

The Holiness of Christ

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[0 : 00] We've been talking about holiness now for four weeks.

! Today we come to week five and we're going to focus in this lesson exclusively on the benchmark! or standard by which we strive for holiness.

And I'm speaking of course of the holiness of Christ. The Lord Jesus gave us a command found in the book of 1 Peter, You shall be holy for I am holy.

1 Peter 1.16 And as we carefully consider that verse, it forces us to come to grips with certain obvious facts.

1. And we know all these. If you don't know these, come see me. We are sinful creatures. We are wicked.

[1 : 07] Our hearts are deceitful. We have all missed the mark of God's perfect holiness. There are many instances in Holy Scripture, both Old and New Testament, where sinful people came near to God and fled in terror and disgrace.

Consider this passage in the book of Revelation. 1 Peter 1.16 1 Peter 1.16 The kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and powerful and everyone, slave and free.

So suddenly that takes in the whole earth of unbelievers. 2.17 Hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who is seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

For the great day of their wrath has come and who can stand. They're asking to be killed. They want mountains to fall on top of them.

And I've always found it interesting that they want to hide themselves from the wrath of the Lamb. We typically don't think of a Lamb with wrath, but in this case it is.

[2 : 45] And I've said many times, here we have what is perhaps the greatest and most widespread prayer service in all of history.

Unfortunately, the object of these prayers is to non-living items, namely mountains and rocks, inanimate objects.

These people would rather be crushed to death than to face the Father and the Son. They said, just kill us.

That is how unsafe people will react when they realize that they will be standing before a holy God as judge. Clearly, these are unbelievers.

in that sixth chapter of Revelation, the church there, if you know your book of Revelation, is already in heaven. Chapter 4, verse 1, come up here.

[3 : 54] After the church age, come up here. How should believers behave? The true believer flees.

But he flees to the Lord. It's a big difference, isn't there? True believers don't look for mountains and caves and rocks.

We flee to the Lord for refuge. That is one reason I love the Psalms. I love to read the Psalms.

The word refuge appears in the Psalms in 47 passages. They're just fabulous verses of Scripture and sections of Scripture.

He is our shelter. Why do we do this? Because as Spirit-filled and Spirit-led believers, we know that Christ is righteous and that His righteousness has been accredited to our account.

[4 : 58] He imputed our sins to Himself. He imputed His righteousness to us. Dr. Sproul, he's talking about double imputation. All of this is a way of saying the following.

Our security in Christ is based firmly on His atoning work and not our own just mere profession.

We don't put faith in faith. We have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finish work. So our security is in Christ. I said last time, it's not even in a place.

A lot of people say, if I can just get to heaven and close the door, I'll be okay. No. No. Millions, maybe billions of angels fell from heaven. Satan, Lucifer, he was cast out.

He fell to the earth. Your security is not in a place. It's in a person. The Lord Jesus Christ. So in what way do the Scriptures testify concerning Christ Jesus?

[6 : 06] Consider some of these New Testament passages. He is without sin. Hebrews 4.15 He is the one who committed no sin.

1 Peter 2.22 He had no sin. 2 Corinthians 5.21 And in Him is no sin. 1 John 3.15 Do you get the impression that the Bible wants to really emphasize the fact this is our sinless Savior?

Our sinless Lord. Well, what about the Old Testament writers? That's New Testament. Isaiah called Him the righteous servant in Isaiah 53.

Psalms 43. The psalmist said He loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Psalm 47. The fact that Christ was without sin is taught throughout the Bible.

In every book practically. Jesus offers testimony concerning Himself. This is what He says in the Gospel of John chapter 8 verse 46.

[7 : 23] Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? That's quite a comment. He says to a group of people Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?

Now, what really makes that question so interesting is He asked that to the Jewish leadership during a very intense argument.

They thought they were going to argue with the Lord. You don't want to take that on. In the midst of this argument with the Jewish leadership, Jesus said, You all are devil worshipers.

That's pretty plain. Yet the Lord asked this question and no one tried to respond back to Him. No one answered Him. Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?

No one stepped forward and said, Oh yeah, I can do that. I saw you do this or that. I heard this about you. No one stepped forward. They didn't want to engage in conversation.

[8 : 31] They knew He was sinless. They knew that. Now, in what ways was Jesus holy? One could say that He was holy because He committed no sin.

And that would be correct, obviously. It's a correct statement, but for our purposes, it really doesn't go quite far enough. He was sinless because He lived a life in absolute conformity to the will of His Father.

He didn't do anything that was ever outside the will of God the Father. You remember when He came from heaven, He set aside a portion of His glory.

He left the throne. He came down here and He totally submitted Himself to the will of His Father. Here's a few scriptures. John 6, 38.

For I've come down from heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. The Father sent Him down here. John 4, 34.

[9 : 39] Jesus said to them, My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work. And then in John 8, 29. He who sent Me is with Me.

He has not left Me alone for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him. All those are references to this wonderful, magnificent relationship He had with the Father.

The statement that Jesus makes in John 8 is a very positive declaration. And it touches on His actions. But in the case of Jesus, His personal holiness while encompassing actions also goes beyond them to embrace both His attitudes and His motives.

So we have the whole package here. That is where we mere humans can get into a lot of trouble. All of us have been guilty of doing the right thing with the wrong motive.

You know, we have to be on guard. Yeah, I did the right thing, but my motive was not pure. That is never pleasing to God. Never pleasing to God.

[10 : 56] So holiness has more to do than actions only. There's more. Our motives must also be holy and those must arise from a desire to do the will of God.

And may I say this, even if I may not, I'm going to do it. Many people who claim to be followers of Christ, believers in God, they don't know His will.

They don't know His will. We're supposed to do His will. They don't know His will. Why? They don't crack open a Bible. They do very little or no study of His Word. And that's where we find out what His will is for us.

I love what so many of the great preachers, they say, if you want to hear from God, read the Bible. And if you want to hear God out loud, read it out loud.

That's God talking to us. Let me add a little another piece of fuel to the fire. Not only must our actions be holy, and besides those actions, the presence of holy motivates us.

[12:21] Behind every one of those actions should be a holy motive. Even our thoughts must be holy. Now we're getting on the really thin ice. Why is this true?

Because God knows our thoughts even before we form them in our mind. He knows our thoughts. And at this point, I start to have some thoughts of helplessness by this time.

Allow me to jump in with some good news. The Lord Jesus met these standards perfectly. Perfectly. Without any shade of sin or doubt or transgression.

He didn't have any of those. He met these standards perfectly not on His behalf, but on our behalf. On our behalf.

As a first century Jew, of course, the Lord was under the perfect law of God. He fulfilled that law and He fulfilled it perfectly for all those who belong to Him.

[13:26] Galatians 4, verse 4 and 5, but when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons.

He redeemed us from the law. The law never saved anybody. The law wasn't designed to save anybody. The law showed us our sinfulness and drove us to the one who fulfilled the law, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The law is referred to as a mirror. We look into the mirror of the law, we see sinfulness. We see us as sinners. And we're driven to the Savior. And when I try in some feeble way to focus on the holiness of God, I am drawn to Isaiah chapter 6.

I love Isaiah chapter 6. It'll be very familiar to all of you. In the year that King Uzziah died, this is Isaiah talking, of course, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne.

He was high and lifted up. And the train of His robe, that's the hymn, the train of His robe filled the temple.

[14:50] Above Him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings. With two He covered His face, with two He covered His feet, with two He flew. And one called to another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.

The whole earth is full of His glory. That was antiphonal. That was like row, row, row your boat. This angel started and this one kicked in and you had this going on.

It's going on now. Right now. And then it says, concerning the temple, Well, how did Isaiah respond to all that?

He said, Woe is me. Use the word woe. Very significant. Woe is me, for I am lost.

For I am a man of unclean lips. And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

[16:08] I mean, what can we say about Isaiah? Isaiah said he had a potty mouth. He just did. In the year that King Uzziah died, we see the prophet Isaiah going to the temple.

In a vision, Isaiah sees the Lord seated on the throne. And just so there's no confusion as to who the Lord on the throne was, John in his gospel identifies him as the Lord Jesus Christ.

So Isaiah is seeing the pre-incarnate Christ. And he sees these seraphim. Those are very special angels.

They're like, Dr. Sproul calls them celestial helicopters. They hover above the throne and make declarations about the holiness of Christ.

Thrice holy. I've always thought, God, the Father is holy, the Son is holy, the Spirit is holy. Thrice holy God. And these are the seraphim.

[17:13] And they're declaring this. And the foundations are shaking. The room's filling with smoke. It's got to be frightening. It's got to be frightening. Now let's understand something about Isaiah.

He's probably the holiest man in all Israel in his day. Can you imagine seeing this vision?

And when he sees it, he pronounces a curse on himself. That's what it means when he says, woe is me. That's a curse on yourself. Isaiah knew that he was not holy.

And he knew that his eyes had seen him who is absolute holiness. And he's got to be wondering himself, how am I going to survive this encounter?

How am I going to live through this? Well, in that great chapter, it says this, Then one of the seraphim flew to me having in his hand a burning coal that he'd taken with tongs from the altar.

[18 : 28] And he touched my mouth and said, Behold, this has touched your lips. Your guilt is taken away, and I love this, and your sin atoned for.

That's an important word for us, isn't it? We've been atoned for at the cross. Our sins and our guilt have been removed at the cross.

Where'd they go? They were put on Jesus. They were put on Jesus. It's called propitiation, meaning appeasement. Who got appeased?

God the Father. His wrath toward our sins and toward us as sinners. It was appeased. There's also the word for satisfaction. God the Father can look at us, see Jesus, and say, I'm satisfied.

Your sins are atoned for. Isaiah survived this encounter because his sins had been atoned for. Well, when were they atoned for?

[19 : 30] He lived 700 B.C. They were atoned for at the cross. Isaiah, like so many Old Testament saints, looked forward to the cross, not with full understanding.

We look back to the cross with probably more understanding, but not full. We don't fully grasp what went on there. But he was atoned for at the cross.

That is true of every believer. Fore and aft. Fore and aft. If we seriously reflect on the holiness of the Lord, then we too will cry out, woe is me.

If we look at that holiness, if we sit down, and I've been doing this lately at my farm, it's nice and cool early in the morning, and I slip out so as not to wake anybody in the house.

I won't call any names, but let her sleep. And I'll go out there early, early. And I'll sit there talking to the Lord with my Bible and listening to things on my little machine that Kyle's daughter could work, and I have trouble working it, but anyway.

[20 : 43] And taking in nature and confessing and marvelous, marvelous time.

I try to seriously reflect on the holiness of the Lord. And I cry out, woe is me. That is why we must make sure we're in Christ. We must make sure that our sins have been atoned for.

That only happens when you're in Christ. That is referred to as the doctrine of assurance. Now, at this point, some argue, well, my assurance was receive the moment of salvation.

That's true. But then they go on and say, I don't have to revisit that. That's not true. To respond, let me give you a quote from the late Jerry Bridges. I really like him.

I'm growing in my admiration for him. And I wanted to write him a letter, and it's too late. The more we grow in holiness, the more we need assurance that the perfect righteousness of Christ is credited specifically to us.

[21 : 56] This is true because a part of growing in holiness is the Holy Spirit making us aware of our need for holiness. That's part of the growth in holiness.

As we see this need, it is well for us to always keep in mind the righteousness of Jesus Christ on our behalf.

And the fact that 2 Corinthians 5.21, God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

You know, I remember reading that one time when Dr. McBride was still here, and I told Mike in his office, that may be the most important verse of Scripture in the Bible that I've ever read.

God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. So how should we who are sinful pursue holiness?

[23 : 00] Well, there's really only one answer to that question. Only one. You've got to flee. Now, we don't flee like those unbelievers did, flee from the rocks, or we flee to the Living Rock, capital R-O-C-K.

The rock is Christ Jesus. We flee to Him. He is the very rock of our salvation. We who believe and are already saved don't flee there to be saved again.

There is no evidence in the Bible that we must be born again, again. Does that make sense? I love with my good Arminian friends at Wesleyan Church and other places, you know, how many times are you born again?

Nothing about being born again, again. We flee there because we are saved and we want to confirm in our heart that we've been saved through His holiness and righteousness alone.

There's no other name under heaven by which we are saved. The Apostle Paul is a great help at this point. 1 Timothy 1.15 Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the worst.

[24 : 25] Paul was the chief of sinners until I came along. But He was the very chief at that time.

The holiness of Christ is meant to be a great example for the way we live our life as well.

Consider again the words of Christ when He said, I always do what pleases the Father. Always. There was never a lapse. Never, well, you know, today I don't feel very well. I've got a headache. Things didn't go well last night. Didn't get much sleep. With that verse in mind, let me issue a challenge. I want you to think about this the rest of the week until we meet again. Do we dare to make this our personal goal in this life? Do what pleases the Father? Do we want that to be the motivation behind everything we do? Does this please the Father? If we take up that goal as a personal challenge, we must then live a life where we scrutinize everything we do, our thoughts, our conversation, our whole life. [25 : 47] The Scottish theologian John Brown said this, Holiness consists of thinking as God thinks and willing as God wills.

holiness. Well, that's a high calling. That's a high calling. That is both a worthy goal and a very tall order.

Holiness is a high road and we are to pursue it even in the midst of an unholy world. And you know, I'll close with this. It's been my observation. We started this five weeks ago. I think the world has gotten less holy in five weeks than it is five weeks ago.

Thank you.