

# Made Righteous

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[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. We're continuing our study of pursuing holiness in an unholy world.

! And as we finished last time, we saw angels in heaven declaring the Lord thrice holy. You see that both in the book of Isaiah and the book of Revelation. And like the angels of heaven, we too should acknowledge the holiness of God.

That's what believers do. And by God, of course, I'm referring to the three persons of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That's the one true God.

And actually acknowledging the holiness of God is a form of praise and worship. And of course, we're all called to engage in that.

[ 1 : 05 ] Now, the Old Testament is filled with such praise and worship. Moses, in fact, in the book of Exodus, made this declaration in the 15th chapter.

Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Don't let that scare you. I looked up that word. It's people in power or even idols. But there are no other true gods or deity.

Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods, who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders. That's praise.

That's what Moses is doing. Even the names and titles of God denote His holiness. Many times in Scripture, He is referred to as the Holy One.

Other times, that phrase is added to with the words Holy One of Israel. Now, we talked about this last week.

[ 2 : 09 ] But the description of God as holy is the most mentioned attribute in the Bible. The 17th century theologian Stephen Sharnock spoke often of the holiness of God.

He and others described God's holiness as the perfection of His other attributes. And this is what he meant by that.

Sharnock said His power is holy power. His mercy is holy mercy. His wisdom is holy wisdom.

And we could go on and on, couldn't we? I mean, we could continue with the list of His attributes until we exhaust them, if that's even possible.

Well, why is God worthy of our praise? We could give a lot of reasons, but primarily it rests on His holiness. He stands apart from all creation, all created beings, human beings, created angels, fallen angels.

[ 3 : 19 ] Obviously, He stands apart from all His creation. And as a reminder, we are commanded by this same holy God to be holy.

He tells us in many passages, Old and New Testament, that we are to be holy because I am holy. That's a tall order, by the way.

As we develop this, we'll learn more and more just how tall an order that is. The Puritans understood that God demanded perfect holiness from all His creatures.

Now think about that. How could it be any other way? Would a perfect God settle for imperfect praise, imperfect worship, or imperfect holiness?

Holiness is the bullseye on the target. And God certainly is not in the business of relaxing His standards of perfection in all areas, including His requirements that we be holy.

[ 4 : 20 ] Now, if you're like me right now, some panic is setting in. You're saying, well, I'm really not holy. And then you're also saying, and I know Tom, he's not either. But we'll get to that.

Maybe not tonight, but we'll get there. In the Old Testament book of Habakkuk, we read this. He says, you who are of pure eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong.

He can't even gaze at evil. He doesn't look on wrong. I mean, when Jesus was on earth, He's walking around with all these sinners.

How did He do that? His glory was veiled in human flesh. That's the only explanation. And we got a peek of that on the Mount of Transfiguration, didn't we?

And God, to spare Peter, James, and John so they didn't die, He put them in a coma. He just knocked them out. Rather than let them see the full glory of Christ and just be gone or burned up or whatever would happen.

[ 5 : 28 ] Let me list what may seem to be some startling facts about God. God never excuses sin. God never overlooks our sins.

God never winks at sin and says, that's okay. I might do that with my granddaughters, but God doesn't do that with us. Now, you know, you might say, well, that's pretty thin ice.

Isn't that the very foundation of the gospel message that God does excuse or overlook our sins?

No. Far from that. He takes our accumulated sins and He places them on His dear Son.

That's what He does with our sins. He doesn't just wink at it like a doting grandfather would do. He puts them on His Son, His dear Son.

1 Corinthians 5.21 For our sake, He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

[ 6 : 37 ] Please note carefully in that passage that Christ did not become a sinner. The church has debated that over the years, but at no time did Jesus ever become a sinner.

He took upon Himself our sins. That is what is meant by the atonement. So how many of our sins did He atone for?

All of them. All of them. He took all of our sins, past, present, and future. And some well-meaning Christian people struggle with that fact. We had a dear brother.

He's with the Lord now. He used to come every Sunday morning to see me down front. He couldn't grasp that. He said, he just struggled with that. They have a problem with future sins.

This brother had a problem with future sins. He understood an atonement for His past sins. He even understood the atonement in relation to His present sins.

[ 7 : 44 ] But what about the future sins we commit after we're saved? Well, guys, when Jesus went to the cross, all our sins were future.

Every one of them. That was 2,000 years ago. 2,000 years ago. But let me just say to you, if we have one sin lingering out there that has not been atoned for, we cannot and we will not dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

I heard MacArthur say this about heaven. He said, I'm going to be interested in seeing the pearly gates, transparent gold streets, all the jewels that are adorned on the walls of heaven for about three minutes.

And after three minutes, I've got that out of my system. But what's going to fascinate me is being in a place where there is no sin. And we can't conceive of that, can we, on this planet?

A place of no sin. Again, we can't gain admission if we're carrying with us sins. He took all our sins and now by imputation, we dwell in the righteousness of God.

[ 9 : 14 ] It's not inaccurate to say that God hates sin. And I mean, you can give a trivial pursuit question and say, does God hate anything? Oh, no, no, God's love.

He doesn't hate. Oh, yeah, yeah, He hates some things. He hates sin. The late Dr. R.C. Sproul described it as sin as cosmic treason against God.

Hate and any connection to God seems very extreme. So let's see what Scripture says to us.

Zechariah chapter 8. I think this is the first time I ever read from Zechariah.

23 years in here. For thus says the Lord of hosts, As I purposed to bring disaster to you when your fathers provoked me to wrath, and I did not relent, says the Lord of hosts.

So again, have I purposed in these days to bring good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah?

Fear not. These are the things that you shall do.

[ 10 : 17 ] Speak the truth to one another. Render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace. Do not devise evil in your hearts against one another and love no false oath.

For all these things I hate, declares the Lord. Those are some of the things that he hates. Are there others? Well, yeah.

Probably the most well-known one found in the book of Proverbs. There are six things that the Lord hates. Seven that are an abomination to him.

And here they are. Haughty eyes. A lying tongue. And hands that shed innocent blood. A heart that devises wicked plans.

Feet that run rapidly to evil. A false witness who declares lies. And one who spreads strife among brothers.

[ 11 : 21 ] That's Proverbs chapter 6 verses 16 to 19. Seven things that God hates. The truth is that as we grow in holiness more, the hatred of sin in our life will grow.

The hatred of sin. David understood this. And in the Psalms, he wrote this. Through your precepts, I get understanding therefore, I hate every false way.

And that was David. So as we grow in holiness, we also grow in our hatred of sin. God is incapable himself of growing in holiness.

He can't do it. He is absolute holiness, therefore, he has an absolute hatred of sin. Now, we need to come to grips with this core truth.

Anytime we sin in word, in deed, in thought, we are engaged in an exercise that God hates. He hates it. Jerry Bridges said that we must fight the urge to create within us an attitude that our sins and the things that God hates can peacefully coexist.

[ 12 : 48 ] They're at war with each other. They're at war. There's a war going on. And it rages all around us and inside us because we live in unredeemed flesh. I mean, we battle it.

I mean, read Romans 7. That's Paul the Christian. The man we would hold out to be the greatest Christian to ever live. And what a battle. I mean, it starts out, what a wretched man am I.

And it goes downhill from there. Which brings me to this important question. Can we create in our own hearts the hatred of sin that God has in His?

Lee is teaching on the life of Joseph on Wednesday night. It is shaping up to be one of the great studies taught in this building. And we can learn much from Joseph in the arena of battling sin.

Remember his episode with Potiphar's wife? She was physically attracted to him and wanted an intimate relationship. For most young men, that would be a great temptation.

[ 13 : 54 ] Here was his response to her overtures. How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?

How could he do that? And let's face it, he would be transgressing his relationship with Potiphar. As David with Uzziah, a very brave soldier in his army. But they came to understand the sin was against God.

The sin is always against God. So one of the chief components of striving for holiness is the cultivation of our hatred of sin.

A good place to start is the attitude displayed by Joseph. He just said, I'm not going to do this. We're probably going to get into some of the writings of John Owen and one of the great books he wrote was The Mortification of Sin.

[ 14 : 58 ] We don't use that word a whole lot anymore. And I think it was John Owen's, and others have done it too, but they came up with that phrase, be killing sin or it will be killing you. And I'll tell you, maybe something we can learn here.

If you have a temptation, you're battling someday, what is it? Just speak it out loud, unless your wife's sitting next to you, because then you've got to go four hours explaining why you said it. But just say, Lord, I want to kill that. I want to kill it right now. Whatever it is. If it's leading towards sin, I want to kill that.

I want to mortify that. We all know that God is the judge of the universe. We also know that one of His chief attributes is that of impartiality.

God is impartial. You can read about that in the first chapter of 1 Peter. And that's the same place where Peter issues a call to be holy.

[ 16 : 04 ] We'll most likely look at that section of Scripture in a future lesson. And we, of course, embrace the truth that God is an impartial judge. And at the same time, though, I think the case could be made that God judges His children more severely than He does unbelievers.

He holds us to a higher standing, a higher accountability. We see that in the judgment of Moses, who by one act of disbelief was excluded from the land of Canaan.

We see that in His judgment of Jonah, who sinned by running from the command of God, and he ends up in the belly of a great fish. Which is an interesting story if you think about it, because that fish could have been his doom, but it turned out to have saved his life.

Because the fish went down to the bottom, and Jonah says there were mountains under there. You know when we discovered mountains in the oceans of the world 300 years ago?

Why didn't they read Jonah? We see it in the life of David and his sin against Uriah. The sword never departed from David's house.

[ 17 : 24 ] And when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had had his experience with Bathsheba, and after he tried to hide it, and hide it, and hide it, and he couldn't, so he had Uriah killed.

He murdered Uriah. Brave soldier. He murdered him. And Nathan came to him. Remember the story? It's in your notes.

He said, man in your kingdom is rich. He owns it all. He's wealthy. He's got herds and money and you name it. And when a guy came to visit, the foreigner, he said he wanted to put on a feed, so he took a little ewe lamb from his servant who had it as a pet, raised it like it was his child, and he barbecued it.

And David see, he said, that guy is going to pay that back and then he's going to die. Now I think Nathan just stared him down. I could see that in my head.

And David kind of got confused. He's not saying anything. And then finally Nathan said, you are the man. And I think in the moment David saw that, he went to his face.

[ 18 : 44 ] He said, you are the man. And he said this, he said, God is not going to take away your salvation. And then he added a three-letter word that will preach, but.

But. It's also used to call it billy goat religion. He butted him all over the place. But. And he did. He paid fourfold with his family.

You know. Daughter raped. Son murdered because he committed the rape. And one of his sons tried to kill David. I mean, it went on and on and on. He paid fourfold back.

That sword never departed from David. And David never built the temple. That was going to be his great contribution. Thought it would last forever.

And God said, no, you're not going to build that temple. I'll leave that to your son Solomon. So, how do we strive for holiness in an unholy world? I think we're on our way to developing a list to live by before we're through here.

[ 19 : 49 ] Not tonight, but in May or whenever. I think step one, we acknowledge that God hates sin. All kinds. He doesn't grade on a curve.

Well, that sin deserves a D, but this sin over here deserves a B minus. He doesn't grade on a curve. We acknowledge that God hates sin. We create in our own hearts a hatred of sin.

And we don't play around with sin because it is a powerful force. Sin is a powerful force.

You know who understands that? The devil understands that, doesn't he? Tell you who else understands that. Some of you young guys won't even know what this means. Madison Avenue understands it.

Now, where's Madison Avenue? New York City. I've been there. 1959, we've moved up there.

What's on Madison Avenue? The major advertisers of the world.

[ 20 : 54 ] The major advertisers. You see an ad on TV? It came from Madison Avenue in New York City. They do 99.9% of the world's advertising.

And I'm telling you guys, you can't see an ad for Ace Hardware without seeing a woman in a bikini selling a hammer. And she didn't know how to use that hammer.

Because the devil and Madison Avenue know that's a hot button for men. It just is. I read a thing not long ago by a theologian.

He said, 98% of men lust. The other 2% lie about it. I mean, don't get mad at me. I'm just saying this is what the guy said. Don't play around with sin.

It's powerful. Don't engage in antinomian behavior. Now, I've used a big word. So, I've got to maybe explain. Antinomianism.

[ 22 : 00 ] Antinomianism arose in the early church. Paul fought it. John fought it. Peter fought it. Jude fought it. And the belief in antinomianism is prevalent in the church today.

Let me define it. Antinomianism is the heresy that once you are saved, you can live any way you want to. I mean, you're saved.

You're going to heaven. You don't have to bother with the moral law of God. You can see how it flourished. If, as the Protestants taught, you are saved by faith through grace alone and not through good works, then one might conclude that good works and morality generally don't matter.

But that's wrong. It does matter. Antinomianism is a false religion that sprung up within Christianity in the early church.

Paul was so frustrated. He would found a church, stay three or four months, get them going, leave, and a week later someone would say, you won't believe what they're doing now. It didn't take long. He'd have to go back and straighten them out.

[ 23 : 14 ] Antinomianism was one of the three great heresies in Paul's day right up there with the legalists and the Gnostics who thought they were the ascended learners. They were smart and everybody else and God gave them more light.

A few weeks ago, we began by reading an important quote from the book of Hebrews 12.14. Pursue peace with all people and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Now, we could get depressed at that point. We could get depressed. I'm not holy. Will it be impossible to ever see God unless we develop within us a certain level of holiness?

If that is true, then what is the acceptable level? And how do we know when we've achieved it? We need to be very clear on this.

Scripture clearly teaches we can never merit salvation by way of personal holiness. We don't wake up one morning and God says, you made it.

[ 24 : 34 ] You've been so good lately, I put you in the category over there. You're going to be with me and my son. God makes this clear with a graphic truth found in the 64th chapter of Isaiah.

And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment. And I taught that to my Sunday's class years ago and Diane was in there and the other women and men and boy, did I get chewed out on the way home.

What does God mean? He uses this Hebrew term filthy rag or filthy garment. In the Hebrew language, guys, it refers to the bodily fluids from a woman's menstrual cycle.

For a Hebrew male to come into contact with that napkin meant they were unclean and they were temporarily suspended from worship in the temple or the synagogue and they had to go through a process to be made clean again.

Now, in no way does any of that reflect on a woman. This is her normal cycle. God made them that way. God made them that way. the fact is our deeds which we might classify as righteous are filthy rags when compared to the holiness of the Lord and you could see that holiness in the law.

[ 26 : 08 ] The law of God. Divinely perfect. The truth is our best works are permeated within perfections. As the Puritan prayer warrior once cried out, Lord, may I repent of my repentance.

He went on and said this, even my tears of repentance need to be washed in the blood of the Lamb. Puritans understood. They did.

They understood. So my first point here is that we cannot earn or merit salvation through personal holiness.

The second point is this, Scripture teaches that Christ was obedient and righteous on our behalf.

On our behalf. The Apostle Paul speaks of this great truth in the book of Romans 5:19.

For as through the one man's disobedience, the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one, the many will be made righteous. Note in this passage passage, that the Holy Spirit says through the obedience of Christ, we are made righteous.

[ 27 : 27 ] He does not say or even remotely imply that we earn righteousness, merit righteousness, or God forbid, deserve righteousness. He doesn't say that.

He says we are made righteous. How does that happen? Well, first, we are reborn. I love the Greek word there.

It's anophon, meaning born from above. It is a spiritual birth that comes down to us from God above.

By that action, we are made righteous. Those of us of a certain age got very used to that term. Most of the young guys weren't alive yet, but we got very used to that term when Jimmy Carter was elected president.

Of course, he was a Southern Baptist out of Georgia, and he went around throwing out that term, I've been born again. Well, soon, every lobbyist in Washington, D.C. was wearing a lapel pin that said, I've been born again, because they're wanting to do business with the government.

[ 28 : 38 ] Now, the former president has come a long way. He now embraces abortion, homosexuality, the ordination of women in the pulpit, including lesbians.

Basically, he's lost it. That is why Dr. Moeller of Southern Seminary, he wrote a commentary a few years ago, I've got a copy, not with me, entitled, Jimmy, we hardly knew you.

We don't recognize you. And if the truth were known, President Carter actually left the SBC about 35 years ago. He stayed in his local church, but he left the SBC many decades before.

Theologians of old and great preachers and theologians of our day speak of this as the active and the passive obedience of Christ.

Kind of a technical term. What is meant by that? Active obedience refers to the type of life that the Lord Jesus lived when he was on this earth.

[ 29 : 46 ] He was actively obedient. He submitted to the Father. While on earth, Jesus was obedient and holy to absolute perfection.

His perfect life is accredited to the account of everyone that is born from above. Everybody's born again. If you like that term. We are required to believe, meaning to have faith, but even that is a grace gift of God.

If it wasn't, we wouldn't do it. Look at what happens when someone trusts God for their salvation. Romans 4.3 For what does the Scripture say?

I've used that so many times. People's got a question for me. And I'll say, what do the Scripture say? I mean, that's a great backup. Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.

Romans 4.3 Galatians 3.6 just as Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. Same author.

[ 30 : 57 ] Two books. So let's change authors. James 2.23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, And Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.

And then James says, And he was called a friend of God. Wouldn't it be nice? I'm a friend of God's? Wow. Wow. I remember old Archie Bunker, he told his agnostic son-in-law one time that he was made in the image of God.

The son-in-law said, God looks like you. He said, I'm not saying you couldn't tell us apart. But yeah, I'm made in his image. The word believe in Greek is *to stuo*.

It means to trust. It means to commit your life. Much more expressive than the English word believe. All of you guys in here right now believe those chairs are going to hold you up.

And they probably will, but it's a belief. They might not. But *pastuo* is much stronger. Much stronger. Passive obedience refers to the Lord's death on the cross by which He satisfied completely the wrath of God towards sinners.

[ 32 : 25 ] It's a reference to the word propitiation which we don't use much anymore. That's a word meaning appeasement or satisfaction. God's wrath was appeased.

God looked upon the cross and all who would be in Christ and said, I am satisfied. When Satan lodges a complaint against us and I tell people you know if Satan has something to say in the throne room about something I did, he's probably not lying.

I probably did it. But the Father in my view can look at Christ and Jesus says he's one of mine and the Father says I'm satisfied. That sin was dealt with at the cross.

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Well when I got to this point in my study I had a problem because I want to expand in this area and it's going to take about another 35 minutes and we've been in here 33 minutes and 26 seconds.

So I think we're going to have to break at this point, go home and watch Dallas Cowboys lose another game and we're going to pick up our study next time.