

The Attributes of God - Part 2

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding God's holiness and its practical applications in our lives.

Duration: 33:18

Scripture: Leviticus 19:2, Isaiah 6:5, Habakkuk 1:12-13, Luke 5:8, 1 Peter 1:16, Revelation 4:8

Topics: "Attributes of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by leading the congregation in singing a hymn that praises God and emphasizes peace, love, honor, and joy. The sermon then focuses on the holiness of God and how He cannot tolerate sin or overlook it. The preacher references Habakkuk and Revelation to support this point. The sermon concludes by highlighting the practical application of understanding God's holiness, which should lead to a profound sense of reverence.

Transcript

...to discuss another attribute of God, and that is His holiness. We're thinking about the attributes of God this week, and I want to think with you today about the holiness of God. And I just read three verses of Scripture.

The first is in Leviticus chapter 19 and verse 2. Leviticus 19 and verse 2. "...Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." Incidentally, that chapter is one of the most important chapters in the whole Bible on the holiness of God. Over and over again in that chapter you have these words, I am the Lord, I am holy, be ye holy. A refrain throughout the whole chapter.

I am the Lord your God, I am the Lord, I am holy, be ye holy. And, of course, that's repeated in 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 16. The second verse is in Habakkuk chapter 1, verses 12 and 13.

You'll be wishing I stayed out of the minor prophets. They're really not so minor. Habakkuk chapter 1, verses 12 and 13.

"...Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die, O Lord. Thou hast ordained him for judgment, and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." I'm just going to stop there.

"...Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." And when Habakkuk says that, he doesn't mean that God doesn't see every sin that's committed. Of course He does. God knows every sin, every thought of our mind, every motive of our heart.

But it means He can't look on it with favor. He can't view it with any measure of condescension. He can't say, oh well, they're just human after all.

God can't say that. He cannot look on any sin with any measure of approval. He can't condone it.

He can't wink at it. He can't overlook it. That's really what Habakkuk is saying in this passage of Scripture.

"...Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." And the last verse is Revelation chapter 4 and verse 8. Revelation chapter 4 and verse 8. It says, "...And the four living creatures having each of them six wings about him, they were full of eyes within, and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." That's interesting that those living creatures in heaven use the word Holy three times. I wonder why? Why do you think it's Holy, Holy, Holy? Well, certainly one reason would be repetition for emphasis, wouldn't it? Emphasizing the extreme holiness of our God. When we say that God is holy, we mean that he's morally perfect in all his words, acts, thoughts, motives, and in every other way.

Just think of that. Think of a being who's morally perfect in all his thoughts, words, acts, motives, and in every other way. God is absolutely free from any sin or defilement.

He cannot be more holy than he is. That's kind of refreshing to me. Being what I am, and living in a world such as I live in, it's wonderful to be able to look off to someone who cannot be more holy than he is.

God is repulsed by any sin. He's repelled by any... he hates it. I can remember my father, years ago, using that expression, a sin-hating God.

That's right. That's exactly what he is. He's a sin-hating God.

And no sin is light in his eyes. I used to think about poor Moses and, you know, how he got kind of irritated with the people of Israel. I used to have a major assympathy with him.

I think I got more exasperated than he did with the people of Israel. And God, it was so serious to God that it kept Moses out of the promised land. And I used to think, why? Why did a little sin like that keep Moses out of the promised land? Of course, the answer is there is no little sin with God.

No sin is little in the sight of God. Every sin is serious. We tend to grade sin.

Have you ever noticed in the Bible, the Bible doesn't grade sin? The Bible doesn't say mortal sin, doesn't say venial sin. It doesn't use these expressions. Those are all man-made expressions.

No sin is light in the sight of God. And all through the Bible, in many, many different ways, God has been trying to teach his people the fact that he is a holy God. For instance, in the Old Testament, he set up a priesthood.

What was the priesthood all about? Well, the priesthood said, here is a holy God, and here are men and women who have fallen into sin. And that has created distance between God and man. And man cannot come directly now into the presence of God.

Man has to go through a mediator. Then God instituted the animal sacrifices in the Old Testament. What was that all about? They were object lessons for the people.

What was he trying to tell the people in that time? He was trying to tell them that God is a holy God. Man has sinned. Sinful man can only approach a holy God on the ground of sacrificial blood, on the ground of the blood of a sacrificial victim.

That's still true, isn't it? We come on the ground of the sacrificial blood of the Lamb of God. Then the temple ritual. The temple ritual really was teaching people of the holiness of God.

Did you ever stop to think that in the temple, God dwelt in the most holy place, that the glory cloud was in the most holy place? The priests couldn't go there. The people certainly couldn't go there. Only one man of one race, of one tribe, of one family, could go into that room, and he could only go in on one day of the year.

What did it mean? It meant that our God is a thrice holy God, and sin must be atoned for. And that high priest, when he went in, before his body went in, I'll tell you, a basin of blood went in. He was holding that basin of blood, and that went in, and with it he made atonement for himself and for the sins of the people.

In the book of Leviticus that we referred to already today, God has various laws concerning food, clean and unclean, certain laws concerning marriage, certain laws concerning clothing, and all kinds of what we call ceremonial washing. How the people had to bathe and how the priests had to bathe themselves in the service of the Lord. What would God say? God was emphasizing to the people what a holy God he really is.

Food, clean and unclean. You know, actually the word holy means different. It means set apart.

God is set apart from everyone else in creation. He wants us to be set apart from the world in which we live. Then we come over into the New Testament, and we find something that has never existed before in the history of the world.

We find holiness embodied in a man, the man Christ Jesus. Great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh.

And, you know, that's a wonderful thing to think of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ coming down into this world. Holiness embodied in a man. He could look on the people around him and say, which of you convicted me of sin? He knew no sin.

He did no sin. There was no sin in him. And I want to tell you that's one of the great proofs to me of the inspiration of the scriptures that we have four records in the New Testament of an absolutely sinless life.

And I would defy any man to write four biographies of a sinless life. Four biographies of a man in whose life all virtues are in perfect balance. You know, some of us might be kind, but we might have a personality like a dill pickle.

You know, we might be strong in one area and weak in another area, but that wasn't true of the Lord Jesus. Everything was perfect about his life. He never came to the end of a day and wished he had done something he hadn't done or regretted something that he had done.

Imagine it. Dear friends, go back to the Gospels and read the Gospels and praise and adore when you find the life of a sinless, perfect, holy man. And then, of course, you come on through his life and you come to the Garden of Gethsemane.

What was happening in Gethsemane? Well, I believe that in Gethsemane, the Lord Jesus faced the moment when he would take our sins upon himself. That didn't happen in Gethsemane. It happened on the cross.

But he faced that time when he would take our sins upon himself. What happened? He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. That's the difference between you and me and the Lord Jesus.

It pains us to resist temptation, doesn't it? It caused him the most exquisite pain to even contemplate sin, to even contemplate contact with sin, to even think of that time when he would take our sins upon himself in his body on the tree and make expiation for it. He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. The more refined, the more holy, the more sanctified a person is, the more exquisite his suffering is from sin.

Think of the suffering of the Lord Jesus. But I tell you, when I think of the holiness of God, I really have to go to Calvary because of what happened at Calvary. Like Abraham and his son climbing Mount Moriah, there's a sense in which God and his son climbed Calvary that day.

And, in some way that you and I will never understand, our sins were transferred from us to Jesus. He took them upon himself. He who had done no sin has made sins for us.

Question what will God do now? What will a holy God do? This is his sinless Son. He could say, This is my beloved Son in whom I have found all my delight. And now a holy God looks and sees his Son with our sins upon him.

What will he do? He reacts as a holy God must react. He unsheathed his sword, and the sword of divine judgment came down on his lovely Son. The difference, that's holiness.

A holy God must punish sin. The tempest's awful voice was heard. O Christ, it broke on thee.

Thy open bosom was its ward. Thou bore the storm for me. Thy form was scarred.

Thy visage marred now cloudless peace for me. That's wonderful, isn't it? See, a God of holiness, even when his beloved Son was a sin-bearer, unleashing the awful judgment, they came down in horrendous force on the Lord Jesus Christ. On him, almighty vengeance fell that must have plunged the world to hell.

He bore it for a sinful race, and thus became our hiding place. Those are the words of Major Andre. It really beggars human description to think of the holiness of God.

You know, every doctrine in the Scripture has practical applications. Did you know that God never has any doctrine in the Bible, but it's for our benefit? Somebody said every indicative becomes an imperative. That means every statement of fact in the Bible really becomes a command.

And when we study about the holiness of God, we're supposed to apply it to ourselves. That's what we want to do. When I study the holiness of God, what effect should it have on me? Well, first of all, it should produce in me a profound sense of reverence.

Sometimes I think the evangelical world has lost this sense of reverence. We're flippant with God. God said to Moses, And we should think of God with a tremendous sense of awe, and respect, and solemnity.

And we should avoid undue familiarity with him. Josh McDowell said, And I think I know what he meant when he said that. If I really appreciate the holiness of God, it's going to really affect my life.

I'm going to walk with a solemnity before him, and a due sense of respect for him. Not only so, the doctrine of the holiness of God should make me want more and more to be conformed to him. He's holy.

I should be holy. I should hate sin. No double lies.

No living a lie. No hiding sin under the counter. Everything out in the open before God, confessed and forsaken, and walking in purity before him.

That's what Peter tells us. Be ye holy, for I am holy. The doctrine of the holiness of God should make a worshipper out of me.

And it really does. I can't think of the holiness of God without wanting to worship such a God. A God who's impeccable, absolutely sinless.

God who's light, and in whom is no darkness at all. Wonderful thing to teach these things to children, because it will affect their lives as well. I think the doctrine of the holiness of God gives me a tremendous sense of my own sinfulness.

When I think of his holiness, I feel like shriveling and dying. I really do. I feel like Job.

He said, I've heard of you by the hearing of my ear, but now my eye sees you, wherefore I abhor myself. What does abhor mean? It means I hate. Oh dear brother, bad self-image.

That's what he said. He said, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. And I want to tell you, dear friends, the closer we get to the Lord, that's the effect it has on us.

When I get away from the Lord and become cold in heart, neglect the Bible, neglect prayer, I'm not sensitive to it, but I tell you, when I get close to the Lord, I really feel my own utter insignificance and unworthiness. Don't you? And then I think of Isaiah. We read Isaiah last night when he had that great vision of the glory of God.

And what did he say? He said, woe is me, for I am undone, a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. Why do you say that, Isaiah? Because I've seen the Lord. And then Peter had that when he was out fishing one day, and the Lord told him to let down the nets, and they brought the nets up full of fish.

The best fishing day he ever had in his life. And he reacted in a very strange way. He said, depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

Why? What happened? I tell you, he saw the Lord. He saw the glory of the Lord in that moment in a way he had never seen it before. I often use the illustration that Jesus came into the world, and he's a straight edge.

And I stand beside him, and I realize just how crooked I am. You'd never know a crooked line if you didn't know a straight line. If I asked you, what's a crooked line? You'd say one that isn't straight, right? Well, Jesus is a straight line.

And that was a true light that shows up, that enlightens, that lightens up every man coming into the world. He shows us up for what we are. I go into a dark room, and there's dust on the piano, but I don't see the dust.

You turn on the light, and there it is. One day, God turned on the light in this world when he sent Jesus, and it showed us up for just what we are. The true light that lightens every man that comes into the world.

The doctrine of the holiness of God will save us from entertaining shallow views concerning the sinlessness of Christ. You know, there are eminent Bible teachers today who say that Christ could have sinned. There aren't.

It's on the radio, and you read it in the magazines, and all the rest. Could Christ have sinned? They say the temptation in the wilderness wasn't a real temptation if he couldn't have sinned. Friends, that's a human reasoning.

That is not a scriptural statement. It's a human deduction and not correct reasoning. Let me put it this way.

Jesus Christ is God. When Jesus Christ came into the world, he was just as much God as he was in eternity past. You can't be God and have anything less than the full attributes of deity.

The Lord Jesus was just as holy here as a man on earth, as before he ever came into the world. Jesus is not God minus something. Jesus is God plus something.

Plus what? Plus humanity. He never had that before. Paul testifies of him, "...in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." It's a very strong statement.

That means that the Lord Jesus is God and is holy. And being holy, he could not sin. They say, well, he could have sinned as a man on earth.

My question is, if he could have sinned as a man on earth, what is to prevent his sinning as a man in heaven? He's still a man. He carried his humanity back with him into heaven. I'll tell you, if there's any possibility of his sinning as a man in heaven, you and I are in trouble, dear friend.

But there is no possibility, so don't lose sleep over it. I wonder if those who say that Jesus could have sinned realize the implications of what they're saying. Could he have committed murder, fornication, rape, sodomy, or any of those horrible sins we think about today? What blasphemy to even suggest that the Lord Jesus Christ could have done those things.

Yet that's the implication of what they say when they say he could have sinned. They say, well, what about the temptation? Was it a real temptation if he could not have sinned? My answer, yes. The purpose of the temptation was to prove his sinlessness, not to prove that he could sin, but to prove that in the most adverse circumstances he could not and did not sin.

Well, they say he was human just like us. There's a difference. The Lord Jesus was perfect humanity.

You and I are fallen humanity. There's quite a difference. Let me say that again.

The Lord Jesus was perfect humanity. We're fallen humanity. Everything about us has been twisted by sin.

Our minds, everything about us is not his. The Lord Jesus could be tempted from without. That's what happened in the wilderness.

He was tempted from without. He couldn't be tempted from within. We can be tempted from without and from within.

Good to keep these distinctions in mind. I'll say that again. The Lord Jesus could be tempted from without.

Satan came and said, command that these stones be made bread. He brought them up the pinnacle of the temple. He brought them up to a high mountain and tempted him in those places.

Those were temptations from without. But there was nothing within to respond to those temptations. He said, the prince of this world cometh and findeth nothing in me.

And so, we cling to the absolute sinlessness of our blessed Lord and to the fact that he couldn't, under any circumstances, have sinned because he's God and God is absolutely holy. Somebody might say, look, there are two verses in Hebrews that speak about his being made perfect. Now, I'd like to look at those verses with you.

Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 10. If he was perfect, how could he be made perfect? Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 10. For it became him for whom are all things and by whom are all things in bringing many sons unto glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering.

You say, well, if he was always sinless, if he was perfect in all his ways, thoughts, acts, deeds, motives, how could he be perfect? Dear friends, the answer is right in the verse. To make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering. He became perfect as our Savior.

If he had stayed in heaven, he never could have been the perfect Savior, could he? In order to be the perfect Savior, he had to leave the ivory palaces and come down to this world and suffer, bleed, and die. It has nothing to do with his sinlessness at all. It doesn't affect his sinlessness.

It affects his office as Savior. To make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering. And because he came in the incarnation, and because he went to the cross and died and rose again, we today have a perfect Savior.

And the other verse is Hebrews chapter 5 and verse 9. It doesn't use the word here. I'll go back to verse 7. Who in the days of his flesh when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death and was heard in that he feared, though he was a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered and being made perfect, there it is, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. And once again, the key is lying right in the door, isn't it? How was he made perfect? The author of eternal salvation.

He was always perfect as far as his character was concerned. He was always perfect as far as his ways and his works were concerned. But here he becomes perfect as the Savior of the world.

Praise his holy name. Hoser said, 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. Wonderful, isn't it? Wonderful imagery.

The heavens are not clean and the stars are not pure in the sight of the thrice holy God. And just let me close with a lovely verse in Exodus chapter 15. Exodus chapter 15, and I think it says it very well.

Exodus 15, verse 11. Who is like unto thee, O Lord among the gods? Who is like thee? Glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. The Spirit of God said much in few words there, but I love that expression, glorious in holiness.

We have a God who is morally perfect. In all his thoughts, words, deeds, motive, and in every other way. We have a God who hates sin, who cannot tolerate sin, who cannot allow sin to come into his presence, but has provided a wonderful redemption for us so that we might come into his presence cleansed from every spot and stain.

Thank you, President. Let's turn to, well, inside the cover. Glory to God on high.

It's wonderful to know that we have a great high priest who is touched with the feeling of affirmative. It's wonderful to know that we have an advocate when we sin. Glory to God on high.

Let's stand and sing these four sentences. Glory to God on high. He is God's honor and joy.

We do God's blessing through His name all the kings ever will.

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