God: What Is He Like? Part 2
Selected Scriptures
1353

To know God, and all that God has revealed about Himself, is the highest pursuit of life. Proverbs 9:10 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.” A man never even starts being wise till he knows God, and a man never gains any understanding until he has the knowledge of the holy. To know God is the highest pursuit of a man’s life. In John, chapter l7 and verse 3, our Lord in His high priestly prayer made the statement that He had come to give eternal life, and that eternal life was “to know Thee, the only true God.” To know God is the highest goal of a man’s life; for that Jesus came into the world, that we might know God. That’s a synonym for eternal life. People often ask what eternal life is, it’s simply to know God – to know Him intimately – to partake of His very nature and life.

The wisest man who ever lived got some good instruction from a man who gave evidence, sometimes, of not being very wise, and that was David, giving instruction to Solomon. Sometimes what David said was very wise. In 1 Chronicles, chapter 28, verse 9, David told his son, “And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind.” Good advice. Solomon, know God. And when you know Him, serve Him, willingly, with a perfect heart, “for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by thee, but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever.”

Peter said, “Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” In 2 Thessalonians 1:8, it says that the Lord will come “in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them who know not God.” To know God, you see, is the crux of existence. To know God is the highest pursuit of life. To know God is everything, and then to know all there is revealed about Him in the pages of this book. Not only to know God is man’s highest pursuit, but to know God is God’s highest purpose. Not only does He want us to know Him, but He cooperates from His side. God desires that we know Him. The Bible is so explicit about this. In Hosea chapter 6, in another context, where God through the prophet is rebuking Israel for their hypocrisy – they carried out the sacrificial system with hearts that were totally estranged from God – and he says this in Hosea 6:6, “I desired mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” More than any other external thing does God desire that we know Him. Men are to know God, and God desires that men know Him, this is meaning to life. This is what we’re all about. This is our highest pursuit and God’s highest purpose for us.

I was trying to think of a way to graphically illustrate to you how important it is to God that we know Him. And it came to my mind that the prophet Ezekiel sets about to reveal the glory of God. In the first chapter of Ezekiel we find the vision of God, and you might look at it for just a minute; Ezekiel chapter 1 begins with God. It says, “Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.” Ezekiel begins his prophecy by talking about this vision of God that he saw. Then when you would go to the end of the book of Ezekiel – you don’t need to turn to it – it simply says in 48:35, the last statement of the book, “The Lord is there.” It begins with Ezekiel’s

vision of God, and it ends with the eternal God reigning in His eternal throne in His eternal Kingdom. Ezekiel presents God in 1:1 and closes out with God in 48:35, and you know, everything in between is an emphasis on the character of God.

Well, as I looked at those two extremes of the book of Ezekiel, I thought, "I wonder what it is in the middle that Ezekiel really keeps pounding home," so I just did a little study on Ezekiel by myself, and I discovered a very important thing about what God wants you and I to know. Let's look at chapter 6 together. Now I want you to follow with me. Ezekiel chapter 6, verse 7, and I'm going to read one statement out of these verses, and you'll find it sometimes at the beginning of a verse, sometimes in the middle, and sometimes at the end, and I'm just going to read it. Verse 7: "You shall know that I am the Lord." Verse 10: "And they shall know that I am the Lord." Verse 13: "Then shall you know that I am the Lord." Chapter 7, verse 4, end of the verse; "You shall know that I am the Lord." Verse 9: "You shall know that I am the Lord." Further – and we may be skipping some in between – go over to chapter 11, verse 12: "You shall know that I am the Lord." Chapter 12, verse 16: "They shall know that I am the Lord." Verse 20: "You shall know that I am the Lord." Chapter 13, verse 9: "You shall know that I am the Lord." Fourteen: "You shall know that I am the Lord." Twentyone: "You shall know that I am the Lord." Twentythree: "You shall know that I am the Lord." Chapter 14:8: "You shall know that I am the Lord."

There's a message here somewhere, folks. Are you getting it? Chapter 15, verse 7: "You shall know that I am the Lord." Going over further to chapter 20, verse 12: "That they might know that I am the Lord." Verse 20: "That they may know that I am the Lord your God." Twentysix: "They might know that I am the Lord." Thirtyeight: "You shall know that I am the Lord." Fortytwo: "You shall know that I am the Lord." Fortyfour: "You shall know that I am the Lord." Now, that takes us through 21 – 22:16: "You shall know that I am the Lord." Twentyfour:24: "You shall know that I am the Lord God." Twentyfour:27: "They shall know that I am the Lord." Well, I'm not going to beggar the point. It goes on, and on, and on, and on, right on out of the end of the book. I didn't even bother to count how many times, but just looking at chapter 39 I see it two times, once in chapter 38, and it just keeps going and going until you get to chapter 40, and then God appears in His great glorious millennial Kingdom. It's just one entire prophecy geared so that you may know that I am the Lord.

Now, what then is God trying to say to us? He wants us to know Him. This is God's desire for man. God is not hiding. God is not sort of a, sort of a cosmic Easter bunny, stashed in a bush, and we're running around and He's saying "You're getting warmer." God is not trying to cover Himself up. God has disclosed Himself, and He wants us to know Him, and that is the highest purpose of a man's life.

How is it that we can know Him? How can we know God? Well, you know, the prophet said. "If you seek Me with all your heart, you'll surely find Me," didn't he? Solomon gave some wise information in Proverbs 2:3. He said, "If you cry after wisdom, or knowledge, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." Solomon said, "There's only one way to really know God, and to know all that's revealed about God, and that's to make that the pursuit of your life. Ii you're looking for money, if you're looking for success, if you're looking for something else, you'll not really discover all that there is to know about God. But, he says: "My son, if you seek God like silver, and search for God as if for hidden treasure, you'll find the knowledge of Him." God wants us to know Him. God wants us to pursue Him. And that's why we're making this little study, in order for us to better know Him; in order for me to help you to know Him better.

Now, let's get into our outline. We've already answered the first two questions, is He, and who is He, and we're working on question number three, what is He like? What is God like?

Now, we said that God is defined for us in the Bible in terms of certain attributes or characteristics, and the definition of an attribute is this: an attribute is anything that is true of God – anything that is true of God. The only ones that we can discuss are the ones revealed in the Scripture. How many attributes did I tell you God has? You remember? How many? An infinite number. You can't number them. There are only some who've been revealed here, and of all the ones that have been revealed here, we're just picking out a few, to better understand God.

Now, what have we studied already? Number one: we studied that God was immutable. That means He doesn't change and He can't change – God never changes. The second one we studied: God is omnipresent. That means He is everywhere at the same time with total consciousness. The third one we studied last Lord's day: God is omnipotent. That means He is all powerful. He can do anything, He can do anything as easily as He can do anything else, and He can do anything He wants to do. God is unchanging, everywhere at all times, and all powerful.

Now, today I want to share with you two other attributes about the character of God. The fourth one: He is omniscient. That simply means He knows everything. God knows everything – everything. In Psalm 147:5, the Bible says, "His understanding is infinite." That means limitless. His understanding is infinite. He not only knows the knowable, He knows the unknowable. First Timothy 1:17 calls Him "the only wise God." Jude 25 calls Him "the only wise God." Romans l6:27, Paul called Him, "God only wise." He not only is wise, He not only knows everything, but He's the only one who knows everything that He knows. Now, the angels know a lot, but they don't know what God knows. And you and I know some things – nobody knows as much as God – unrivaled, infinite wisdom, and understanding, and knowledge.

Did you know that God never learned anything? When you pray you don't say, "Now, God, I want to inform you about my motherinlaw who is ill." "Oh – I'll write that down." No. No, you didn't give Him any information that He needed. He needed to know you cared, and He chooses to work through your prayers, but there are no surprises with God. He never learned anything. Who would teach Him? Isaiah 40:13: "Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counselor, has taught Him?" Who taught God? Of course, no one. Romans 11:34, Paul says: "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor?" No one. Who taught God? Nobody. God knows everything.

Now, people, when you stop to think about it, here we are sitting here, and most of us know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, most of us know God. Have you ever stopped to realize that the most astounding fact about God's omniscience is that He knows us, and still we're here? Yeah, that's amazing. God knows everything and still loves us. Incredible. When you match up the attribute that I'm going to mention in a minute, His holiness – God despises sin, God knows everything – and then try to figure out how you got into His presence, then you'll come up with one other attribute: love. God knows everything, and still He redeems us.

You say, "Why?" Isaiah 48 explains everything to us. Isaiah 48:8, he says: "Yea, you heard not," you didn't listen to Me. "You knew not, from that time thine ear was not opened," you never listened to Me. From the very beginning when I made man, they never listened. "For I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and was called a transgressor from the womb." God says, "I knew you were a sinner from the very womb." You talk about when does a person become a person in the eyes of

God? It's pretty clear in the Bible, already in the womb. "For My Name's sake will I defer Mine anger, and for My praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver. I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction, for Mine own sake, even for Mine own sake will I do it." God looks down, and He knows everything. "I knew you – I knew you were rotten from the beginning. I knew you were a transgressor from the womb and I hate sin, but I saved you anyway. Why? Not so much for your sake, but because I wanted to display to the world another of My attributes, and that is the attribute of love; and to the angels another one, the attribute of wisdom, for My sake."

People, the marvel of marvels to me is that God knows everything and still loves me. Nothing is hidden from God. Do you know that everything about your body God knows? And the hairs of your head are numbered? For some of you that's no trick. Everything about you, God knows. You say, "Why would God" – why would God bother to count your hair? He didn't have to count it; He intrinsically knows it. God isn't doing that just to prove a point, going around keeping a record book on hair. Anything that is, He knows; and doesn't have to learn it or find it out. He knows it. He knows your body. But do you know something? He knows beyond your body; your body is transparent to God. In Revelation 2:23 He said: "I am He who searches the hearts and minds." Your body doesn't cover anything. He sees your heart and your mind just as well as He sees your outside. The clouds, the darkness, the night are no canopy to Him. The night isn't any curtain to God. In Psalm 139:12 it says, "The darkness hideth not from thee." I suppose that it's that "men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil" has something to do with the fact that most sin is conducted in dimly lit places. But that's certainly in the brilliant light of God's omniscience. Night doesn't hide anything from God.

Whispers are no muffler to God's ear. Psalm 139:4 says: "There is not a word in my tongue but, Lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it all together." God hears your whispers as if they were broadcast. You say, "What about my thoughts?" Listen, your mind couldn't conceive the subtlest thought outside the knowledge of God. Isaiah 66:l8: "I know their thoughts." Jesus, in John chapter 2, gave evidence that He was God when He said nobody needed to tell Him what was in the heart of a man, He knew what was in that man. When Jesus confronted Nicodemus, Nicodemus asked one question with his mouth, another one in his mind, and Jesus answered the one in his mind that he never asked with his lips. There isn't a secret place in your house, or a secret place in the world that you can go to, that hides you from God. Same chapter, Isaiah 66, same verse: "I know their works." He knows. And listen to me, everything He knows is right, because according to Deuteronomy 32:4, He's called a God of truth. It's impossible for Him to lie. He has never made a mistake. He cannot err. He knows everything, and He knows everything right and truthfully – everything.

You say, "Well, what about I'm counting on Hosea 13:12, man, I've made this my life verse. It says, 'The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, his sin is hidden.' I'm hoping on that one. I'm hoping that there are a few little things He doesn't know about." Sorry about that. You say, "Well, what does that verse mean? I know people who say this means that God doesn't know all the sin." God knows everything. The Bible makes that clear. Everywhere you read about the character of God it's obvious He knows everything. You say, "Well, what does this verse mean?" Well, it's certainly not a contradiction. It means this: "the iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, his sin is hidden." That is, for the moment, his sin is laid up against a future day of judgment. It's the divine lay-away plan – sin now, pay later.

That's right. You know, you look at it – sometimes the godly people seem to be under more stress than the ungodly, right? Why is it that sometimes the ungodly prosper? They will not always prosper.

Maybe, like Ephraim, their sin is for the time hidden, bound up against the day of judgment to come in the future. That's the meaning of Romans, chapter 2, verse 5 and 6, where Paul says, "But after thy hard and impenitent heart treasures up under thyself wrath against the day of wrath." In other words, you're sinning, and piling up a stockpile of sin against a future day: the "revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds." There's coming a day when that judgment will come, and that sin which is now being hidden, or bound up against a future day, will be unmasked, punished.

God knows everything – everything. And that leads us to a footnote. Another attribute of God that we'll just slide in, 'cause we don't have time to cover them all, is the attribute of wisdom. Now, listen to me: what is wisdom? I'll give you a simple definition. Wisdom is omniscience acting with a holy will. It's omniscience acting with a holy will. If God knows everything, then everything He does is absolutely wise. If He knows the end from the beginning, then He knows every step in between. If God knows that this is what you are, and this is what you will be, you may not understand what's going on in between, but He does. And it's all right. If He has perfect knowledge, He has perfect wisdom. Practical omniscience – He knows everything – everything.

You know, you can get a lot of illustrations of God's wisdom. You can look at creation – everything from the macrocosm of the universe to the microcosm of the minutiae of life – and you can see wisdom. It's absolutely incredible how wise God is – staggering – wisdom. Can you imagine how God puts an entire universe together, the component parts of which run beyond the capacity of numbers, and that every single thing functions in harmony with every other thing, to bring about exactly the thing which God intends? Incredible. And every result along the way is perfectly fulfilling His wisdom. God's creation is a monument to His wisdom. Psalm 104:24 says. "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works, in wisdom Thou hast made them all." The wisdom of God – we see how everything works together according to Ephesians 1:11, after the counsel of His will.

And then you have to agree that redemption is an act of wisdom. God took the ones who weren't mighty, and weren't noble, and weren't smart, and made of them His people, and confounded the mighty, and confounded the wise, and confounded the noble of the world; we studied that in 1 Corinthians 1. And then God takes the church, according to Ephesians 3:10, puts them on display before angels, that the angels might see how wise He is. The wisdom of God, my friends, is seen in the redemption of us who are His church.

God is wise. God knows everything. What are the practical lessons of this? Let me give them to you. What is the practical thing for a Christian, first of all? What does this do to me, to know God is wise and knows everything? Number one: it's a great comfort to me to know that He knows everything. You say, "Why so?" Well, in the first place, it's good to know He knows me. He'd have to just about know everything to know me; I'm not that significant in the universe. Have you ever wondered, "Well, I wonder if He knows that I'm here?" I imagine there are some folks that just are kind of there in the world, and they're not very famous or anything; and they may check in once in a while and say, "I wonder if He really knows I'm around? I don't make a lot of noise or anything."

You know, there were some people like that in Malachi's time. God was really breathing down judgment on the people, and Malachi the prophet was really flailing away. And there were a group of little folks that got together, and they got kind of shaky, and they were saying, "You know, we might get drowned in all this judgment. God might forget and just start whacking everybody. I wonder if He remembers us?" And in Malachi 3:16, it says: "Then they that feared the Lord spoke often, one to

another." They were doing a lot of talking. "Boy, you know, this is getting pretty bad – I wonder if God knows we're here." "And the Lord hearkened and heard it, and the book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord and thought on His name, 'And they shall be Mine,' said the Lord, 'in the day when I make up My jewels, and I'll spare them as a man spares his own son that serves him.'"

God's got a book, my friends, and He doesn't forget who belongs in it. Isn't that good to know? I'm glad He knows everything. He knows John MacArthur and He knows that I know Jesus Christ, and so He knows I belong in the book. In fact, He knew that so long ago He wrote me down before the world began. It's a comfort to me to know God knows everything – to know there is absolutely nothing outside of the knowledge of God. He knows me, and He knows that I belong to Him. That's a comfort. In Psalm 56, verse 8 – I love this: "Thou numberest my wanderings; put Thou my tears into Thy bottle?" It could be a statement rather than a question. "You put my tears in your bottle." You know, in the Orient when the mourners would come – that was a pretty customary thing – everybody cries. Some of the mourners would catch their tears in a bottle. You paid the mourners. I suppose it was one way to prove you did your job – hand over a bottle of tears – take your money. But they had mourners who came and mourned. And they would catch their tears in a bottle, and they would leave them as a little token.

David says God catches his tears in His bottle. God remembers my tears. God not only knows me, but He knows my tears. Is that good to know? Is it comforting for you to know that God knows every trial that you ever go through? That God catches your tears in His bottle? He must have a very big bottle. Maybe He just fills the ocean with them, and that's why it's salty, I don't know. God catches your tears in His bottle. That means to me that God cares about me. I'm glad to know that.

In Matthew chapter 6, not only does God know my anxieties and my pain, not only does He know who I am, but He knows all my needs. In Matthew 6:25, He says, "Don't be anxious for your life, what you eat, what you drink, what you wear on your body. The life is more than food and the body than raiment. Look at the birds of the air; they don't sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you better than they?" You're better than birds. "Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to your stature?" No sense in worrying, you can't help yourself with it anyway. "And why are you worried about your clothes? Look at the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say that even Solomon in all his glory wasn't arrayed like one of these. And if God's going to clothe the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe ye, O ye of little faith? Don't be anxious saying what shall we eat, what shall we drink, or what shall we wear? These are what the heathens seek. Your Father knows you have need of these things. You seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and" – what – "all these things will be added."

My Father knows me, and my name is in His book. My Father knows my tears. And my Father knows my needs, and He takes care of them all. I'm better than a bird. I'm more important than a lily. Lilies are nice, and birds are okay. And I'm better than the grass that's here today and gone tomorrow, 'cause God takes care of me. It's a comfort, people, to know that God knows everything. He knows me, my anxieties, my trials, my tears, my needs. And listen: in the midst of all of that He never, ever, ever makes a mistake – ever. Listen to me: if God has an infinite amount of attributes, and an infinite knowledge, and you don't understand something, don't say God made a mistake, just realize you don't know very much. Don't chalk it up to God's stupidity, chalk it up to yours. God doesn't make mistakes.

Further, to the Christian omniscience means comfort; secondly, I think, it means confidence. Boy, I use to think the doctrine of omniscience was anything but confidence. When I was a little kid my parents use to say, “We may not know what you do, but God does. He sees everything.” Remember that beauty? Used to get that – “He knows.” And, you know, I use to think the doctrine of omniscience was really a bummer. Boy, I mean, what a deal. Then I studied John 21 and grew up a little bit, and I remembered Peter there, and Peter kept trying to convince the Lord he loved Him. Remember that? “Lord, I’m telling You, I love You.” And the Lord kept asking him, and asking. Finally, he says, “Lord, look: You know all things, You know that I love You.” What did he appeal to, what doctrine of God, what attribute? Omniscience.

Omniscience is a great thing, people. It’s not so much that God looks down and spies you out – that’s only half of the thing. Do you know that if it weren’t for omniscience, there are some days when God wouldn’t even know you loved Him, because it isn’t obvious? And if He didn’t know everything, He wouldn’t even know you cared. I suppose in my life there are plenty of days when I am indistinguishable from one of the world’s people. Would you agree for that for your life? How does He know I care? He has to know a lot. He has to know everything. He has to know my heart. Oh, that gives me confidence, that even when I blow it, my love is still secured because He knows my heart.

A third thought – and this I alluded to already – it’s correction. Listen to this. If you knew that God didn’t know everything, what would you do that you don’t do now? Think about that one. That’s a real winner. If you knew God didn’t know everything, and that He would never find out, what would you do? Ohh – my paper’s not long enough to write it all out. And so I say the third good, practical result of the doctrine of omniscience is correction. God is one teacher who never leaves the room. And yet it’s always with love, isn’t it?

He knows everything. If you knew – and think about this – if you want to know where you really hurt, if you want to know your sins, if you want to know where you’re the rottenest, just imagine what you would do if you knew He wouldn’t know, and you’ll find yourself there. But He does know. And as I told you last time, because He’s everywhere, every sin you ever commit is as if you crawled up into the throne room of God, walked up to the foot of the throne, and did it right in His face. But the New Testament tells us that sometime, all the things that we’ve done in the body are going to be accounted for, 2 Corinthians 5. And it also tells us in 1 Corinthians 4:5 that that day is going to bring to light the hidden things of darkness. Everything God knows – all of our ways, thoughts, attitudes, everything. For the Christian, that’s correction, boy. If He knows it, I don’t want to do it – I don’t want to affront Him – I don’t want to dishonor Him – that’s correction. And then the confidence I have in knowing that He knows my heart, and the comfort I have in knowing that He knows I’m His, He knows my tears, He knows my needs, He never makes a mistake.

What about the nonChristian? What does the doctrine of omniscience mean to you? You’re here, you don’t know God, you don’t know Christ, you’re just kind of looking in, you’re kind of hearing us out, what does this mean to you? Number one: let me say this. It ought to reveal to you the stupidity of hypocrisy. If you think you can play a game and get by, you’re wrong. God knows everything. Don’t think for a minute that God buys your act. He doesn’t. He doesn’t buy it. Your hypocrisy is absolutely unmasked. When Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, took off after Israel, He just stripped them naked, didn’t He? He just tore the masks right off of them. “You hypocrites!” And they were running for cover, believe me, by the time He got done with them. Listen to Ecclesiastes, a word of wisdom from Ecclesiastes 12:14, it says this: “For God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret

thing, whether it be good or it be evil." Listen: God doesn't buy your routine, God doesn't see your mask and say, "Oh." God isn't like man. "Man looks on the outward appearance, God looks" – what – "on the heart." He reads you loud and clear. Listen, my friend, if you don't know Christ, you might as well realize to begin with, that you don't know God, and whatever games you're playing to try to appear to be good before God doesn't make it. The stupidity of hypocrisy if God knows everything, He knows a lot more than you're thinking He knows.

Second thing that I would say to an unbeliever, or to one who doesn't know God, is that there is the promise of accurate judgment. In Romans 2:2, Paul says "God will judge according to truth." When it comes down to the final judgment, and the lake of fire, and who is sent to hell, believe me, that judgment will be a just judgment. God will judge on the basis of truth, because He has absolute knowledge of truth, nobody but nobody fakes God out. In Jeremiah 16:17, the prophet said: "Their iniquities are not hid from Mine eyes." No hiding. In 1 Samuel 16:7, "Man looks on the outward appearance, God sees the heart." Judgment will be according to truth, and there is no way to hide it from God. He knows if you're a sinner. He knows if you're unforgiven. He knows if you're churchianity was all you had. He knows if your good deeds were all you had chalked up. He knows whether your name is in the book. He knows whether you've repented and come to Christ. He knows. He knows everything. And your games don't fool Him; neither do mine.

Another thing that I would say to an unbeliever is this: to know that God knows everything ought to point up to you the folly of human wisdom. God knows everything, so if you want to really be wise, you ought to get in on His knowledge. As Solomon told his son, "Seek knowledge" – "seek knowledge," he says it over and over again, particularly chapter 8, just repeats it from verse 1 right to verse 36 "Get knowledge, get knowledge," and knowledge is the knowledge of God. A foolish man pursues the knowledge of the world. First Corinthians 1:19, "I will destroy the knowledge of the world. I will destroy the wise," he says. "The wisdom of the wise shall come to nothing."

So to the unbeliever, I would say, "There's folly in hypocrisy. God is going to judge you according to truth. Don't trust human wisdom." God knows everything. That's a comfort to us, and it ought to be a stern warning to others. God is unchanging. God is everywhere. God is all powerful. God is allknowing.

Lastly, I want to talk to you, fifth, about God's holiness – God's holiness. God is holy. I feel that this is the most significant of all of His attributes. This, to me, is the sparkling jewel on the regal crown of His head – this is the ultimate. God is holy. When the angels sang, they didn't say, "Eternal, eternal, eternal." They didn't say, "Faithful, faithful, faithful." They didn't say, "Wise, wise, wise; mighty, mighty, mighty." What did they say? "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." This is the crown of all that He is. He's holy. Exodus 15:11: "Who is like unto Thee? Who is like Thee," it says, "glorious in holiness, fearful in praise, doing wonders?" Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness? Nobody. Do you know that that's His name? Psalm 111:9 says, "Holy and reverend is His name." Holy is His name. Job 6:10 calls Him "the Holy One." Isaiah heard them say, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory." Revelation 4:8, the living creatures: "Holy, holy, holy." First Samuel, chapter 2, verse 2 talks about His holiness, and that "there is none other that is as holy as He."

God is holy, and I don't know of any other way to get to the holiness of God than by comparing it with sin. I would say that in the Bible, at least in my mind, probably the most revealing passage regarding the holiness of God is the sixth chapter of Isaiah. And you don't need to turn to it, let me just mention it to you. Isaiah says, "In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord high and lifted up, and His

train filled the temple." He had a vision of God, and he said, "Around God were the seraphim, and they had six wings; with twain they covered their feet, with twain they covered their faces and with twain they did fly." And one of those angels, you remember, took his tongs and took a coal from off the altar and touched the tongue of Isaiah, but before all of that, what really is the issue in that passage? Isaiah says, "I saw the Lord, and I cried out, 'Woe is me for I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King.'" He was absolutely shattered to the very core of his being. He shook fiercely. He violently was being shattered. Why? Because he had seen the holiness of God, and in seeing the holiness of God, he was rattled to the very base of his being by his own sinfulness. You see?

And I tell you something, people, it is not until a man understands the holiness of God, that that'll never happen without a comparison with his own sin. It's not until you understand your own sin that you'll ever know the holiness of God. The two go together. You can't know your sin until you know His holiness, and you can't know His holiness until you see your sin. Isaiah saw God lifted up, and then he saw himself, and he just poured his inner heart out: "Oh, woe is me – I am undone." Between you and God, there is an absolute gulf of holiness and unholiness. You are unholy. He is holy. And you ought to be, and I ought to be, just absolutely shaken to the very roots of our being when we see ourselves in comparison to Him. God is holy.

Now listen to me: God doesn't conform to a holy standard. He is the standard. He's absolutely holy. He never does anything wrong. He never errs. He never makes a misjudgment. He never makes a mistake. He never makes something happen in your life that isn't the right thing to happen in your life, or it doesn't have a right end in mind. Always He does right. And there are no degrees to His holiness – He is absolutely infinitely holy. And because, you see, God is holy, that's His condition for anybody who wants to exist in His presence. When the angels sinned, what did He do to them – immediately what? Threw them out, and prepared a place for them separated from His presence. When men choose not to come to God, when they choose to reject Jesus Christ, what happens to them ultimately? They're sent to the same place, prepared for the devil and His angels, out of the presence of God. Why? Because to be in God's presence, in His universe you must be – what – holy.

You say, "But, John, how in the world can I be holy?" You can be, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, it is through Christ that God gives us Christ's holiness and sees us holy – positionally. God made us holy in Christ. To the Corinthians, the apostle Paul said, "Now are you holy. Now are you sanctified in Christ." Further, thinking about this, the only way to understand God's holiness is in contrast. We have to see His hatred of sin. We can't just understand His holiness independently of His hatred of sin, 'cause we have to take it from the sin side, 'cause that's what we understand so well. God despises sin – just hates it. In Habakkuk 1:13, it says: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity and cannot look on evil." God can't tolerate sin. He can't tolerate evil. He is totally removed from it. It cannot enter His presence. It cannot abide with Him.

When the sinfulness of Sennacherib was exaggerated, you remember, the Holy Spirit said, "You have lifted up your eyes on high, even against the Lord, the Holy One of Israel." You see, the sin of Sennacherib was evident because of God's holiness.

When the evil Egyptians were drowned, in Exodus 15, do you know what drowned them? Some people say the power of God. No. Not really. Listen to Exodus l5, "The sea covered them, they sank as lead in the waters," then this, "who is like unto Thee, O Lord, glorious in holiness." Do you know

why they drowned? Not by the power of God, but by the holiness of God; He couldn't tolerate their evil. God's holiness is best seen in His hatred of sin. In Amos chapter 5, some strong words: "I hate, I despise your feast days. I will not take delight in your solemn assemblies. Though you offer Me burnt offerings and meal offerings I'll not accept them, neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not hear the melody of your harps." God loves all those things, 'cause He instituted all of them, but when those kind of deeds, even though those deeds were right, come out of impure hearts, God hates them. God doesn't want people doing right things with wrong attitudes. God says, "I hate it all; stop it." Sin is the object of His displeasure. God loves holiness. In Psalm 11, verse 7, it says this: "For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness." What a beautiful statement. God loves holiness.

Now, God's holiness we've seen from a negative standpoint, His hatred of sin. The amazing thing here, though – and you have to interject it – is God's love. Even though He's holy and absolutely hates sin, and even though as I just mentioned to you earlier, He is omniscient and knows everything, isn't it amazing that He redeemed you? It's amazing that He knows me, and He despises my sin, and yet He loved me. That's where love comes in, you see. God's holiness, God's omniscience, and God's love all act in the same. What a fantastic realization. God knew everything about me, and God hated every bit of sin in me, and still He loved me. I tried to think of an illustration for that, and I suppose it would be like cancer. You know, you would love your body, but you would hate the cancer. And you would do everything you could to preserve your body, and keep it healthy and strong, and minister to its needs, and everything you could, at the same time, to destroy the cancer. You would hate what's there, but not the total self. And somehow, God looks at man, and He loves the body, and He despises the sin.

Where do you see God's holiness revealed? Well, you see it in a lot of ways. God never wills sin. No, no – never. He wills to allow you to sin if you choose to, but He doesn't will the sin. God never tempts anybody to sin. God doesn't want you to sin. Some people must think God wants them to sin. Some people have said to me, "You know, what you really should do is have a real sinful life and tell everybody about it, and then when you tell your conversion a lot of people will believe it and say, 'What a transformation, isn't it wonderful?' So God must really want you to go down to the dregs, so you'll have something to say." Very convincing; oh no – God doesn't celebrate in anybody's sin – never. And God never tempts a man to sin, James 1:13 and 14, "God tempts no man."

But God's holiness is seen in some very positive things. For example, His holiness is seen in creation, to begin with. In Ecclesiastes 7:29 – we're going to close with these thoughts – in Ecclesiastes 7:29, he said, "God has made man upright, but they have sought out many devices." God made man upright. When God made man he was holy. God's holiness is seen in creation.

Secondly, God's holiness is seen in the moral law. The moral law that still pervades, though man has tried to mess it up and try to wipe it out, the moral law that still pervades in the world shows God to be holy. Romans 7:12, Paul said, "The law is holy, the commandment is holy, just and good." God's moral law shows that God's a holy God. When God laid down a righteous moral law He proved Himself to be a righteous moral holy being.

And I think, too, that God's holiness is not only seen in His creation, and not only in His moral law, but I see God's holiness in His sacrificial law. When I see God laying out all those animals as a sacrifice, I see God saying that death is the result of sin, and I want you to see that, and I want you to see it good. And every time those people made a sacrifice, they saw the deadliness of sin; and that

proved the morality and the holiness of God. God's holiness is seen in creation, in moral law, sacrificial law; God's holiness is also seen in judgment on sin – in judgment on sin. When you study the Bible and you see, for example, in 2 Thessalonians, chapter I, Jesus coming in flaming fire, and taking vengeance on those who know not God and obey not the gospel. When you see in Jude 4 those ungodly who are damned and condemned for their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly done against God, you see how God hates sin, and His judgment on sin is a reflection of His holiness; He must punish it.

And perhaps supremely, the holiness of God is seen in the cross. Yes. The holiness of God is seen in the cross. You say, "But that's where all the sin was on Him." Yes, and that's the greatest illustration of His holiness. Listen to me: God was so holy that He paid the absolutely supreme price that was necessary to satisfy His holiness. In Hebrews, chapter 9, and verse 26, we pass over that, but it is a remarkable statement, listen to what it says: "For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world." In other words, if it was a sacrificial system, Christ would have had to die again and again. But listen: "Now once in the end of the ages has He appeared" – listen, God Himself showed up, God Himself appeared – "to put away sin by the sacrifice of" – whom – Himself." God's holiness was so infinite that He had to pay the supreme price of dying Himself, bearing sin, because the price had to be paid even if it cost Him His own life. That's holiness. His holiness is seen in the death of Christ. God's holiness required payment, even if He had to pay it Himself. He is holy – holy.

What are the practical lessons of holiness? For the non- Christian, just this: the holiness of God demands holiness in your life, and it's only through Jesus Christ. In Ephesians 4, it talks about "putting on the new man, renewed in holiness." God wants you holy, and the only way to ever be holy is to be in Christ and have His righteousness given to you. On the other hand, if you're not a Christian, and you reject the holiness of God offered you in Jesus Christ, then another attribute of God goes to work, and that attribute is called justice. If you reject God, then you will receive what you deserve. That's justice, and God is just. And for the impenitent, His holiness demands justice.

What about the Christian? What does holiness mean to a Christian? What is the practical idea of God's holiness in my life? It's simply stated in 1 Peter, and I want you to listen, chapter 1, verse 15: "As He who has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of life, because it is written, 'Be ye holy, for I am holy.'" If God is holy, what does He want out of us? Holiness. Now listen to me: He made us holy positionally – positionally, in Christ we are holy, but He wants our practical lives to match our position. He wants us to live holy. Not just be holy positionally, but live holy lives, because when we are holy, that distinguishes us from the world. That lets the world know there's a difference. That's why in 2 Timothy 2:19, he says, "Let all that name the name depart from iniquity." If you're going to name the name, then live the life. Let the world know there's a difference.

I'll tell you something else. Holiness in your life gives you boldness before God. If you're a Christian and you're living a holy life, you're dealing with sin, you're doing godly things and holy things, you're living an upright life, then you're going to have a boldness before God. Listen to this beautiful illustration out of Job 22, and I'm just going to read it to you, listen: "If you return to the Almighty, you will be built up. Thou shalt put away iniquity very far from thy tents." Listen, you're going to go back to God and get things straightened out? The first thing you're going to do before you get back there is put sin away. Verse 26, listen: "Then shall you have delight in the Almighty, and shall lift up thy face unto God." You can't go to God, and lift your face, and delight in Him when there's sin in your life. Have you ever experienced that? Did you find out in your life what I found out, that whenever there's

sin in my life, I have a tough time praying? Job says, Job 22 says, “Take care of your sin, you’ll be able to lift your face up into the face of God.” No guilt.

Listen, holiness distinguishes us from the world. Holiness gives us boldness. Holiness gives us peace. “There’s no peace to the wicked,” Isaiah 57:21 says, Holiness – God wants us holy even if He has to chastise us; according to Hebrews 12:10, He’ll chastise us to make us holy. What should a Christian do? Well, maybe what David did in Psalm 51: be sure you pray for a clean heart; and then according to Proverbs 13:20, walk around with clean people. “Be holy as I am holy.” Let’s pray. Father, thank You this morning for Your revelation of Yourself to us; we commit these words and thoughts to Your care. May they bear fruit in our lives. Confirm to our heart these truths, Father. Dismiss us with Thy blessing to bring us back tonight anticipating that we shall learn more about the adversary, and be victorious in Your power. We praise You in Christ’s name. Amen.

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