

Attributes of God - Holiness Righteousness and Soveriegnity

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald explores the attributes of God--holiness, righteousness, and sovereignty--emphasizing their significance in the believer's life and worship.

Duration: 37:33

Scripture: Leviticus 19:2, Isaiah 45:21, Daniel 9:7, Habakkuk 1:12, Romans 3:26

Topics: "Attributes of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of beauty and how it is often used to judge people's worth. He emphasizes that Jesus, despite not having physical beauty, came into the world to show that true worth is not determined by appearance. The preacher shares a story about a servant of the Lord who was rejected by a church because of his unimpressive appearance, but God accepted him. The sermon also emphasizes the importance of righteousness in all aspects of life, including judgments, actions, and attitudes. The preacher concludes by highlighting the righteousness of God and the need for believers to strive for holiness and reverence.

Transcript

Last night we began our study of the attributes of God. We were thinking something of the greatness of God, and we had this little definition behind us. Who is God or what is God? And we borrowed this from the catechism.

God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. It's impossible really to think about the Lord without thinking about these attributes. And we also mentioned last night that as we contemplate the attributes of God, they're designed to lead us to worship, trust, service, and conformity to him.

Now, this morning we'd just like to start and take up one of the attributes of God, or at least begin with one of them, and that attribute of God is known as his holiness, the holiness of God. What do we mean by the holiness of God? We mean that God is morally perfect in his thoughts, deeds, motives, and in every other way. He's free from all sin and defilement.

He cannot be more holy than he is. Let's just go over that once again. I'm sorry that those at the back can't see this.

I can hardly see it myself. But the holiness of God teaches us that God is morally perfect in his thoughts, deeds, motives, and in every other way. He is free from all sin and defilement.

God cannot be more holy than he is. Now, let's look up a few scriptures that bear on this subject. Actually, the Bible is filled with them, and all we can do is just select two or three scriptures this morning that teach this.

First of all, back in Leviticus chapter 19, verse 2. Leviticus chapter 19, verse 2, I think Leviticus 19 is one of the greatest chapters in the Bible on the holiness of God. In that chapter, over and over again, God mentions the fact, I am the Lord your God, I am the Lord, I am holy, you shall be holy. And of course, that is echoed in 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 16.

Peter quotes that verse in the New Testament, reminding us that the will of God is that we should be holy. Habakkuk chapter 1, verses 12 and 13. Habakkuk chapter 1, verses 12 and 13.

It says, O Lord my God, mine holy one, thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity. Just think of it. O Lord my God, mine holy one, thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.

That doesn't mean that God can't see sin. God sees every sin that's ever committed. But when it says he can't behold it, it means he can't behold it with any measure of approval at all.

He cannot look on iniquity with anything that might simulate countenancing it. But he sees it. There's no sin he doesn't see.

And then finally, I'm sure the verse that many of you are thinking of as we speak about the holiness of God, Revelation chapter 4 and verse 8. Revelation chapter 4 and verse 8. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is and is to come. There the holiness of God is repeated three times. Why? Why do you think the Spirit of God says there, holy, holy, holy? Why didn't he say holy once and let it go with it? I would suggest that the emphasis, the repetition is for emphasis to express the inexpressible.

The holiness of God is absolutely inexpressible. So one of the great attributes of God is his holiness. But what does holiness mean? How can, how can the great God in heaven convey to this dull mind of mine the fact that he is holy? Well, I can see him in the Old Testament seeking to do it by object lessons.

For instance, he set up a priesthood. What did the priesthood say? The priesthood said that sin had come in, that man had fallen into sin, and that sin creates distance between man and God. And so God set up a priesthood as a means of mediating between man and God.

How can he come into the presence of a holy God? God set up that priesthood, and not only the priesthood, but the whole sacrificial system by which God was saying that a holy God can only be approached by sinful men on the ground of shed blood. Now that was a very potent object lesson. Many of us are so used to it, we just take it for granted.

But you can't come with your vegetables. You can't come with your fruit as Cain sought to do. You've got to come with the blood of a sacrificial victim.

The wages of sin is death, and the penalty must be paid. And if it isn't paid by you, it must be paid by the blood of a sacrifice. And then coming over to the New Testament, I think I see a tremendous glimpse into the holiness of God in the Garden of Gethsemane, when the Lord Jesus is there and the cross is not far away, and he's going to take upon himself your sins and my sins.

And the very thought, not the very act, the very thought of becoming identified with our sins causes him to sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. But dear friends, it pains you and me to resist temptation. It pained him to even think of coming in contact with sin.

That's the difference between a holy God and a sinful person. You might say it causes us to sweat, as it were, great drops of blood to resist sin. But just the very thought of coming in contact with sin caused him the keenest suffering.

And then, of course, if you want to see the holiness of God in all its grandeur, you have to go to the cross of Calvary, don't you? Because there, the Lamb of God, the holy, sinless Son of God, takes our sins upon him. And now, what will a holy God do when he looks down and sees his only beloved Son as the sin-bearer? Will he make an exception? You know the answer. But I know the answer today.

Jehovah lifted up his sword. Oh, Christ, it fell on me. And when God looked down and saw sin, my sin, on his own beloved Son, he did not hold back the sword.

God is morally perfect in his thoughts, deeds, motives, and in every other way. He's absolutely free from sin and defilement. Even the stars are not pure in his sight.

But really, the idea of the holiness of God beggars human description. Now, what should this, what practical effect should this have in my life? You know, it's an interesting thing to me that in the study of the Word of God, every doctrine has practical implications connected with it. God never intended me to study the Bible and fill my head with doctrinal facts and stop there.

Somebody has said it this way, every indicative gradually becomes an imperative. I like that. Every statement of fact merges into a command.

Every indicative gradually becomes an imperative in the Scripture. That's true with the holiness of God. I contemplate in the Word of God the holiness of God, and I'll tell you one of the things it should do is create in my heart a profound sense of reverence.

Reverence, one of the missing keys in the evangelical church today. Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the ground whereon thou standest is holy ground. And dear friends, if we could just immerse ourselves in these grand attributes of God, I tell you, it would make different people out of us, wouldn't it? It would make us more reverent.

And then, of course, another thing that it should teach us is conformity to Him. Ye shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy. If I'm going to walk in fellowship with God, I have to be holy.

Because how can two walk together except they be agreed? God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. And if there's anything hidden under the counter in my life, I can't walk with God, because He's not that kind of a God. And the higher my thoughts of God in connection with His holiness, the greater will be my abhorrence of sin in my life.

It's when I forget the holiness of God that I fall and commit sin. And dear friends, there are some today who suggest that the Lord Jesus could have sinned when He was here on earth. That He didn't sin, but that He could have sinned.

And this teaching is quite common today. I'd like to suggest to you that the Lord Jesus cannot be God and have anything less than the full attributes of God. And if the Lord Jesus is God as a man here on earth, He's absolutely holy.

And the idea of His sinning is absolutely impossible. You see, we judge Him by ourselves. We want to say, well, He was perfectly human.

Yes, that's exactly the point. He was perfect human. We're not.

We judge humanity by ourselves, but we're fallen humanity. If you want to see perfect and absolutely pure humanity, look at the Lord Jesus. And as one of the brothers suggested last night at the close of the meeting, if the Lord Jesus could have sinned as a man on earth, why couldn't He sin as a man in heaven today? And if He could, what kind of a savior do we have? No, no.

The Lord Jesus is holy, spotless, pure. He knew no sin, no sin in Him. He did no sin.

He could say, the prince of this world cometh and findeth nothing in me. There was nothing in that sacred being to respond to any temptation that Satan might bring to him. People say, well, the temptation wasn't real if he couldn't have sinned.

That's a human imagination. It's not divine truth when you speak like that. The purpose of the temptation was not to show that He could sin, but to prove that He couldn't sin.

And so, we believe that the Lord Jesus was absolutely holy, absolutely holy. And we bow and we worship at His feet, the holiness of God. Tozer says, before the uncreated fire of God's holiness, angels veil their faces.

Yea, the heavens are not clean, and the stars are not pure in His sight. I wonder if we could pause here. Is there some brother that would just like to get up and give thanks to the Lord for His holiness? Is there someone? While we bow our heads.

Anybody? Our God and Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we just thank Thee for the pureness of our God today, and that He is to be held in reverence by all men that go above Him. We just thank Thee for His presence in this chamber at this time. We just pray our Father that Thou speak to us through Thy word, that Thy word is true.

And we just thank Thee for the pureness of our God and the holiness of Thy Son. And we just pray to cleanse our lives as we're here through this one. In Jesus' precious name, we pray.

Amen. Another attribute of God is what we speak of as the righteousness of God. And the righteousness of God means that God always acts with fairness and equity.

He invariably does what is right. When you think of the righteousness of God, just take the first letters, right, and you have the idea. God always acts with fairness and with equity.

He invariably does what is right. Let's look at a few verses of scripture. Daniel chapter 9, Daniel chapter 9, verses 7 and 14.

Daniel 9, verses 7 and 14. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion of faces as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to all Israel that are near and far off, through all the countries where Thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against Thee. Verse 14.

It says, Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil and brought it upon us, for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth, for we obeyed not his voice. Here's Daniel vindicating the Lord in all that he had done, and some of it wasn't too pleasant either, in saying, Lord, you're righteous, you've acted with fairness and equity, we just really received what we deserved. And then Isaiah chapter 45, the lovely expression there, Isaiah chapter 45 and verse 21.

It says, Tell ye and bring them near, yea, let them take counsel together. Who hath declared this from ancient times? Who hath told it from that time? Have not I, the Lord, and there is no God else beside me. Notice, a just God and a Savior.

Just. Just is a synonym here for righteous. It says the same thing, a just God and a Savior.

There is none beside me. And then of course that lovely verse in Romans chapter 3 and verse 26. Romans chapter 3 and verse 26.

And then of course that lovely verse in Romans chapter 3 and verse 26. Romans chapter 3 and verse 26. To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

Wonderful. Once again, to see the righteousness of God in all its glory, we look at the cross. The cross was a wonderful display of the attributes of God, wasn't it? Things in a very special way they met there.

Righteousness, mercy, peace, all met at the cross. The righteousness of God was there. How can God be a holy God and still save ungodly sinners? How can he do that? Well, the cross tells us how he could do it.

The cross declares the righteousness of God in saving guilty sinners because a substitute has died in their place. The perfect righteousness of God is witnessed in the Savior's blood. It is in the cross of Christ we see how God can save, yet righteous be.

God could not pass the sinner by, that wouldn't be righteous. God could not pass the sinner by, the law demands that he must die. But in the cross of Christ we trace his righteousness, yet wondrous grace.

The sin alights on Jesus' head, because in his blood sin's debt is paid. Stern justice can demand no more, and mercy can dispense her store. The sinner who believes is free, can say, the Savior died for me, can point to the atoning blood and say, that made my peace with God.

Yes, the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ declares the righteousness of God. It shows us how he can be just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus. The righteousness of God is designed to have practical influence in our own lives as well.

We should be righteous. That means we should be impartial. God is impartial.

He makes his son to shine on the just and the unjust. We should be that way too. We should not judge by appearances.

We should judge righteous judgment. I think one of the greatest mistakes we make in life is judging according to appearances. Do you do that? Dobson has an interesting book, Hide or Seek, and he says, he has a chapter in there that's called, Beauty, the golden coin of human worth.

We judge people by whether they're handsome or homely, and we appraise them on that basis. Beauty, the golden coin of human worth. You know, I believe that's why the Lord Jesus came into the world and there was no beauty about him that we should desire.

I think it was one of the great tests of fallen humanity. And dear friends, he still comes to us in very humble guys. I was telling some of the friends about a servant of the Lord years ago.

Some of you might've known him actually. And he went to a certain city in the east. He was a, he was a good brother, had a message from the Lord.

He was not pre-possessing in his appearance and he really didn't have what you'd call charisma today in the worldly sense. He wasn't dynamic on the platform. And he went to this assembly and they didn't want him.

And they suggested that he go down to an assembly down in the ghetto. And he did. And while he was there, the Lord took him home.

Just in that next week, the Lord took him home. And it seemed as if the Lord was saying, if you don't want him, I do. In as much as he had done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, he had done it unto me.

God wants us to be righteous in our judgments and not judge according to appearance. He wants us to be righteous in all our ways. That means not breaking the traffic laws.

That means not fudging on income taxes. That means being careful with those expense accounts and absolutely honest. Means being absolutely righteous with our examinations that we have to take.

Means avoiding anything in the way of a bribe or a payoff or anything that would influence righteous judgment. That means not trying to evade building codes, you know, when you have to do that construction. I'll tell you, there are so many temptations to compromise in the Christian life today.

God wants us to be righteous. We say of a man, his word is the law. His word is the law.

His word is his bond. He's righteous. He says it.

He'll do it. That's the way God wants us to be. The righteousness of God.

Well, another attribute of God, if I can get this down, is the sovereignty of God. The sovereignty of God. And what do we mean by the sovereignty of God? We mean that God is the supreme ruler and that he can do as he pleases and that what he pleases will always be right.

I'll tell you, there's a pillow to lay your head on. God is the supreme ruler. He can do as he pleases and what he pleases will always be right.

I like that. I personally delight in the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. The doctrine of the sovereignty of God is the teaching that allows God to be God.

Doesn't insist on bringing him down to our human level. Doesn't insist on fettering him with the bond that tie us here. No.

God is overall. He is supreme. He can do whatever he wants, but what he wants will always be absolutely perfect.

Let's look at some scriptures that teach the sovereignty of God. Ephesians chapter one, verse 11. Ephesians chapter one, verse 11.

In whom we have obtained an inheritance being predestinated, notice, according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. That's the sovereignty of God. Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

Ephesians one, 11. Second, Isaiah chapter 46 and verse 10. Isaiah chapter 46 and verse 10.

Says, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done. Saying, my counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure. That's our God.

My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure. And then perhaps one more verse. Daniel chapter four and verse 35.

Daniel chapter four and verse 35. Says, and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing. And he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.

And none can stay his hand or say unto him, what doest thou? This is wonderful, really. God is sovereign. And for me, this solves an awful lot of problems in the Christian life.

To know that God is over all, that he does as he pleases and what he pleases is always best. As for God, his way is perfect. People have problems with election, predestination and foreknowledge and all the rest.

I don't have problems. I don't pretend to understand them. I don't have problems with them.

I like what Erdman says in his little commentary on Romans. This has helped me a lot. He said, the sovereignty of God is never exercised in condemning men who ought to be saved, but it is exercised in saving men who ought to be condemned.

The sovereignty of God is never exercised in condemning men who ought to be saved. Why is that? Because nobody ought to be saved. Nobody who deserves to be saved.

Ah, but it is exercised in saving men who ought to be condemned. That gives me great thoughts of God. Great thoughts of God.

It keeps me from complaining against God or, you know, questioning God and the dealings of God. I'll tell you, God's trains run on perfect schedule. They really do.

And God is working out his purposes. And although it seems today as we're here at Corona's that truth is forever on the scaffold and wrong forever on the throne. God in his sovereign wisdom makes the wrath of man to praise him and what won't praise him he restrains.

Isn't it true? God's overload. Oh, you say, yes, but they took, they took John Huss and they burned him at the stake. I know they did.

And they threw his ashes in the river and everywhere the river went, the gospel went shortly afterwards. And they take the Bible and they tear it up and they throw it into the wind. And somebody takes a stray random page from the Bible and reads it and gets gloriously saved because God is sovereign.

Because God is sovereign and God will have the last word. What a comfort to our hearts. Maybe there's somebody here today with a, with a heavy heart.

I'll tell you the sovereignty of God should speak great comfort to our hearts today. God's overall God's in control. He's the ruler.

And I'll tell you, if you're on his side, you can't lose the Lord before us who can be against us successfully. And the answer is no one. I quoted that, um, him last night.

I think God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform. He plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm. Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take.

The clouds you so much dread are rich with blessing, are rich with mercy and shall break in blessing on your head. Isn't that wonderful? Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take. The clouds you so much dread are rich with mercy and shall break in blessing on your head because God is sovereign.

God is the potter. We are the clay. Paul brings out in Romans that the ridiculous situation of the, of the clay speaking back to the potter.

Now our proper attitude is mold me and make me after thy will. While I am waiting, yielded and still, isn't that a lovely attribute of God, the sovereignty of God. Don't ever be afraid of it.

Rest in it, enjoy it and allow God to be God. Perhaps we could just think for a moment. Um, the next one, which is the omniscience of God, the omniscience of God.

And what do we mean by that? Well, we mean that God has perfect knowledge of everything. He has never learned and can never learn. Just think of it.

God has perfect. It doesn't mean that he could have perfect knowledge of everything. If he wanted to, it means he has.

And God has never learned anything. He never will learn anything because he always has perfect knowledge of everything. Now in that connection, we might turn to Psalm 139 verses one through six, Psalm 139 verses one through six.

We won't be able to finish this, but at least we can start and then go on. In fact, I think I'll just read these and then leave it with you to be thinking about the omniscience of God. And the next time we'll go into it further.

Psalm 139 verses one through six. Oh Lord, thou has searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising.

Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down and art acquainted with all my ways. For there's not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.

Thou hast beset me behind and before and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It's high.

I cannot attain unto it. Well, I should say we can't. For there are limited little intellects and we're told that we don't even use a fraction of the minds that God has given us.

But here is one whose knowledge is absolutely perfect and nothing can be hidden from him. Shall we look to him in prayer? Father, we come into your presence today and we worship you for your great holiness. Father, how we see that holiness shining out throughout the Old Testament and how it comes to its noonday splendor when we come to Calvary.

Lord, we bless and praise you for it today. We praise you too for your righteousness, Lord. So many question marks in this world of ours.

Why does God do it this way? We thank you that we can rest in the fact that you're a righteous God. You always do what is right, fair, equitable. You never make a mistake.

Father, we rejoice in your righteousness today and we rest in your sovereignty. What a comfort to know that you are in complete control, that you do as you please and what you please is for our very best good, for your glory and for our greatest interests. Lord, we just feel your arms thrown about us today.

Father, we thank you for your omniscience today, the fact that you know all things. You know heavy hearts that are here, broken hearts that are here. You know all about us and we're dear to you.

When we think of your greatness and then when we think that you did not spare your son but deliver him up for us all, what can we do but pour out our hearts in love and adoration and worship today in the Savior's name.

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