

The Power of God

by Paul Washer

The holiness of God is the foundation of all his attributes and the reason for our worship, and it means that he is separate from sin, cannot sin, and has set himself against sin.

Duration: 1:06:32

Scripture: Psalm 5:5, Proverbs 3:11-12, Matthew 6:33, John 3:16, Romans 12:5-8, 2 Corinthians 6:2, Hebrews 12:7-8

Topics: "Pursuing Holiness", "Childlike Faith"

Description

In this sermon, Brother Charles emphasizes the importance of being violent in our faith and seeking after God with fervor. He encourages listeners to prioritize their pursuit of holiness and to recognize that God is a greater reality than anything else in the world. Brother Charles warns against becoming accustomed to evil and urges believers to avoid places and things that do not promote godliness. He also highlights the significance of approaching God with childlike faith, referencing the story of King Isaiah and the angels' reverence in the temple.

Transcript

Last night, I spoke on the holiness of God as God is transcendent over the creature and that the great emphasis in the word holy is that not of sinlessness, but the idea of separation, that he is, well, like there is no one like our God, absolutely no one, and that to be holy, it is to esteem the worth of God above all things, to hold him as sacred and above all things and to draw unto him with passion, with love, with desire. We went through the fact that you could be a rule keeping Pharisee who dots every eye and crosses every T with regard to the law and yet still not be holy because your heart is far from him. To be holy means more than separating from that which is evil.

For separation is not an end in itself, it is only a means, a means to a greater end, and that end is God. Another thing that I spoke on last night that I think is important to iterate, it is this many times when there are conferences with regard to the attributes of God, the people who come to those conferences are people who care about truth. But in speaking about the holiness of God, it is very important to speak about how even truth can become an idol that sets itself in the place of God.

A team of experts have not been gathered here this week, for first of all, there are no experts with regard to the attributes of God. And if there were so-called experts, they would have no power on their life to proclaim him. There are no great men of God here this weekend, only tiny, pitiful, pathetic, sinful, weak men of a great and a merciful God.

And if we learn anything about God, it will be by God's good grace that we learn it. And in learning it, we are not to keep it to our breasts and hold it to ourselves as some idol that takes the place of God. It is very, very common to see men who love to study about God, who love to speak about God.

But it is very, very few the men you'll find who love to run to God and sit in his quarters and dwell with him. Now, having said that, it is important also to speak about holiness in a way that is very, very common and very appropriate, and that is with regard to separation from sin. And although I was going to speak on the power of God, I feel it necessary to continue on with this idea of holiness.

And then tomorrow I will speak on the power of God. Holiness of God does mean also that he is morally pure, that he is without sin. And if we are to be a holy people, we will draw near to him only to the degree that we have also separated ourselves from those things that God truly hates.

So we're going to pray and then we're going to begin our study on this aspect of the holiness of God. Father, I come before you in the name of your son and in it is in his name, Father. That I am bold enough to come, I thank you, Father, so much for your son.

For I know that I would have no part with you if it were not for him. But I know that because of him, I can very run run Lord into the throne room where angels fear to tread. That I have access to you, that you are my father and I am your son and I rejoice in that and I praise you that you hear me and I praise you that I'm acceptable in the beloved.

I thank you, Lord, for all the great things that you have done in Zion. Her joy is great because of thee and because of that son of David that you have enthroned. Oh, dear God, I praise you and I worship you and I pray, God, that for your own glory and for the sake of your son and for the benefit of your people and for the sheer joy of it, that we would come to understand even this aspect of your holiness.

Oh, God, and help us to see that it is not a grave thing, it is not a burden, it is a joy, it is like running through a field as a young man without a weight on your back, that the greatest freedom belongs to the man who makes himself a slave to you. Oh, Lord, I praise you, I worship you. Lord, why do I have to open my eyes and preach now? It would be better to stay with you.

Much better. Oh, God, I praise you in Jesus' name. Amen.

We have some kind of wonderful God, don't we? I recall a dear friend who's going to speak tomorrow, Mike Morrow, and how he loves sometimes he'll just be speaking about God. And sometimes I always say he's a cross between Jonathan Edwards and Jerry Clower. And sometimes he'll be preaching about God and all of a sudden he'll just kind of rear back and slap his hands to his side and say, oh, folks, we got ourselves a God.

And that is so true. That is so true. So we had a conference here on the attributes of God.

We could have taken each attribute and spoken a year and still said nothing. And you see, that's what heaven is all about. Don't you see people ask me sometimes when I get to heaven, will I know everything? Well, you'll know a lot, but you won't know everything.

Why? Because heaven is about that. Throughout all of eternity, you will be in a wild, passionate pursuit of knowing God. And every day he will fill your coffers full to the brim and you'll think there's nothing less left to give.

And the next day you'll wake up and he'll fill them again with new, ever increasing knowledge of his glory. It's such a splendid thing. But what's so wonderful in John 17, we're told that that we start that now.

We start that now for this is eternal life to know him. You start that now. Knowing him, that's what it's all about.

Now, we're talking about holiness as the moral purity of God. There's some things that you need to understand, first of all, because a lot of times we look at what it means to us, then we think that it means the same thing for God when actually it means something quite different. Moral purity is not something that God decides to be.

It's not something that he seeks after. It's not something that he does. We can say that moral purity is essential to God.

It is an attribute of God. It is not something that he does. It is what he is.

And for him to be any other thing would be for him to contradict his very nature. It's an impossibility. When we talk about the power of God, it's important to note that there are some things God cannot do, and one of them is this and all of them really goes down to this one thing.

God cannot contradict himself. God cannot do that which contradicts his nature. God cannot be anything but holy.

He cannot be anything but morally pure. Now, let's stand back again for a moment. Oh, I hate to use this, but people are always saying, make your theology practical.

And I always tell them if it's not practical from the beginning, it's not theology, or at least it's not biblical theology. Can you imagine the confidence that we have in this thing? That he is holy, absolute, moral purity and can not change, will not change. Now you say, well, that's a very wonderful thing.

Well, it is even more wonderful when you compare that to his creature, when you compare that to even the holiest creature. I want to just read a statement to you in Job 15, 15. It says this, Behold, he puts no trust in his holy ones and the heavens are not pure in his sight.

Now, is that meaning the second part of this statement? Is it meaning that the heavens are not pure or that there is sin in heaven? No, in heaven is perfect righteousness. So what is the truth being communicated here? It's meaning again that in his moral purity, he is holy. And what we mean by that, even in his moral purity, he is separate from everything else.

There is nothing morally pure like he is morally pure. Nothing is clean compared to God. Even the cleanest among creature is not clean.

And that's what Brother Mike was sharing last night. We can compare ourselves by ourselves. And in doing that, Paul, the apostle, says we are not wise.

But by doing that, we can say, I'm OK, you're OK. But when you compare anything to God, it's nothing compared to God. Again, this is not just quantitative.

He is not like us, just better. It's qualitative. He's not like us or anything else at all.

Now, another thing he says there, Behold, he puts no trust in his holy ones. Does that mean that even the elect angels could turn on God? Well, no, it doesn't mean that, but this is what I do believe it does mean. God's holiness is inherent.

No one else can say that. All other holiness, all other moral purity is derived. When I say that God's holiness is inherent, it is who he is.

But to say that an angel is holy, from where does that holiness come? It comes forth from God. If an angel is to be holy, it's because God made them holy. If they are to remain holy, it's because God sustains them in their holiness.

And if God were to withdraw from them, they would become, well, they would become moral chaos. A good illustration is this. I always ask people, well, God made the world.

Well, yes, he did. What also does he do with regard to the world? Well, he sustains it. And if he did not sustain it, what would happen? Well, it would turn into utter chaos, fall apart, it would be destroyed, it would self-destruct.

Absolutely. Same way with any aspect of holiness in any creature. God not only makes holy, he sustains holiness.

All holiness is derived from God. Now, to go back to make this practical again, do you see how, Saint, you are dependent upon God, whether you recognize it or not? You do not achieve some level of holiness and then you kind of sever yourself from God because you've arrived. Everything that you are in that moment must flow from God in that moment.

You cannot go to God one day and fill your pockets full of grace or fill your pockets full of God's holiness and then run out in the wilderness independent of him for a while and remain holy. It's just like manna. It must come every day.

It must come every moment. And young Christian, those of you, some of you young men are studying for the ministry. Realize this, that in your young age, before you're given to the things of ministry, you are more likely to be given to the things of God.

And you will give yourself to prayer and seeking him. And the problem is that when you start doing ministry, you'll become so busy that you think that you can draw on those times with the Lord that you had before and continue going. You cannot.

It is daily manna, moment by moment manna that must come from the throne of God. Now, holiness, one aspect of holiness is it means that God is separate from all that is profane and sinful. Separate.

Now, why do we need to speak about this? Well, we need to speak about this and something else to learn something again and again and again. It is impossible for a people like us, especially in a culture like ours, to understand the sinfulness of sin. We are like those who drink down iniquity as though it were water.

I mean, go speak to the fish, ask them if they have any reality of their wetness. They don't speak much about it. Just they don't speak much about being wet because wet is all around them.

They've grown so accustomed to it. In the same way, we need to constantly be seeing God's perspective on sin so that we can treat it with the same attitude. And I want you to know it is an extremely severe

attitude.

God takes a merciless attitude with regard to sin. He hates it, loathes it, despises it. Now, just some some texts that are very, very important is Psalms 5, 4 says, No evil dwells with you.

Do you know, my dear friend, I think when we get to heaven, one of the things that we are going to be, if we could say such a thing, I don't know how this works out, but one of the things in which I think we should be most ashamed of will be this. Of all the things that we did not, for which we did not worship God. This statement right here, No evil dwells with you.

We just take that for granted. OK, yeah, that's great. No evil dwells with God.

Do you know how we could spend a lifetime just worshiping God because of this one statement? Because would you imagine what it would be like to live on an earth created by an all powerful being who did have evil dwelling within them? That it is absurd, it is a travesty not to every waking moment worship God simply because no evil dwells with Him. There would be no confidence, there would be no hope, there would be nothing. When you think about the evil that Satan has amassed, the destruction he has left in his wake as an evil being, and yet he is not an all powerful being.

So you imagine what it would be like if God were like him. You imagine the terror, even if God was not like him, but could be like him someday, the terror in which we would live. I hear people sometimes say, well, I just don't know why I should worship him.

If you have breath, you have reason. And he goes on and he says in James 1 17, every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above. Now, we don't always think about this, but I want you to notice something.

If it were not for the fact that God is holy, there would be no good thing given and there would be no perfect gift coming to anyone from anywhere. You see, my dear friend, all the other attributes of God that we so desire, that we so cherish, that we sing about, they all hinge upon his moral purity. If he was not morally pure and see the way Satan is able to take that in this world and twist moral purity into some horrible thing, puritanical thing.

And yet every every ounce of sound laughter that has ever broke forth out of the lips of angels or men has come only because God is holy. Now, he says, coming down from the father of lights with whom there is no variation or shifting of shadow. James uses father here for a very important purpose.

Again, sometimes we set things in tension that we should not. You know, here's the fatherly aspect of God. Here's the holy aspect of God.

Well, I want to tell you something. What would it be like to have an unholy father? You see, I hate that even in the Christian mind at times, there's this idea of holiness always being this severe, frightening, terrible thing. And yet.

The only way God can be a kind, compassionate and loving father, trustworthy in all things, is because he's holy. How can a son trust a father who's unholy man who's committing adultery on his wife? How can a nation trust a leader? That's supposed to care about them when he doesn't even care about his own family. You see, it works that way without holiness, everything else breaks down.

Absolutely everything. In First John 1 5, this is the message that we have heard from him and announced to you that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. There is almost the chorus, joyful, joyful, we adore thee, behind these words.

It's like John coming running with this magnificent joy written all over his face. I have a message for you. God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.

Now, you compare that to the gods of the pagans and you'll appreciate it a lot more. These fierce, cruel, frightening, demonic goat gods, the God of even modern day paganism in America. The God of the witch, the God of the druid, the God of the Babylonian, the God of many of the Asian religions.

They are fierce, they are frightening, they are terrifying. The myth of the Greeks. Well, you never knew what those guys were going to do.

Those gods could be for you one day and just to get a laugh, destroy you the next. John comes running with something that we've become so dull to. We take it for granted.

It's a common thing. And when it becomes a common thing, we no longer worship. We ought to just be exhilarated with this one fact that God is holy and he changes not.

He changes not. Now, it says in James chapter one, verse 13. Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted by evil.

He himself does not tempt anyone. Now, for a greater scholar, you could sit on this verse for days, but there's something here that I just I want to draw from. And it's this again, we look at this passage and we almost look at it as though somehow God were like us, but greater that God faces temptation like us.

But he always has the power to overcome it. That's not what this means at all. You see, why are we tempted to ever think about that? I mean, why are we to be tempted means to be drawn towards something.

There's an affinity. There is something out there calling to us and there's something in us that likes what's calling and we want to run to it and we have to fight against it. Because even though as Christians we have been regenerate, there is this part of us that I really don't know how to name and call it the flesh, whatever.

There's this part of us that is unregenerate and desires evil. There's this thing in us, worldly and carnal, that is still there. And when a temptation comes by, a sensuality, a thing comes by, it can have the power at certain times to draw us and we have to overcome that temptation.

We have to wrestle against it. We have to quote Scripture. We have to think on the things of God.

We have to fight hard and not be drawn to that desire. Do you think that's what it means about God? No, my friend, here's the big difference. You parade any wickedness in front of God, he doesn't sit there and go, oh, that's really attractive, but I'm God and I can overcome that desire.

No, there is nothing out there. There is no part of that wickedness that he desires. Whatever you parade in front of him that is wicked, he hates it.

He's not attracted to it. He doesn't have to fight it off. He doesn't have to grab a hold of the table to keep from sliding down into that black hole.

Immediately when it comes before him, he recognizes it and he hates it. And that's wonderful. That is absolutely wonderful.

Glory to God. Nothing wicked dwells with him. Nothing wicked attracts him.

Nothing. Oh, saints, I want to tell you something, and I can say this because I am a fearful man. I'm not a bold, strong man.

But I will tell you this, when I hear things like this, even as weak as I am, I feel strong. I feel bold as a lion. When I think of what could come against me, even before I finish this sermon, when I think of all the things, all the trials and tribulations, all the evil out there, all the things, even the demonic plots against me as a Christian, it'd be enough to make the strongest man, his foundations, tremble and sink.

But when I think of this, that my God is not given to any of that, but hates it and comes against it. It is not something that makes me think of God as some one who wants to rain on everyone's parade. It makes me think of a God in whom I am secure.

In whom I am secure. That's why in Job 34.10, it says, Therefore, listen to me, you men of understanding, far be it from God to do wickedness and from the Almighty to do wrong. Far be it.

There is not enough distance. I don't know how large this universe is, but I know that if you stacked it and put it side by side with a trillion other universes, it would not be far enough to give us an illustration of how far wickedness is from our God. And that gives me the greatest amount of comfort.

You see, I heard a preacher one time, and I guess many preachers have said the same thing. So I, and it's this, preacher stood up one day and he said, folks, I have good news and I have bad news. He said, the good news is this, God is here.

The bad news is this, God is here. It just depends on what side of the line you're standing on. And you see, that's what's so amazing, isn't it? I mean, we speak about the holiness of God.

If we truly understand it as believers, we just become almost beside ourselves with joy. You paint the same picture of holiness to the wicked and they will run as though you douse them with kerosene and lit a fire. Now, the holiness of God not only means that he is separate from sin, cannot sin, will not sin.

It also means that he has set himself against sin. God is not neutral or apathetic towards the evil that is in this world. And he has and will deal with every ounce of evil that has ever spewed forth.

I'll promise you that. He will. He has.

How has he? There's two ways in which God has dealt with evil. One is through the cross of Jesus Christ, as Brother Mike pointed out last night. Christ bore the evil.

He bore the sins of his people. He died on that tree and made it possible for a just God to show mercy. But evil will also be dealt with.

And those who have shunned Christ, if you have shunned Christ, if you have no part with Christ, know this. God will deal with evil and it will be on that great day of judgment when no mercy at all will be shown. God is not apathetic towards evil.

We hear the philosopher constantly, the politician constantly saying, where is God amidst all this evil? He's right on the throne and in his time he will deal with it all. Not one, Jesus Christ assures us, not one idle word that has come forth out of the mouth of a person will go unnoticed. That's how he will deal with evil.

Now, I just want to look at some things in Habakkuk 1.13. Your eyes are too pure to approve evil and you cannot look on wickedness with favor. Saints, especially the men that are here, your eyes. That's a good that's a good barometer, that's a good standard, a good measuring stick.

Do your eyes approve evil? Do your eyes approve evil? Or have they become so accustomed to evil, they don't even recognize it when it comes forth? A dear friend of mine, he shared that one time the Lord had led him to a 28-day fast. And he said that all he did was just pray and seek God and read the Scriptures. Just locked himself away for 28 days.

He said that when he finished, he could not even read a newspaper without almost becoming nauseous in his spirit. Have your eyes become accustomed to evil? The awkward glance, because I assure you that your father's eyes cannot look upon evil with favor, cannot. There is a sense, my dear friend, in which no, no, we cannot move up on a mountain and hide from the rest of the world.

But there are places you should not walk. There are places you should not be. There are things you should not look at, specifically the television and other things that are doing nothing to preserve your soul, nothing to promote godliness in you, but doing just the opposite.

And what's amazing, and I want to give a warning to the young people here, I have seen seminary students, I have walked in on seminary students and college students who would witness and do everything, but walk into their room or walk into the center there, the kind of social center where they have there on campus or seminary, walked in and seen things on the television that I as a man of God cannot even bear, and they can watch it. With each generation, there seems to be a greater tolerance. To these things, not only is it not right, it's offensive to God, but I want you to look at them also this way.

They are joy killers. They will kill your joy, they will destroy your happiness, they will make you filthy. But God's eyes are too pure to approve evil, your eyes will be a good a good reminder to you, a good measuring stick for you.

Whatever they're drawn to, realize they're only drawn to it because it's in your heart. And some deep heart work of the spirit needs to occur. A little bit of fasting and prayer wouldn't hurt any of us.

Meditating on Scripture and seeking after the things of God would do us all a world of good. And I would suggest that if you spent as much time in front of the Word of God on your knees as you do in front of a television set, you would see great prosperity in your Christian life. It goes on in Deuteronomy 25, 16.

Now, I want you to look at just God's perspective on sin for everyone who does these things. Speaking about injustice, everyone who acts unjustly is an abomination to the Lord, your God. Now, I want you to look at something very important.

First of all, the word translated abomination comes from a Hebrew word that means repugnant, offensive, disgusting, revolting or obscene. In Psalms 88, the word is translated object of loathing. Now, let's go back and look at an important point that is totally lost in modern day American evangelicalism.

And it is this. Listen to what he says. It doesn't say that these things are disgusting and loathsome, even though they are.

But it says every one, every person who does these things, everyone who acts unjustly is an abomination. We are so quick and preachers in the modern day pulpit today are so quick to say that sin is an abomination before God. But I can't even recall the last time I heard a preacher say that the sinner is an abomination before God.

No, you won't hear that. But you read it in Scripture all over, all over that the person who commits the sin is an object of loathing before God. Now, just to reaffirm that and turn to Psalms five, because no one believes me.

Psalms, chapter five, verses four and five. For you are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness. Now, no one has a problem with that because we can define wickedness and we can put it somewhere outside of us where it doesn't touch us.

Oh, yeah, God is really, I mean, hates wickedness. But look, he says, no evil dwells with you. The boastful shall not stand before your eyes.

You hate all who do iniquity. I want you to look at that for a moment. Please look at that.

Realize that Scripture speaks for a reason. It is not poetry. It is setting something up for us.

Very, very important. Now, look, it says you, referring to God, hate all who do iniquity. When was the last time you heard that out of a pulpit? So much for God loves the sinner and hates the sin.

Now, immediately when I say that, I've had people stand. I've had people say, well, what about John 3, 16? For God so loved the world, I say it's in the book. So is this.

And one of the laws of classical logic is the law of non-contradiction. And if the Bible is the word of God, it cannot contradict itself. So no, I'm not denying John 3, 16, but I am reading this text to you in Psalms 5. And we have to figure out a way in which they speak the truth and do not contradict one another.

But they are both there. God has demonstrated his love towards the world. The Bible does say that God hates all those who do iniquity, the workers of iniquity.

Some translations, those who do wrong. My dear friend, one of the greatest problems in America today is that we preach almost all the truth. And we leave out that one part that we would have to explain to the media.

You tell people that God hates sin, you won't make anyone mad. Why? Because everyone has a definition of sin that sets sin outside themselves. You tell a group of homosexuals, you tell a group of feminists, you tell a group of murderers that God hates sin.

And they'll say, well, of course he does. The problem is, is when you begin to say, and this is the definition of sin. And this is God's attitude, not only to the sin, but toward the sinner.

Now, I don't have time to go into this because I want to share about so many other things. But this is what we talked about last night, Brother Mike and the divine dilemma. If God is just and holy, he cannot forgive you.

That's what the gospel is all about. And yet, if I stand up in a seminary and say this, people look at me like they've never heard it before in their life. If God is just and holy, he cannot forgive you.

In the same way that if a judge is a righteous judge, he cannot simply pardon you because of some love that he has for you. It is required of judges to do justice. The great question in all the Bible is this.

How can God be holy and just and forgive? You see, if I speak on divine judgment on the last days or the second coming of Christ and the great judgment throne of Christ and that men are cast into hell, I always have people that come up to me and they go, I'm appalled at what you just said. I really have a problem with God casting people in hell. And I said, well, you know, heaven has a problem, too, but it's just the opposite of yours.

The problem in heaven is not how can a holy, just God judge sin and the rebels who commit it? The problem in heaven where God has to give an explanation is this. How can God be just and holy and forgive these vile creatures who deserve death? You see how we've twisted the gospel? And there is only one way, and that is for his justice to be satisfied. And it was satisfied on that day for his people when his son bore their sin and all the fierce fury and holy hatred of God against men and their wickedness fell upon Jesus Christ.

And God the Father crushed his only begotten son under the furious wrath that belonged to you. So when we speak about coming unto God, realize that we come unto God only because his son died outside the gates of the city, crushed under his father's own wrath, the wrath that should have fallen upon your head. Now, seeing that we were not redeemed with coins or silver or coffers from heaven, but by the blood of God's own son, how then shall we live? How then shall we live? Now, just some things that I want to mention to you about our response to God's holiness.

First of all, we should rejoice and give thanks. I've already touched on this, but let me just iterate it. Psalms 34, sing praise to the Lord, you his godly ones, and give thanks to his holy name.

We ought to sing and worship and adore him because he is holy and he doth not change. And that he will always be holy, he will always be worthy, more than worthy of our confidence. This ought to be a constant thing of worship for us.

Another thing, we should live before God with reverence and godly fear. This is almost an impossible truth to teach. There are some things, and some of you might become angry with me on this, but there are some things that require more than sound preaching.

This is one of them. You have to have the truth of Scripture to understand this statement, but you have to experience God to understand this statement. How he can be a father to us, and yet at the same time, our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

How we can approach him without fear, and yet we should approach him with great fear. It goes beyond definition, it goes beyond the writing of books, but to the saint, to the saint who has drawn near unto their God, they understand it fully, even though they themselves cannot explain it. I just think of the picture of John F. Kennedy sitting in the Oval Office, the most powerful man on the face of the earth, in the most

powerful office, a place where if men were called in to meet with him there, they would tremble.

And yet the cameraman is shooting the picture from across the room, and you can see inside the desk, because there's a hole all the way through the bottom of the desk where the legs go. You can see the opening from the other side. And there, playing under the desk, between his legs, is his little boy.

A place where dignitaries would be afraid to enter in, and yet the son is sitting there playing between his legs. I want you to know that it's that childlike faith that can approach God. Where angels feared to tread in the year that King Uzziah died, what did he see? The Lord, high and lifted up, his train filled the temple.

Those angels walked carefully not to step on that thing. You and I can play in the foals of it. And yet, at the same time, says this, But the Lord is in his holy temple.

Let all the earth be silent before him. So how do those two things go together? Well, if you have ever drawn near to him any amount of time, you know. You know how they go together.

Now, something is very, very important here, Isaiah 8, 13. It is the Lord of hosts whom you should regard as holy, and he shall be your fear and he shall be your dread. One time, a group of young men asked a rather bold preacher who had just preached a message that had gotten him in a great deal of trouble.

They came to him and they said, You've got to be the bravest man on the face of the earth. I mean, the leaders right now are gnashing their teeth at you. They want to, I mean, you're out.

They're never going to ask you to come back here again. You must be the bravest. How can you get up and say that? You do not fear men.

The preacher looked up at them and said, Yeah, I fear men. I'm ashamed to say it, but I fear men and I dread them sometimes. But I fear God more and I dread him more.

You will be amazed at the amount of freedom afforded to the man who is more afraid of God than he is men. It has nothing to do with the courage of a man. That's what I try to tell people.

Young man, listen to me. It has nothing to do with courage. It has everything to do with reality.

OK, let's say I'm the most frightened man on the face of the earth. And over here is an enemy, very small, but I know he can take me out. What am I going to do? I am going to be afraid.

Why? I am a coward. But over here is this gigantic, infinite colossus who can destroy me with batting an eye. Now, it has nothing to do with courage.

It just has to do with reality. That one is a reality to me, if not more than this one I can see. So if I've got to choose someone to fight against, it's going to be the little one.

Has nothing to do with courage. It's debatable whether there ever has been a courageous man on the face of the earth. But if you will realize that God is a greater reality than the armies of men, you'll have no problem making the right decision because you're going to have to deal with one or the other.

Make it this one. Make it this puny thing. A worm can enter in to his brain and in a day he'll be a lunatic.

Bacteria can enter into his body and a day he'll be dead. But this one abides forever and the nations are like a drop in the bucket before him and there will be no changing of the guard. And we go on.

I love that text. It's a very helpful text. The knowledge of the attributes of God will change the character of a man.

Do you see that, young preacher? It is not about how big and bold you can become in relation to other men. It's only about the reality of who God is in your life that will change everything. Now, what should we do? What should we do in light of this? I want to go just quickly to Philippians chapter 2, verse 12.

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but also much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. I believe Brother Mack preached on this last year, sanctification. But what is one of our responses to the holiness of God? Our own desire to be holy.

To work this thing out. And he says to do that, to work at your salvation, to strive. Brother Charles has a sermon I recommend about the violent in the kingdom of heaven, entering in, being violent in your faith.

This pressing forward, this recognition of this tremendous need, absolute need of God and violently seeking after Him. Like those blind men who were told, be quiet. And they cried out even more, save us, son of David, pressing on to holiness.

You press on to so many things, don't you? You press on to a good education. You press on to know more about God so that you'll be smarter than everyone else and get asked to a conference. You press on to so many things, press on to holiness.

That's the thing God awards, rewards. Press on to being holy. And if all your knowledge doesn't lead to that, it's vanity.

It's vanity. People ask me, they've said, Brother Paul, what do you think about the great reformation that seems to be going on in the country? It's a very silent type of thing, not very noticed by the media or contemporary Christianity. But it is true that there's this reformation of young men wanting truth and all this.

And for the last, for several years, I applauded it. I was joyfully embracing it, saying, yes, it's wonderful. Now I've got my doubts because a lot of these young men are just becoming absolutely useless because what they've gone after is knowledge and not God.

Doctrine and not the presence of Christ, it's a terrifying thing. And it's something that the older preachers also must be constantly afraid of. Now, it goes on and he says, and then he gives us this encouragement.

First, there's this idea of working out our salvation. And then in 13, for it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. I want you to know that if you are a Christian, you will be in the process of sanctification and you will grow in godliness.

And if you are not growing in holiness, not growing in godliness as a style of life, then your assurance may be false. Because it is not just, OK, you're saved now, now decide how far you want to go in the Christian life. God has decided how far you're going to go in the Christian life.

And it is all the way to conformity to his son. Oh, yes, I know that when we pass over on the other side, we're going to be glorified. The only assurance that you're going to pass over and be glorified is that even now God is working to make you holy.

Another thing, very, very important, Hebrews chapter 12, one of the amazing, amazing statements in Scripture 12, 14, pursue peace. What does that mean? Run after it. My little boy, he could get so excited, put him in front of a white wall, totally blank, and he'll take off running right into it.

He gets so excited. I spend most of my people ask me, they say, why are you so thin? I said, I've been pursuing my two boys. It is something that you just do with vigor, with strength, running with everything that you have.

It is not lackadaisical. It is zealous. It is fire.

It is steam. It is something you are given to. He says, pursue peace.

And everyone says, oh, that's wonderful. Let's just all join hands and sing Kumbaya, pursue peace. But then he says, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

If this is true, then maybe 75 percent of the people who attend evangelical churches in America are lost. And it's not the fault of liberal politics or liberal theologians, it is the fault of the pulpit. Because I can reinterpret looking at the church today, the words of Jesus about the narrow way.

If we took the church today and reinterpreted that text, it would be enter in through the small gate and then walk in the broad way and you'll be OK. Make a profession of faith in Jesus and then walk just like the world. That's OK.

That profession is strong enough. Your profession of faith in Jesus Christ is worth absolutely zero. Because he said, many will profess me on that day, they'll say, Lord, Lord, and I'll say, depart from me.

I never knew you. The evidence that a person is truly born again is that they pursue sanctification. That they pursue holiness.

Now, I want to step back for a moment and make it clear we're not talking about a red hot pursuit all the days of our life, because we all struggle. We all struggle with lukewarmness at times. We all struggle with being mesmerized by the world and having to be pulled back.

But then. The Bible takes this in course, because before this passage that we've just read, we have the great passage on what the father's discipline of his children. Most of Romans chapter 12 deals with that one thing, he says this, he said, my son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by him.

For those whom the Lord loves, he disciplines and he scourges every son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you endure. God deals with you as with sons.

For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Yes, we will recognize that in the heart of the truest believer, we can find lukewarmness at times. We can find distraction.

We can find a cold heart, but it will not be as a style of life. Why? Because of the power of regeneration and the powerful love of this father who will not let you go. Jacob, I loved Esau, I hated.

How did he hate Esau? Well, first of all, recognize he really did. Now, how? If you look at Jacob's life and Esau's life, they were both blessed tremendously by God. And Esau had so much wealth, he needed

nothing from Jacob.

When Jacob returned, then how is it that God hated Esau? I'll tell you how. He cut the rope on Esau and let him run. He let Esau be Esau and Esau did everything Esau wanted to do.

And there were no repercussions that we know of. He cut the rope and let him go. Esau always remained Esau, free and full and died and went to hell.

As my mother would say with regard to Jacob, God beat the living daylights out of that boy every day of his life. That is how God loved Jacob. And when Jacob came back over that river, limping, limping.

Someone pointed out one time, they said, Paul, you you must really be evil. You must really be a hard son to deal with. And I said, why? Because he just touched Jacob's hip.

He had to replace both of yours. I said, well, that's true, but they are replaced. I think one of the greatest evidences of being born again is that passage in Ezekiel where he says, I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and all your idols.

If I were to point back and describe my life with one thing, it would be this. God has been working these last 22 years to cleanse me from my filthiness and destroy all my idols. And if I live another 50 years, it will be that that will describe my life.

Now, we go on. There is just so much to say, just so much to say, I don't even know where to go. I've got too many verses here.

I want us to go for a moment to Second Corinthians, chapter six. Young people, listen to me. Listen to me carefully.

I'm going to tell you something that will help you. One of the prayers for my boys, I pray that they're converted, that they're regenerated. And I put in the background, in the context of that, when it pleased the Lord to call, when it pleased the Lord to call them, because it pleased the Lord to call Paul at a time I wouldn't have chosen, you know, and the Lord's will be done and not my own.

But one of my prayers is, Lord, regenerate them and convert them early, that the world not have such a hold. That there not be so many claw marks on them. I don't know whether that makes any difference or not, but seems to.

What I'm trying to tell you, young person, is listen to me. This is life and death. This is guard your heart.

It is the wellspring of life. There is an enemy and a fallen world out there that wants to suck you down. It wants to rape you.

It wants to destroy you. It wants to mutilate you. It wants to darken you, to stain you, to make you filthy.

Why? Because while you are not all those things, when they look at you, they are rebuked and they hate it. Listen to me. If I could go back and not do the things I have done prior to my conversion, I'd give an arm to do that.

I would give everything that could be taken off of me, and yet I still live. Just to get away from me the fun and the entertainment, at least that's what they called it. Some of you are homeschooled.

That is extremely dangerous. You say, why? Well, I'm going to homeschool my children. But my point is this.

You sometimes maybe think, well, it's not so bad over there. Oh, it is more horrid than you could ever imagine. And when God tells His children, be holy as I am holy, look at what He's saying.

God is the most blessed creature, not creature, God is the most blessed entity. He is the most blessed being that there is. His continual joy before His throne, pleasures without number before His throne.

And so when He's saying, be holy as I am holy, He's saying, come and be swallowed up in this joy. And yet the world and the devil will put into your mind, and some of you will be able to acknowledge this has happened, this has happened, the devil will put into your mind, you're missing out, you're missing out. Oh, man, your parents, they're just wanting to rain on your parade.

They don't understand. They're old. They do understand.

They were not always old. And if they could go back and not do what they're trying to keep you from doing, they would cut off their right arm. They understand much more than you will ever know.

And so, God, when He comes to us in this 2nd Corinthians chapter 6, when He comes to us in verse 16. He says this, what agreement. Well, let's go on up, let's go on up to verse 14, do not be bound together with unbelievers.

What does that mean? Do not enter into any relationship with any unbeliever that will become an influence on your life. We cannot remove ourselves from this world. We cannot keep from having contact with unbelievers.

There's a sense in which biblically we should have contact with unbelievers. But we should never enter into a relationship with an unbeliever, communion with an unbeliever that is going to bring about their influence in our lives. It is just too dangerous.

And He says, for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness? You see, it's not a thing about, you know, just have it your way and have it God's way. It is a drawn line that is stern and strong. It is either you will follow Christ, that you will follow God, or you are with those who amass themselves together, who, if they could, would storm the throne room of God, knock Him off the throne and slaughter Him.

You see, it's not just this neutral ground somewhere. It's those who love Him and those who despise Him. And you have to decide where will you be.

And you decide that every moment of every day of your life. Then he goes on and he says, righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? And of course, they're all rhetorical questions and the answer is absolutely nothing. There is no agreement.

There is no agreement. And you have to come to that conclusion. There is no agreement.

That world has nothing to do with me and I have nothing to do with it. That world has been crucified to me and I have been crucified to the world. I am upward bound.

I am a pilgrim. This is not my home. I do not belong here.

This is not my thing. This is not my place. I am a foreigner.

I am a stranger. I expect to be mocked. I expect to be treated cruelly.

I am behind enemy lines. I expect to get nothing here. But I expect to get it all there.

You see, one of the problems is you expect too much of this place. And expect that God should give you some of this place. He is not going to give you some of this place.

He hates this place. He would never give it to a child that He loves. He is giving you that place.

The other place. So do not moan and mope that the world is against you. That everyone else seems to be having so much fun and you are behind prison bars of morality.

This is not your home. And the ones who are doing all the dancing, they are dancing only to forget the pain of how empty they are. He goes on and says, this is where we are going to finish with this part.

He says, and this is one, in my opinion, is one of the most heartbreaking passages in all the Bible. He says, for we are the temple of the living God, just as God has said. I will dwell in them and walk among them and I will be their God and they will be my people.

Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean and I will welcome you and I will be a father to you. And you shall be my sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.

You almost see here Hosea coming, that old prophet coming to Gomer and saying, Gomer, come away from all those vile men. Come away from your prostitution. Come away from your adulteries.

Come, I will be your husband. I have a home for you. That a man should be reduced to that is a sad thing.

That God, by grace, should so condescend to do that is an amazing thing. That's what he's saying to you. See, he really is everything he says he is.

And it goes back to our biggest problem is we don't know him and we don't believe what we do know. He really is like this and he really has prepared a place for his people. But the most important thing is that place for his people is beyond description for one reason.

He is there. He is there. It all goes back to him.

Holiness, again, is not the ability to submit to a prescribed set of rules. It is a drawing unto him which will lead a heart to willing and joyful submission. Let's pray.

Father, that our hearts would be so drawn to you. That our heart, oh God, Lord, prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love.

Take my heart, Lord, and seal it. Seal it for thy courts above. For Jesus' sake.

Amen.

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