Thank You for Your kindness, Your consistency, immutability, that You are settled and seated, that You scoff at the nations when they gather themselves against You. You laugh at them because You have established Your King upon Mount Zion and He will not be moved until every one of His enemies are placed at His feet. Father, thank You for the redemption we have in Christ.

Thank You for the divine wisdom that established such a way of salvation, something angels would have never contrived. Thank You for the love that motivated it. Thank You, Lord, that You love us because You love us, because You love us, because You've chosen to love us.

That all that You have for us flows out of You and is not dependent upon us. And thank You that He who began a good work will finish it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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