

# Rooted: Studies in Christian Discipleship

## -God. His Attributes, Part Three

- Teacher's note- In writing this lesson. I also read the corresponding chapters of Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*, J.I. Packer's *Knowing God*, and John Frame's *The Doctrine of God*. A very helpful resource was A.W. Pink's book, *The Attributes of God*
- “Our Aim in Studying the Godhead must be to know God himself better. Our concern must be to enlarge our acquaintance, not simply with the doctrine of God's attributes, but with the living God whose attributes they are.” J.I. Packer *Knowing God* pg 23
- I was so encouraged by what we did last week in class. I hope that those of you who were here were also encouraged by it. For those that weren't here, we spent the whole class time walking verse by verse through Isaiah 40, and we listed up on the board all the descriptions and attributes of God that we found in the text. By the end of class, we had some 30 plus different descriptions of God up here. The obvious question that comes to mind when studying God and His character is “How can we keep that from being some sort of ivory tower discussion? How does our understanding of God effect real life? We're not academics, after all. We are real people working in real life, trying to make decisions, undergoing relationship problems, sickness, etc.” Well, I think it was so clear last week when we went through one, just one, chapter of Scripture and were confronted with an overwhelming picture of who our God really is. If we remember that this is the God we as Christians are in a relationship with, and who we depend on, then when we see such a picture of who He is, that should be a comfort to us. A reminder that God isn't surprised by what we are going through. That He is using it.
  - In my own life this week, it played out this way. We're having some friction within our extended family right now. Its normal stuff that happens in families, where one person wants to do one thing, and it means that someone else could get offended, or be left out. I think that certain people are being selfish. And that stuff stresses you out. Families can be stressful! You get that many sinners together, and sin happens! But you know what? I've been reminded all week of that list of attributes that God gives us in Isaiah, and that I can't say God isn't in control of my family situation. He isn't the authority over our hearts. He isn't able to bring us together, or to work through this situation. I know my God, and I know that He's not stressed or worried about this. And I know that I can't do anything, but He is powerful, all knowing, the supreme authority. Whereas I depend on my family for so much, God doesn't. He knows exactly what He is doing. And that's not just some flippant statement that I make. That is a belief that has roots. I know my God because I have met Him. He has spoken to me. He has shown Himself faithful.
- This week, we're going to look at God's attributes from a different angle. The goal of this class is to not only teach the truths of the Christian faith, but to put tools in your hands to grow on your own. Last week, we did that exercise to show that you can go to Scripture and find out about God. You can meet him in every text in Scripture. I hope you take that home with you. I hope you read on your own, and make lists like we did last week. So last week, we came to Scripture and let a part of it speak all on its own. This week, we're going to come to Scripture with pointed questions about God. We're going to look at what all of Scripture says on a topic. I want to present a way for you guys to go off and study God's attributes on your own. So we're going to look at one attribute of God that we find in Scripture, and we're going to ask three questions about them. We're going to look at the Holiness of God, and ask
  - What does Scripture teach about the Holiness of God?
  - How is the Holiness of God highlighted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ?
  - What effect should God's Holiness have on my life?

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### ➤ The Holiness of God

➔ What does Scripture say? This is where we should find it so helpful that we're not first century Christians! We're not inventing the wheel, and trying to find out what this huge book says all on our own. We have the study, research, and thought of two thousand years worth of God's children to lean on. And when it comes to finding where the Bible teaches on a certain topic, that's a huge blessing! I don't know if you know this, but there are an awful lot of verses in this book, and if you were going to sit down and survey the entire Bible for every passage on Holiness, well, there's your life's work for you! This is where we as Christians can find help. For instance, you can go to a Systematic Theology, and find where he lists many of the best known and clearest passages on the Holiness of God. Another great place to go is the ESV Study Bible if you own one. In the back, where the articles are, you'll find a listing of the attributes of God with a lot of Scriptures that you can study on your own.

- ◆ So let's go to Exodus 26.33, and we find there God speaking about the Holy of Holies. It was a place totally separated from the people and could only be entered once a year, and all these sacrifices had to be made beforehand because the point is- God is Holy and cannot abide the presence of sin. We can also see God separating Aaron and His son apart to be "made Holy" in Ex. 29.44. They were to be separated from the normal daily life and the evil of the world to be dedicated to God's service. God is concerned here with His Holiness- He is totally separate from us, and he cannot abide sin.
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- ◆ And so when you use helps like this, you can spend your time studying those passages instead of just hunting them down! Don't feel like you're cheating if you let someone else help you. Usually, the smartest people are the ones who know what they don't know, and seek help in that area. God gave us gifted thinkers and studiers in the Church to help the rest of us!
- ◆ We see from Scripture that God alone is perfectly Holy
  - Revelation 15.4 *Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.* (Revelation 15:4 ESV)
    - God alone is perfectly Holy- separate from the taint of sin. Does anyone know the context of Revelation 15? It is the wrath of God shown in the seven plagues. God's complete separation from Sin, and hatred of it, demands a response. His wrath.
    - 1 John 1.5 tells us that *God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.*
    - It is God's Holiness that we find being praised before His throne- Isaiah 6.3
      - *In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and 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!"*  
*And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "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!"*

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(Isaiah 6:1-5 ESV)

- “It wasn’t enough to say that God is holy. No the Seraph had to say holy three times to capture the depth and breadth of God’s holiness... Whatever it means to say that god is holy, you need to know that he is in an entirely different category of holiness; he is much holier than you ever thought holiness could be.” - Paul Tripp, “Do You Believe?”
- Do you see Isaiah's response to the Holiness of God? It is to lament his own sinfulness.
- As we study more about God's Holiness, we see that it such a part of God's character that the Bible will describe His other attributes as being Holy.
  - *Oh sing to the LORD a new song,  
for he has done marvelous things!  
His right hand and his holy arm  
have worked salvation for him.* (Psalm 98:1 ESV)
  - His wisdom is a Holy wisdom, His peace is a Holy peace, His justice is a Holy justice. It is entirely untainted by Sin.
  - “God’s holiness is not an aspect of what he is. No, God’s holiness is the essence of what he is. If you were to ask, “How is the holiness of God revealed?” the only right answer is, “In everything he does.” Everything God thinks, desires, speaks, and does is utterly holy in every way.” -Paul Tripp, “Do You Believe?”
- The Law of God is described as Holy-
  - *So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.* (Romans 7:12 ESV)
  - But of course, in Romans 7 what does Paul go on to say? The Law fails to save us not because it is unholy, but because we are. We are tainted by sin. We are sold under sin, slaves to it. Just as Isaiah, confronted by God's holiness, laments his sin, Paul laments that our sin will never allow us to attain to the holy Law of God.
- One more point to drive it home-
  - *“You give your mouth free rein for evil,  
and your tongue frames deceit.  
You sit and speak against your brother;  
you slander your own mother's son.  
These things you have done, and I have been silent;  
you thought that I was one like yourself.  
But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you.  
“Mark this, then, you who forget God,  
lest I tear you apart, and there be none to deliver!  
The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me;  
to one who orders his way rightly  
I will show the salvation of God!”* (Psalm 50:19-23 ESV)
  - There it is- laid out stark for us. We cannot think that God is like we are- tainted by sinful desires. That is not who God is. His holiness doesn't just mean that He is without sin, but that He must respond to sin. He despises it.
    - Pr. 3.32, Pr. 15.26, Nahum 1.2, Ps. 5.5, Ps. 7.11,

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- How is the Holiness of God highlighted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ?
- ◆ The cross was the greatest expression of the outpouring of God's wrath ever seen in Creation.
  - ◆ “Wondrously and yet most solemnly does the atonement display God's infinite holiness and abhorrence of sin. How hateful must sin be to God for Him to punish it to its utmost deserts when it was imputed to His Son!” -A.W. Pink *The Attributes of God*
  - ◆ “*When we understand the character of God, when we grasp something of His holiness, then we begin to understand the radical character of our sin and helplessness. Helpless sinners can survive only by grace.*” - RC Sproul, “The Holiness of God”
  - ◆ If we look all the way back to Ex. 26 where we started, we see how the Gospel fulfills the Holy of Holies. Man can not come into the presence of God because He is so Holy! But Christ made a way through His death. The writer of Hebrews makes that clear for us!
    - *Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.* (Hebrews 10:19-22 ESV)
    - The point is this- we could not ever ever ever find a way to overcome the fact that we are unholy, and God is perfectly Holy. But in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, God Himself made a way for us to come into His presence. He made us Holy. Not in ourselves, but because He gave us the righteousness, the perfect righteousness I might add, of His Son Jesus.
  - ◆ So you see, Holiness isn't some dry academic term. It's not some pious language. It's an awe inspiring picture of a God who is so much higher than we are. It points to His great love and mercy in the Gospel message. Holiness matters.
  - ◆ So we asked, what does Scripture say and we used help to study a number of the prominent passages on Holiness. We got a picture of what the Bible means by Holiness, and we could have made it even more complete if we took the time. Then we asked, “How is it fulfilled in the gospel?” All of God's attributes find expression through Jesus Christ. Who is Jesus Christ, after all? He is God! Hold up though, we're almost to the Trinity
- What effect should God's Holiness have on my life? This is the final question. If all these things are true about Holiness, how does that effect our real, day to day lives?
- ◆ Look for answers.
  - ◆ You know who you are when you understand holiness.
    - We know what the standard is. Isaiah said it for us when he saw the holiness of God. *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;*
  - ◆ It helps us because sin doesn't always seem sinful to us.
    - And it needs to! But we can trick ourselves into thinking it's not.
  - ◆ We are made Holy. If you have been saved by Jesus Christ, then you are Holy, separated from sin. Sin has no control over you anymore, because you have the Spirit of God. Now we will continue fighting sin until Christ returns, but we can win in our battle as we fight. According to God, you are holy and that should change the way you live. You should be putting off, and putting on righteousness to bring Glory to God.
    - 1 Peter 1.16- “Be Holy, for I am Holy.”

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- ◆ Live in awe and reverence of God. Don't make God into some tame, dulled down, image. God is a fiercesome God, a jealous and wrathful God.
- ◆ Read the section from Tripp on how our culture has lost an understanding of holiness.
- There's a model for studying the attributes of God.
  - What does Scripture say?
  - How is this attribute fulfilled in the Gospel of Jesus Christ?
  - What effect does it have on my life today?
- Application-
  - Go home and study another attribute of God this week- his love, his peace, his foreknowledge, his mercy, his justice, his goodness, his anger. Ask these questions and work through the answers. Use help as you need it.
  - Is the image of God you find in the Bible the same image as the God you believe and trust in? Are there things about God you're not willing to accept? What should you do about them?