

Characteristics of the Upright Man

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[0 : 00] Since last September, we've been studying pursuing holiness in an unholy world.

! And of course, the basis for our study, lesson one, was found in the book of Hebrews 12.14, Without holiness, no one will see the Lord.

Late in our study, just a few weeks ago, I injected another word in place of holiness, and that was the word godliness. The Puritans spoke of the great gain of godliness.

Many sermons were fashioned around a passage found in 1 Timothy 6.6, but godliness with contentment is great gain. One such Puritan was Thomas Watson who said this, We should be holiest when times are most evil.

And I wonder if Reverend Watson looked into the crystal ball and saw the times in which we live. But as we close out our study tonight, I want to inject a third word to describe true followers of the Lord Christ.

[1 : 25] It is a word used frequently by the Puritans and has practically disappeared from the landscape in the 21st century. And it is the word upright, as he is an upright man.

That used to be a very popular quote. I cannot recall ever hearing that by anyone described in this church or any church I've been to.

It was very popular in the 18th century. When we talk about a man being upright, we're talking about his character. In our case, we're talking obviously about Christian character.

So mark this down in your mental file. We are to put on display the proper character when we are with our wives, our parents, our children, our grandchildren, our church members, our pastor, our fellow employees, our bosses, our friends, our enemies, and especially when we're all alone.

That last comment I think is very instructive and important. I once saw a church marquee that said, your character is what you do when you're all alone.

[2 : 46] That's who you truly are. That is a true statement. It contains negatives and positives. For one thing, as followers of Christ, I think we all realize we're never alone.

Never alone. The Holy Spirit takes up residence in us at the moment of justification. Never leaves us. Never forsakes us. God is with us all the time and a witness to what we do, what we think, even down to our subconscious minds.

I came across a question when I was preparing this lesson. It gave me pause. I'm still reflecting on it. Maybe this will be your summer statement to reflect on.

You can reflect on this this summer or the rest of your life even. If everybody in your church had your character, what kind of a church would you be? That's some deep theology there, you know. Might be troubling to some. Certainly something to reflect on. But I want to talk for just a few minutes about Christian character. There was a word widely used in the Old Testament.

[4 : 10] It was known by the Puritans and the Reformers. It was brought to the shores of America by the Puritans. It was a word understood by the Calvinistic Baptists and Calvinistic Presbyterians, both of whom played a vital role in the founding of our nation and in the writing of our important documents, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States.

And again, I'm referring to the word upright. Upright in character. The word upright and companion words, uprightly or uprightness, are used some 97 times in the King James Version of the Bible. It is a word that has largely disappeared from our landscape. When's the last time you heard someone say he displays an upright life or lives uprightly?

Yet it is essential to Christian living and to sanctification process. Remember, that's the lifelong process that God uses to recreate us into the image of Christ.

Someone has said, if you want to be wise, read the Proverbs. If you want to be holy, read the Psalms. Here is a sampling of what we find in both books concerning the upright man in the King

James Version.

[5 : 40] Psalm 7, My defenses of God, which saveth the upright in heart. Psalm 7 again, For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth both behold the upright.

Psalm 15, Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

Psalm 18, I was also upright before him, and kept myself from mine iniquity. Psalm 21, Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait on thee.

Proverbs 2, He layeth up sound wisdom, for the righteous, he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. Proverbs 10, The way of the Lord is strength to the upright.

Proverbs 11, The integrity of the upright shall guide them. Again, Proverbs 11, The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them, and final verse, again, Proverbs 11, By the blessing of the upright, the city is exalted.

[6 : 55] And those are just samplings from the word, and of the word upright, used in Holy Scripture. Several years ago, I came across a Puritan writing which spoke of the character of the upright man.

I still have that book in my library. That sounded good to me, but then I came across a work, and that particular book covered six marks of the upright man.

And then I came across a work that detailed the 11 marks of the upright man. And then I found a writing of a 15, and then another writing of 29 marks of the upright man.

And I finally gave up when I found on the internet a paper, 62 marks of the upright man. And I didn't think there was any way I was going to teach on 62 marks tonight.

So I made a selection. The marks or characteristics that I chose are in no particular order of importance. They're all important as we strive for holiness.

[8 : 10] The first one might come as a little bit of surprise, maybe, I don't know. The upright man studies to obtain the approval of God. 2 Timothy 2.15 Study to show thyself approved unto God.

Seeking the approval of God is the business of the upright man. God is a person, and like any person, the more time we spend with Him, the better we get to know Him.

And He can be known. He wants to be known in intimate detail. As we get to know God better and better, we're able to better teach what we learn and pass it on to our children and our grandchildren, or in my case, great-grandchildren.

The upright man loves God without reservation. The infallible characteristics of the upright man is contained in the greatest commandment.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. Of course, we know love and worship are both related. We can do neither if one is absent.

[9 : 20] We cannot be in communion with God until we give Him the priority that He deserves from each one of us. But this begs another question. How can we know for certain that we love Him at the level that He demands?

John gives a great answer to that in his epistle, 1 John 2. By this we know that we've come to know Him if we keep His commandments. The one who says, I've come to know Him and does not keep His commandments as a liar and the truth is not in Him.

But whoever keeps His word, in Him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we're in Him. The one who says He abides in Him ought Himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

And then in 1 John 4, if someone says, I love God and hates his brother, he is a liar. For the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

Note that one of these passages is vertical and one is horizontal. Love God, love your fellow man. Jesus went further when He was on earth and said, love your enemies.

[10 : 33] I mean, probably a bunch of Pharisees said, He's meddling now. You know, love my enemies. The very mark of the Christian is love one for another. The Lord said, by demonstratable love, the world would know that we belong to Him and the world would rightly conclude by looking at our love that Jesus came from the Father and is the true Messiah.

Make one final comment about the great commandment. No one has ever attained that level of love except the Lord Jesus. You will never attain that in this lifetime.

It is not to perfection in this life, but it is to be the direction of our life. But because we constantly violate and fall short of the great commandment, it drives us to our knees thanking our Lord and

Messiah who has attained the perfection of love and that is why we are to stay cloaked in His righteousness.

The upright man loves others to include family, friends, strangers, and enemies. The upright man fears God. For the believer, that's reverential trust and awe.

We fear God because fear is the beginning of knowledge. Proverbs 1.7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

[12:01] The upright man is a true worshiper of God. You can read about that in John chapter 4, the woman at the well. The upright man obeys God whatever the circumstance.

The upright man bears much true fruit. How do we bear fruit? How do we fulfill the fruit of Galatians 5.23? To have joy, love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control.

Well, the answer to that is in John chapter 15. I'm the true vine and the Father is the vine dresser.

Every branch that does not bear fruit He takes away and every branch that bears fruit He prunes so that it may bear more fruit.

You're already clean because of the word which I've spoken to you. Abide in me and I in you as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me.

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me and I in him he bears much fruit for apart from me you can do nothing.

[13:11] If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away as a branch and dries up and they gather them and cast them into the fire and they are burned. If you abide in me and my words abide in you ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

My Father is glorified by this that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples just as the Father has loved me I have also loved you. Abide in my love.

If you keep my commandments you will abide in my love just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full.

The upright man loves his wife. Ephesians 5 Husbands love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.

The upright man trains his children. And brothers we can't train our children unless we spend time with them. And I wish I could roll that clock back.

[14:24] And I can't. I'd love to roll that back. I speak to young fathers and fathers to be even that the day is coming when you will say to your child let's go do this or that.

And they will look at you and say Dad I already have plans with my friends. I remember that day for both my boys. That day is coming and you can't stop it you can't slow it down.

We basically have 18 years to train that child and after that we have to do it long distance. The upright man is sensitive to sin and deals with it daily and even hourly in his life.

The upright man knows he's not upright. That's a great one. He knows he's not upright but he presses on to be glorifying to God honoring to Christ and obedient to the Spirit.

Philippians 3 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended but this one thing I do forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth into those things which are before I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

[15:46] And there's so much more that I want to say. The upright man is responsible. He's a spiritual leader. He's humble.

He defends the Word of God. He's a man of prayer. He's a man of repentance and confession. Prefers the glory of God to the applause of men.

He keeps His Word both to God and to man. The upright man is at peace with God and man. He disciplines himself. He strives always to be progressing toward holiness.

He works to make others upright. Meets others' needs usually without them knowing it. He's liberal in giving to the church.

He orders His life aright. He will finish strong. He will die in peace. And will, by God's grace, anchor His family for generations to come.

[16:54] So I just want to name a few as we close out tonight and this year. So how do we end, guys? Same way we started.

Strive for holiness, my brothers, for we are living in an unholy world. Be about the business of striving.

Let's close with a word of prayer. Father, I thank You for this group of men. I thank You, Lord, for the vision that Dr. McBride had to start this class.

He once commented that this building which was built during his tenure, this portion of our church, was his legacy. And we said, Mike, your legacy meets every Monday night called Fat Boys.

That's his legacy. And Lord, we thank You for that vision that he had. I remember Lord studying Steve Farrar in a book and he said, one out of every 500 evangelical churches has a ministry specific for men.

[18 : 11] So we're one of 500 churches across our nation that do that. Lord, I pray for these men during the summer. I hope they will avail themselves of the Saturday morning Bible studies that we're doing once a month.

We have one coming up, I think the 12th. And Lord, we just pray that they can come closer to their families, closer to their Lord, closer to the Word and be a pillar in the church of God as we wait for the Lord Jesus Christ to return.

We ask all this in His holy name. Amen. Thank you.