

**Institutes of Theology | Session 23**  
**The Incommunicable Attributes of God**  
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You know, it was 14 years ago that God called me and my family to the left coast, that we also refer to as the west coast. And we went there for me to attend the Master's Seminary. And it was certainly a joy to be a part of that time that we were out there. Seminary had its challenges, its ups and its downs, but it was certainly a delight to be out there, to sit under those men, and to prepare for ministry. And with those challenges, you know, a seminary student goes through a lot of different things. The cost of California is one thing, and probably the biggest challenge that was for us out there. But there were all kinds of things that challenged us. The opportunities that we had to trust God were bountiful. But one of the experiences that we had over and over again that was just a wonderful experience was going to the beach. And I'm not a big sand guy. I've gotten over that since then, because sand will stay with you for months. But I do enjoy the beach, and I love the ocean. And so, and it was free, you know. We could go; we could be there at the beach. Our kids could get in the water. I could get in the water. And it was just a good time of relaxation in the midst of the chaos.

But there were times when I would stand there, and I still do this to this day. I was just in Florida a couple of weeks ago and went out to the beach. It was 30 degrees, by the way, in southern Florida when I was there. It was freezing. But I went out to the beach, and I love looking at the ocean. Just gazing as far as you can gaze, as far as your eyes will take you, and seeing that it really—to the naked eye—has no end. We can't see the end of the ocean. We can just stand and see the overwhelming amount of water that is there. And when I think about that picture, when I think about that scenario, I think that it's a little bit like studying the perfections of the attributes of God. Is that we stand on the edge of this time that God has given to us, and we look out and gaze out at the vastness and the greatness of God.

But as we do that, we also see that we can barely plumb the depths of how of how great God is. And so that's my goal for us tonight, is to keep that on the forefront of our minds as we begin to

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talk about the incommunicable attributes of God. There will be several sessions, I believe, on these on these particular attributes. My job tonight is to introduce us to these perfections of God. And then we, in the second part of our evening, Lord willing, will take a look at the holiness of God.

I want to begin thinking through the incommunicable attributes of God and the perfections of God. I want to begin by asking this question: Why study the perfections of God? Why should we study this? As Lance prayed, he prayed that we would not just sit here and theologize, which, by the way, that's a new word for me, but I think that's good. We would not just sit here and theologize, but that this would actually penetrate our hearts and our minds. And so I want to begin really with application at the beginning of our time, and we'll end with application. There'll be some application as we go through. But I think this is really important to ask this question as we think about the perfections of God.

So why study the perfections of God? I have several reasons why we should study the perfections of God. The first reason is because genuine love for God begins and is cultivated through knowing God. If we are going to truly love God as He calls us to in His Word, then we must know and understand the God that we are going to love. We do not want to love a God that is not presented in the Scriptures, because that is idolatry. We want to love the God of the Scriptures, and so we come to know this God by digging into His Word and by fleshing out who the Word says this God is. And as we do that, it produces this genuine love for God.

There's a second reason why I think it's important that we study the perfections of God, and that is this. It is because it is essential that we worship the God of the Bible, and not a God made in our own image. You know, there are so many idols in today's world. In the Old Testament, there were all kinds of idols that look differently than, that look different than our idols. Idols that were made of wood and stone and set up, and people would go and bow before. Today, the idols are much more, in one sense, numerous, as there's so many more things going on in our world because of technology and those things. But the reality is, is that idolatry is everywhere, and you know that.

You know the temptation of idolatry in your own lives, in your own hearts. As you think about the things that take priority in your life, but that's not necessarily what I'm talking about when I

say this statement. You see, we also form idols when we create a god in our image that we think is the god of the Scriptures. When we craft in our minds a god that is not spoken of and described precisely and specifically in the Word, and we worship that god, then we are worshipping a god made in our own image. A god that we are more comfortable worshipping. Perhaps it's a god that allows us or justifies us to do certain things that the Bible says we are not supposed to do. It's some kind of god that caters to our flesh and our desires, or our preferences in terms of worship. That happens when we begin to craft this god in our own image, and that happens because we don't look at the Scriptures and say, what is our God like? Who is this God that we must worship? So studying the perfections of God helps us because it is essential that we worship the God of the Bible and not a god made in our own image.

There's a third reason why we need to study the perfections of God, why it is good for our souls, and that is because an accurate understanding of the perfections of God transforms the way we think, speak, act, and it drives our motives. And that's something we really need to understand. What you believe about God will dictate how you live your life. What you know, and understand, and believe about God, and know to be true about God, and embrace, will dictate the way you think. It will dictate your priorities. It will conform your motives. It will affect your decisions. It is absolutely essential to study the perfections of God because that transforms the way that we think. That transforms the way that we act, the way that we speak. It must be, it must be of the utmost importance to us.

A fourth reason that I would give—just to kind of propel our study this evening—is because studying God's perfections brings humility. It brings humility because we are rightly confronted with our own insignificance in light of God's infinite significance. You see, when we open the Word of God and we reflect upon this, this, this God that it describes, and we understand what the Scriptures say concerning who we are, it brings deep, deep humility to our souls. Because we, if we could go back to even that ocean analogy, we're like that small seashell in the ocean that you step on, and it hurts when you walk out ten feet into the ocean in the midst of this massive billions and trillions of gallons of water. We need to contemplate God and focus on who He is, because that will help us to rightly understand who we are. And men, as we rightly understand who we are, as we rightly understand our purpose and all of those things in light of the significance of God, then it allows us to wholeheartedly accomplish what He has called us to

do on this earth. Even though we are, in the scheme of things, totally insignificant. It helps us to not overestimate our importance. To not overestimate our worth. It helps us to understand that we are who we are only by the grace of God.

There's a fifth reason why studying the perfections of God is incredibly important. And that is this, because knowing God is our greatest and our only boast. There's a lot of things that people boast about in life. There's a lot of things that, unfortunately, we boast about in life. And the reality is, there is only one primary boast that we are to have as individuals, and that is that we know God. Turn to Jeremiah chapter 9. Familiar text. Jeremiah 9:23. "Thus says Yahweh, 'Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might. Let not a rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows me, that I am Yahweh who exercises steadfast love, justice, and righteousness on earth. For I delight in these things,' declares Yahweh." Men, we are to study the perfections of God because He's worth being studied, and He's worth being our only boast. There's nothing else. There's no other ground. There's no other foundation that we can ever stand on and be able to exist. God is our only boast. He is our greatest boast. Knowing Him is our greatest boast.

A final reason why I would give us at the outset here of why studying the perfections of God is incredibly important is because knowing God ought to be the believer's primary goal in life. You know, there's a lot of priorities that we have, a lot of goals in life that we have. You have goals in your marriage. You have goals in your education. You have goals in your workplace. But as men of God, as men who have been bought by the precious blood of Christ, our primary goal in life ought to be knowing God. It should be that thing that drives us every morning to get up out of our slumber and to get into the Word before we go about doing anything else in the day. Because it is our main priority, is our main prerogative. Paul says this in Philippians chapter 3. He says in verse 7, "But whatever things were gained to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be lost in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the

fellowship of His sufferings being conformed to His death in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

This was Paul's main goal in life. This was his driving motivation. This was the primary thing that he wanted, was to know Christ, to know the Lord. And so, that's why we study the perfections of God. That's why you're here over the course of this semester, to be challenged, to be encouraged, to be exhorted in knowing this God that the Bible presents. And I hope these reasons, I hope they challenge you, I hope they motivate you, I hope they compel you to want to think about this, not just in a theological way, not just in an educational way, an academic way, but in a very practical way. This is why we exist. It is to know God.

And so, you know, as we begin to think through these different categories of perfections, it was J.I. Packer, I think, in *Knowing God*, who sums up why we should commit ourselves to this study, when he says this, he says, “Our aim in studying the Godhead must be to know God Himself better. Our concern must be to enlarge our acquaintance, not simply with the doctrine of God's attributes, but with the living God whose attributes they are.”

And so as we start to think through these different attributes, these different perfections, we must never lose sight of the fact that we are thinking about God in all of His fullness, in all of His greatness, one being not divided up by these attributes, but one being who has all of these things that He is. So let's begin with a definition of the attributes, the definition of the perfections of God. We'll define it this way, distinguishing characteristics of the divine nature, which are essential and indispensable to the very essence and nature of God. Characteristics of the divine nature. God is divine. These are these characteristics that this definition says are essential and indispensable. They must be a part of who He is. He must be these things. And if He isn't any of these things, then He isn't God. That's the idea of essential and indispensable. To the very essence and nature of God. This is who God is.

James Mook states the definition this way. He says, “The perfections of God are the characteristics of God. They are necessary to His divinity, therefore necessarily and absolutely perfect. [And] without any of these perfections as perfections, God would not be God.” He basically breaks down that definition in those three categories. That the perfections of God are the characteristics of God. They are absolutely necessary to His divinity. And every one of these

particular perfections are absolutely perfect. There is no flaw in any of these perfections. And the final aspect of that definition is that without any of these perfections, God would not be God. If God were loving, but He were not just, God would not be God. If God were gracious, but He were not omnipresent, He would not be God. And so it is absolutely necessary for these three things to be true. They are God's characteristics. They are necessary to His divinity.

And they are perfect. And without any of them being a part of who He is, He would not be God. A.W. Pink says it this way, “The perfections of God are the excellencies of His divine nature, the glory of His being, and the foundation of His works.” Jonathan Edwards, in *The End for Which God Created the World*, said this, he said, “God is God and distinguished from all other beings, and exalted above them chiefly by His divine perfections.” So these divine perfections that make God who He is also exalt God in an infinite sense above every other creature, every other being in the universe.

MacArthur in *Biblical Doctrine* defines the perfections this way, says, “The general definition of perfections is as follows, that God's perfections are the essential characteristics of His nature, because these characteristics are absolutely necessary to His nature. All His attributes are absolutely perfect, and thus rightly called perfections. Further, since these perfections are essential to God's nature, if any one of them were denied, God would no longer be God.”

You're seeing a theme run through all of these particular definitions, right? That all of these perfections have to be true about God, and if any of them are missing, God would not be God. It's incredibly important. And we would say that the correct method for identifying the perfections of God is the Scriptures. It's not scholastic, and it's not modern methods. We figure out who God is through the Scriptures. Louis Berkhoff, in his systematic theology, said it this way. He said, “God has revealed Himself, including His perfections, in the Bible. This is the only means for man to have an assured, accurate understanding of the divine perfections. Of course, for this revelation to be relatively comprehensible, man must be created and recreated in God's image and therefore have analogies to God's perfection in Himself. [And] this is where scholastic arguments could serve in a secondary confirmatory way. But even the assurance of this confirmation would be based on the revelation of Scripture concerning God and man.” We figure

out who God is through the Scriptures. We understand everything He is, everything He has done, and all that He is going to do through the Scriptures. So let's talk more about the introductions.

When examining the perfections of God, theologians down through the centuries have agreed upon two different classifications to help give clarity to how these perfections are identified in God. The two classifications you probably know in some sense are the incommunicable, the less communicable attributes, and the other classification is the communicable, the more communicable attributes. Before defining these different classifications and thinking through them a little bit, it's helpful to understand that though this is a helpful method, it's also imperfect. It's an imperfect method to think of God in this way. Why? Because as we have said, God is one God. And so to somehow compartmentalize God is dangerous, and it is something that creates a little bit of a challenge. Dr. Mook notes the, by the way, Dr. Mook was one of my profs at seminary, notes the overarching problem with trying to classify the perfections of God's essence when he states this, "All classifications of God's perfections have the same weakness. They seem to divide God into two, leaving no harmony between the attributes and no unity in God." And humanly speaking, that's true. As we think about things, sometimes it's hard for our minds to see things running concurrently and cohesively together, both of them being absolutely true at the same time. And so in our minds, this can be a profound weakness.

Louis Burkhoﬀ addresses this weakness, when he says this, he says, "This weakness must be overcome by seeing the first class of attributes as qualifying the second class and vice versa. So that it can be said that God is one, absolute, unchangeable, and infinite in His knowledge and wisdom, His goodness and love, His grace, mercy, His righteousness and holiness, and vice versa." All of those things are absolutely true at the same time. They're not parts of God, even though we say this part of God. They're not parts of God. God is one. All of these things concurrently flow together in His divine essence. Biblical Doctrine is helpful to this point, when it says this. It says, "God is fully each of His perfections. Whatever God is, He is totally in His essence. If God is not fully and absolutely love, or fully and absolutely holy, or fully and absolutely good, then He is not fully and absolutely God." And I think that is perhaps one of the clearest explanations of the unity and the oneness of God and how those perfections interact within His nature.

Biblical Doctrine goes on to further explain that “God's essence is identical to His perfections. There is no essential distinction between God's essence and His perfections. There is no essential difference between God's perfections to one another. Each perfection characterizes God's complete essence simply and eternally. That is to say, God is what He has. He does not merely possess love, justice, and goodness. He is love, justice, eternally, fully, and completely. God is eternally all-powerful, all-holy, and all-loving.” So, men, it's incredibly important for us to avoid the temptation when studying the perfections of God to compartmentalize God, to compartmentalize these perfections. And that's what some have done, isn't it? I mean, you think about conversations perhaps you've had. You think about even churches in our area, various denominations, who really triumph and praise the love of God, but they diminish the wrath of God. They diminish the justice of God.

And that's the danger. Because we like some of these perfections more than we like some others of these perfections. We like the fact that God is love that God is merciful, that God is grace. We get terrified of the fact that God is omnipresent. Sometimes, we balk at the fact that God is just. Because our human nature doesn't want to consider those things, and doesn't want, honestly, what happens to us, because what we deserve. And so we must avoid the temptation to compartmentalize God. He is love. He is just. He is gracious. He is good. He is wrathful. He is jealous. One God. All of these attributes existing concurrently with one another in His essence.

So let's talk about, then, this first category. The less communicable attributes. The less communicable. And again, you have less communicable. You have the incommunicable. Theologians differ on how they present them. I think less communicable is helpful because it describes characteristics that have little analogy in human beings. I think the Lexham Survey of Theology is helpful when it says, “God's incommunicable attributes are those divine attributes that cannot be communicated, shared by humanity. They are unique to God's nature and His character.” So this is the first classification of these particular attributes.

And so what are some of these? Well, that is to say that God is holy. God is eternal. He hasn't had a beginning. He hasn't had an end. He is immutable. He is absolutely unchanged in His character. He is unable to change. He is infinite. He is omnipotent, all-powerful. He is omnipresent. He exists everywhere. He is omniscient. He knows all things. He is self-existent. He is not

dependent upon any person to exist or anything to exist. He is self-sufficient. He is sovereign. He rules over all things. He has control of every molecule of this universe. He is spirit. He is transcendent. He is unique.

These are the characteristics that share very little analogy in humans. We could say God's holiness, which we're going to discuss, Lord willing, during the second part of tonight, that it can probably fall into both categories in some sense. As we'll talk about the holiness of God, we'll see how it exists in a world all in of its own, and how it does show that God is completely distinct, that God is completely other. But then through the commands of Scripture, we also know that we are called to be holy, in a sense. But things like eternity, you and I had a beginning. You and I were conceived. You and I were born into this world. God has never had a beginning, and He will never have an end. I think we can think about the second part of that. We can look out and say, I can kind of see how eternity will go on, even though it's very small in our minds. But we get a glimpse of that, because we are now going to live on eternally.

But I think when we think about the first part of the reality of God's eternity is that there was no starting place. You know, I'm limited in my mind, in my intellect. You guys got the C team tonight, and I appreciate you coming out and being a part of this. But it is very, very hard for me to contemplate no beginning. Even when you draw a circle, you start somewhere. God has no starting place. We don't have that ability. We are not connected to God in that way.

God's omnipresence, we are here tonight. This is what you chose to do. You are not anywhere else. Yet God is here, and God is every other place in this entire universe right now, present. And not only present but presiding over it. In complete control of every element, of every single thing that is going on. Sometimes we can't even control whether or not we are going to take a drink and not spill it. If we are going to set it down in the right place. God is presiding over every single thing. It's just part of who He is.

And He knows everything. We have the ability to learn. You're here tonight. You're learning. We're always learning as we read. God has given us that capacity, but God never learns a thing. And there's certainly a false doctrine out there that teaches that God is continually growing in knowledge, and you want to reject that with every fiber of your being. God knows all things and has eternally known all things that will ever be. It's unfathomable. You can see a little bit of, you

know, why standing on the ocean kind of represents this. It's just hard for our minds to even grasp.

I think one of the biggest perfections in this category that's mind-blowing is just the self-existence of God. We are absolutely dependent creatures. And as men, we don't really like to think of ourselves that way. We like to think of ourselves as independent. You know, we grow up, and then we turn 18, and we move on in our lives. We start to go, you know, trudge our own path. We make our own money. We take care of our families. But yet we are absolutely dependent upon God for every ounce of everything that we do, every bit of provision that we provide, every breath that we take, everything that we get, we are dependent. But God is completely and totally self-existent.

There's an amazing thing to think about in terms of His self-existence, and that is the fact that though He doesn't need us, He chooses to use us. You know, that's an amazing thing to think about is the self-existent God who could accomplish every purpose that He has set out to accomplish by a mere word from His mouth has determined to use creatures like us to accomplish His divine purposes in this life. That's a humbling thought.

So God is holy, eternal, immutable, infinite, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, self-existent, self-sufficient, sovereign, spirit, transcendent, unique. There are several passages that flesh out these less communicable perfections. The first one would be Psalm 145:3-5. The text says this. It says, "Great is Yahweh and highly to be praised [and here it is] and His greatness is unsearchable." It's unsearchable. So even as we read and plumb the depths of who God is and all that He has accomplished, we still get to the point where Paul got in Romans 11, which we heard repeated over and over and over again at our conference this weekend, right? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. His greatness is absolutely unsearchable. "One generation shall praise thy works to another and shall declare thy mighty acts. On the glorious splendor of thy majesty and on thy wonderful works I will meditate." The glorious splendor of thy majesty, thy wonderful works, all of those things speaking to this massive greatness of God, this uniqueness of God, this omnipotence of God.

Isaiah 40:18, the text is talking about what God is like, and Isaiah is doing that through communicating His distinction from idols. Says this in verse 18, "To whom then will you liken

God? Or what likeness will you compare with Him?” I mean, obviously, the obvious answer is, well, nothing and no one. Why? Because God is absolutely incomparable in who He is. Isaiah chapter 55:9 says, “For as [high as] the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” He gives that comparison, for as the heavens are higher than the earth. And we can go up in the same way we look at the ocean. We can go out and we can look at the sky. And we know that that is the heavens that the Scripture teaches us about.

And Psalm 19 is we're looking at the glory of God through that, and we can see how vast it is and how great it is. And He says, just as, by comparison, so are My ways higher than your ways, just as the heavens are so much greater than the earth, and they span so much more distance. So are God's thoughts and God's ways to ours. He's incomparable. He's completely unique, totally transcendent. Jeremiah 10:6-7. “There is none like thee, O Yahweh. Thou art great, and great is thy name and might. Who would not fear thee, O King of the nations? Indeed, it is thy due! For among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like thee.” Our God is absolutely amazing. And when we talk about the less communicable perfections of God, those are the things we're talking about. Over the next few sessions, those are the things that are going to be explained, that are going to be looked at in greater detail.

But there's a second category when we think about the perfections of God. And we'll call this the more communicable attributes, the characteristics that have a little more analogy in humans. Again, the Lexham Survey of Theology says this, “The communicable attributes of God describe God's intrinsic character, particularly in His activity toward creatures. These attributes are therefore predicated analogically of creatures, chiefly of those created in His image.” And so we would say things like this. We would say that God is perfectly wise, that He is perfectly love, that He is perfectly grace, perfectly truth, perfectly faithful, perfectly merciful, perfectly long-suffering or patient, perfectly just, perfectly jealous, perfectly blessed, perfectly glorious, perfectly holy.

And these characteristics are distinct from the less communicable characteristics in the sense that we have a greater understanding of some of these things. We gain wisdom, we can grow in wisdom. We understand from Proverbs what wisdom is, that “The fear of the Lord is the

beginning of wisdom.” And so we can, and we even commanded in Proverbs chapter 2 to search for wisdom as kind of that unsearchable treasure, that treasure that is worth more than anything. We understand this because we understand love. We can love, we can give love, we can receive love. We understand faithfulness. We understand mercy. Those things we can communicate to others, those things we can receive from others. But again, we say more communicable because it's not a perfect analogy from God to us. God's love is vastly superior to our love because it's infinite and it's perfect. Our love is less than perfect at best. God is perfectly merciful. God is perfectly gracious. He's perfectly glorious. He's complete, complete truth, total truth. We have some analogy with these things. But it's still a completely other planet, if you will.

There are several passages that flesh out these more communicable perfections. Exodus 34, if you want to turn there. Exodus 34:6. “Then Yahweh passed by in front of him and proclaimed, Yahweh, Yahweh God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and truth, who keeps steadfast love for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin, yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.” This is God's self-revelation concerning Himself.

And if you've been around here long enough, you've heard Tom preach on this passage, when he's preaching on this passage and when he's preaching on other passages, he comes back to this text a lot, speaking about the fact that God's greatest self-revelation is His goodness, His goodness expressed in His compassion, His grace, the fact that He is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and truth. Or Deuteronomy chapter 10:17-18. “For Yahweh your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe. He executes justice for the orphan and the widow and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing.”

Again, more communicable attributes of God communicated to us, to His people. Seen in these texts, Psalm 86:15, “But thou, O Lord, art a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in steadfast love and truth.” Psalm 103:8, “The Lord, Yahweh, is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” Notice a theme? I mean, this is who God is. And when we study the perfections of God, we need to understand that He is all of those

things in the category of the less communicable attributes, and He is all of the things in the more communicable category of attributes. And they are not compartmentalized. These perfections, these attributes, help to explain to us who God is and what He is like. And that's the, really the purpose of much of this semester, is to flesh out several of these particular perfections to see God in a greater way. And we're going to start with holiness after our break here in a minute. But as we finish up this introduction, I think MacArthur's quote in this section in Biblical Doctrine is helpful for us to summarize this truth. He says this, he says, "In summary, God's perfections constitute His essence or character, which far transcends all created things in greatness. God's essence is one indivisible whole, so that each and all of His perfections actively characterize God's entire being. God's perfections must be thought of as always actively present together and mutually influencing each other without any hierarchy, even when they are not all mentioned in a given passage of Scripture. God in His essential nature is truly beyond human understanding, and the only appropriate responses to studying even the fringes of His ways are awe filled reverence, worship, adoration, trust, and service."

So, as we embark on beginning to flesh out several of these characteristics, that's where we start, understanding the big picture why; why we're doing this, understanding what these perfections are, understanding the categories of these perfections, and I think that will help us as we go along.

So, as we venture into this first category of incommunicable or less communicable attributes of God, certainly the greatest perfection of God in one sense, again, without compartmentalizing it, is the holiness of God. And I think it's helpful, first of all, to just look at several definitions of the holiness of God, and then we'll break it down. Then we're going to look at the holiness of God, several examples of His holiness played out in the Scriptures, and then hopefully end with some implications of God's holiness for us. But let's begin with Louis Berkoff. He talks about the fundamental aspect of God's holiness when he says, "It does not seem proper to speak of one attribute of God as being more central and fundamental than another; but if this were permissible, the scriptural emphasis on the holiness of God would seem to justify its selection." So again, without compartmentalizing the holiness of God, or one attribute above the other, it's helpful for us to see the holiness of God as this kind of overarching umbrella attribute, which we'll kind of see as we go along. Biblical Doctrine says it this way. "God's inherent absolute

greatness by which He is perfectly distinct above everything outside His essence and is especially absolutely morally separate from sin.” So perfectly distinct above everything outside of His essence and especially absolutely morally separate from sin.

Edward Welch in his book *When People Are Big and God is Small* defines holiness this way, he says, “Holy can be defined as separate, that is set apart, distinct or uncontaminated. In reference to God, holy means that He is different from us. None of His attributes can be understood by comparison to His creatures. Holiness is not one of many attributes of God. It is His essential nature and seen in all of His qualities.” So holy love, holy mercy, holy justice, holy wrath is what he's saying.

RC. Sproul in his book, *The Holiness of God*, defines holiness by saying simply that God is “transcendently separate.” He is transcendently separate. So I think we can define holiness in some sense quite simply. We can say this, that the holiness of God means that He is completely other. Completely distinct from both His creation and from sin. So completely other, a separate category, if you will, and completely distinct from both His creation and from sin. So God's holiness functions in one sense like an umbrella attribute. Every other attribute is connected to and influenced by His supreme holiness.

Jerry Bridges, in his book, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, says it like this, he says, “Holiness is the perfection of all God's other attributes. His power is holy power, His mercy is holy mercy, His wisdom is holy wisdom. It is His holiness more than any other attribute that makes Him worthy of our praise.” When we think about the holiness of God, the Scriptures clearly define these two aspects of God's holiness. First, that He is completely distinct from His creation, that He is ontologically holy. Exodus 15:11. We're going to move around in the text a little bit more this session. So, if you'd like to do that with me, get ready to go. Exodus chapter 15:11. We're going to see this part of the definition, this aspect of His holiness kind of played out through several Scriptures here. Exodus 11, or 15 rather, verse 11. “Who is like you among the gods, O Yahweh? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders?” So we see here in this particular passage, separation from His creation or His creatures, and the very fact that He is incomparable, as the author is asking the question, the question that leads us to say God is

incomparable by saying, who is like you among, and He says the gods, who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders?

God, we could say, is in a category all by Himself. That's what we mean when we say that God is holy. Or Psalm 50:21. The psalmist says, "These things that you have done and I kept silence, you thought that I was just like you. I will reprove you and state the case in order before your eyes." God's holiness speaks of His ontological otherness. Again, a separate category. He says, You thought that I was like you. That's what we do, is we talked about the beginning at times. We create God in our image. And how do we do that primarily and fundamentally? It is by thinking that God is like us. As we think about various situations and circumstances in our life, we bring God down to that level and we make Him like us. And we kind of force Him and some kind of definition of Him upon our circumstances that help us to be able to grovel with God, to deal with who God is. But God says, "You thought that I was just like you?"

He is completely and totally other in another category, in His essence. Isaiah chapter 40, there's a couple verses there, verse 18. It says, "To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare with Him?" Verse 25, "To whom then will you liken me? That I would be His equal, says the Holy One."

God is unmatched in His uniqueness. Again, it's a nuanced way of saying, again, that God is completely other, distinct from anything that is remotely creaturely, anything that is created. Isaiah 55:8. The prophet writes this, he says, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are My ways your ways, declares the Lord. For as high as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts higher than your thoughts." This is a text that we read in our previous time. The reality is, God's thoughts and ways are of a totally different nature, not simply a different degree of thinking and doing. So He doesn't just think in a higher way than us, in a more sophisticated way, in a more helpful way. He thinks in a totally different way categorically.

The way that He acts is another category, not just a different way than we do, a better way than we do. It's not a different degree; it's a totally different nature. Acts chapter 17. Paul is in Thessalonica, verse 24. It says, "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is the Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands, nor is He served by

human hands as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things.” God, as the Creator, He is always the giver, and He is never the receiver. That speaks to His ontological otherness.

But there's another category. He's not just distinct from His creation, he's also completely separate from sin. God is completely separate from sin. This speaks to His moral purity. You have His ontological otherness, His moral purity. And the Bible is replete with passages that deal with His moral purity. And it's not a foreign concept to us. We understand this. But let's just see several texts that speak to this. In the Old Testament, in Leviticus chapter 11:44, Moses writes this. It says, “For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. And you should not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth.” This is separation from any and all impurity. That's why God said, you can't make yourself unclean with all of these creaturely things and all of the unclean things on the earth, because I am distinct from that impurity. Holiness is God's essential nature.

Job chapter 34:10, writes this, “Therefore, listen to me, you men of understanding. Far be it from God to do wickedness, and from the Almighty to do wrong. It is not possible for God to do anything evil.” We speak of His complete separation from sin, we are saying it is not possible for God to do anything evil. Habakkuk 1:13 speaks to the fact that God's purity cannot allow him to look on any form of wickedness with any inkling of approval. He can never give any kind of approval to anything that is completely foreign and separate to His nature, anything wicked.

In Psalm 5:4-5, we see that no evil can dwell with God. Evil cannot dwell with God. It doesn't dwell in His presence; it doesn't dwell in heaven. There's going to be a new heavens and a new earth at the end, where there has never been any form of evil whatsoever. Evil cannot dwell with God. And then in James 1. James 1:13. “So let no one say, when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.” Sin has no connection to God. It does not tempt Him, nor can He tempt anyone towards it. Again, this is another text speaking to this complete separation. First John 1:5 speaks to the fact that God is absolute light, and that highlights the complete inability for any darkness or evil at all to co-exist in His being.

So God is completely distinct from His creatures, from His creation, every aspect of it. He is in another category all by Himself, and He is completely separate from sin, separate from impurity, uncleanness. He is absolutely morally perfect. That's what we speak of when we speak of the holiness of God. So what I want to do now, really the heart of our discussion at this point is to just look at several examples of God's holiness on display in various passages. And the first passage I want you to turn to is Numbers, Chapter 20.

Numbers, chapter 20. And perhaps you're familiar with this context. I remember when I really came to grips with this passage and kind of the heart of this text, when I was in seminary as one of my profs, it was during actually a Hebrew class. And it was really profound. And so I want you to look at verses 8 through 13. Then we'll just walk through this a little bit. “Take the rod, and you and your brother Aaron, assemble the congregation, speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water. Thus shall you bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink.’ So Moses took the rod from before the Lord, just as He had commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock, and he said to them, ‘Listen now, you rebels, shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?’ Then Moses lifted up his hand, and struck the rock twice with his rod, and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank. But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, ‘Because you have not believed me, to treat me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them. Those were the waters of Meribah, because the sons of Israel contended with the Lord, and He proved Himself holy among them.’”

A little bit of context of this passage. Miriam, Moses' sister, had just died. And they were here in this area, in the wilderness of Zin. And there was no water. We see that in verses 1 and 2. “So the people stayed at Kadesh. Miriam died there, was buried there, and there was no water for the congregation. And they assembled themselves against Moses and Aaron.” Verses 3 through 5, we see simply that the people complained about the water situation. Very common for the people of Israel to complain, particularly about these two provisions, food and water. Here, “The people thus contended with Moses and spoke, saying, ‘If only we had perished when our brothers perished before the Lord, why then have you brought us to the Lord's assembly into the wilderness, for us and our beasts to die here? Why have you made us come up from Egypt to

bring us into this wretched place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, nor is there water to drink.”

Again, just putting out of their minds and pushing to the side the fact that God had faithfully provided for them from the very moment that He took them out of Egypt and had begun leading them in the wilderness, and also that they were wandering in the wilderness because it was their fault. They were the ones who didn't go conquer the land like they were supposed to go conquer. So they wandered. They had sinned. God allowed them to wander in the wilderness for this time, but here they are. They've come to this situation. They begin to complain about the water.

Verse 6, Moses and Aaron go before the Lord, and they ask Him for provision. “Then Moses and Aaron came in the presence of the assembly at the doorway, the tent of meeting, and fell on their faces. Then the glory of the Lord appeared to them.” Moses was a good leader, a faithful leader, and he went before God to ask God to deal with this situation, to bring water for these people to drink. And not only is Moses a good leader, but God is a great God. As they fell on their faces, and the Lord spoke to Moses, He said in verse 8, as we just read, “Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water.” They were given explicit, specific instructions of what they were supposed to do. At times, God told Moses to strike the rock. Here, very specifically, God said, you speak to the rock, and I'm going to provide water for you. An amazing miracle is about to happen before your eyes. An amazing miracle that these people are going to partake in, again, to bring me glory. And Moses, I'm not asking you to even lift a finger. Speak to the rock.

But these people by this point had gotten under Moses' skin. Who can blame him? We understand how this works. Moses was very, very frustrated, and so he “Took the rod from before the Lord, just as He commanded him, and Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock, and he said to them, ‘Listen now, you rebels, shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?’ And he lifted up his hand, and he struck the rock twice with the rod.” Notice God's mercy in this, in the midst of the disobedience. And water came forth abundantly and the congregation and the beasts drank. There's a lot going on in this passage, and a lot of things to pull out. But the reality is, God gave Moses explicit instructions. Speak to the rock, don't hit the rock. This time, you're speaking. Moses disobeyed. So what does God do? Verses 12 and 13.

Well, God acts according to His holiness, and He takes away the promised land from the one whom the Scriptures call the humblest man who ever lived.

Men, think about that for a second. Moses is described in the Pentateuch as the most humble man who has ever lived on this planet. And yet, in one moment of frustration, in one moment of anger, he decides to take matter in his own hands, and he strikes the rock instead of speaks to the rock. And God says, listen, Moses, you're not going into the land. And what's the reason? Well, you see it there in verse 12. He says, "Because you have not believed Me, to the point where you treat Me as holy in the side of the sons of Israel." That was his job, to treat God as holy in the midst of these people. He was their leader. His whole job was to point them towards God, so that they worshiped God, so that they loved God, so that they saw God for who He was. And He failed.

And in one moment, God says, I am so holy, I don't care how humble you are. I don't care how much you have led. I don't care what you have done, and you have done a lot of good. You're not going into the Promised Land. Because God is distinct, completely separate from sin. Moses' job was to point these people to God. And it says there at the end of verse 13, that God, in His rebuke of Moses, "proved himself holy among them." God vindicated Himself. Moses trampled on the holiness of God through his disobedience. But God vindicated Himself, proved Himself holy by dealing with Moses, because He did not treat those people who He was called to shepherd. He did not treat God as holy in their presence. That's how separate from sin God is.

And that one little thing, that one little sin, as James says, it's the one sin, right? You become a transgressor of the whole law. Every time we lash out in anger when we're frustrated, every time we have that thought we shouldn't have, every time we respond in a way that is rebellious to the Lord, because He told us to respond in a different way. Every one of those instances is just like what Moses did. It is disobedience in the moment. And it offends a holy God because He is that separate from sin.

There's another example in Leviticus 10 that's helpful for us to see. You're familiar with this story. Look at verse 1, "Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. And fire came out from the presence of the Lord, and

consumed them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said to Aaron, ‘It is what the Lord spoke, saying, “By those who come near me, I will be treated as holy, and before all the people, I will be honored.”’ So Aaron therefore kept silent. Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Aaron's uncle Uziel, and said to them, ‘Come forward, carry your relatives away from the front of the sanctuary to the outside of the camp.’ So they came forward and carried them still in their tunics to the outside of the camp, as Moses had said.

“Then Moses said to Aaron and to his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, ‘Do not uncover your heads, nor tear your clothes, so that you will not die, and that He will not become wrathful against all the congregation. But your kinsmen, the whole house of Israel, shall bewail the burning which the Lord has brought about.’” They were priests. They were some of the first priests. Priests were given explicit instructions, how they were to conduct worship in the presence of God, and how they were to offer, and what they were to offer. Obviously, there's a lot of debate, and we actually have no idea what this strange fire is, but the text tells us that they place incense in it, and they offered strange fire before the Lord. And it's that phrase after that in the end of verse one that explains the implications of this strange fire, and it was something that God had not commanded them. So whatever it was, it didn't fit the prescription that had been given to priests. And God immediately struck them dead.

You imagine being at that worship service? Where the one who was conducting the worship did something that God didn't prescribe, and God immediately striking him dead, and telling the other people who were involved, get him out of here, and don't weep for him? See that at the end of verse 6? “Sons Eleazar and Ithamar don't uncover your heads or tear your clothes.” That was a sign of weeping and mourning. Don't do that, or you're going to die just like they are. He said, I will be treated as holy, and before all people, I will be honored. God was establishing the priesthood. He was establishing all of this in the Old Testament, this practice of worship. And so He immediately struck dead those whom had been placed in authority as priests to govern the worship, to show the people, to show everybody involved, I am holy, what I say matters. To veer from it at all, at all—again, we don't know what this strange fire was—but to veer from it at all is to bring wrath upon yourself.

Isaiah chapter 6, probably the most notable text about the holiness of God in the Scriptures.

Verse 1, “In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings, with two covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory.’ And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of Him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. Then I said, ‘Woe is me, for I am ruined, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts.’ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs, and he touched my mouth with it and said, ‘Behold, it's touched your lips, and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven.’”

Again, we get this vast view of God, and we get this picture of His holiness, the fact that His train and the smoke is filling the temple, speaking of His greatness, His awesomeness, and His holiness, His exaltedness. You have the angels who are bowing before Him, crying out to one another, to this thrice holy God, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory.” And what begins to happen, the foundations, the thresholds tremble. The voice of Him had called out. Temple was filling with smoke. What an amazing scene this could have been. But not necessarily amazing in just “wow,” but as Isaiah experienced, amazing as in, “I'm going to die. I'm about to die.” He was beholding as the text presents to us this picture that Isaiah got. He is describing the holiness of God and all of His splendor and all of His majesty. And Isaiah says, “I'm a dead man.” He says, woe is me. I am ruined. That is, I am a goner. Why? And here's the distinction. “Because I am a man of unclean lips. And I live among the people of unclean lips.” Because I am a man of sin. I am a man stained with sin. I am a man with corrupt speech, he says. And because I have corrupt speech, and because I am in the presence of this thrice holy magnificent God, I am dead. That is the vastness of the holiness of God. But again, just like we saw in the text with Moses, we see mercy. We see salvation. We see God saving His servant. It says, “your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.” But there is an absolute distinction from God and sin.

Acts chapter 5. Verse 1, “But a man named Ananias with his wife Sapphira sold a piece of property and kept back some of the price for himself with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing

a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. Then Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back some of the price of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God.' And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last, and great fear came over all who heard it. Then the young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him.

"Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in. Not knowing what had happened, Peter responded to her, 'Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price.' And she said, 'Yes, that was the price.' Then Peter said to her, 'Why is it that you have agreed together to put the spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out as well.' And immediately she fell at his feet, and breathed her last, and the young men came in and found her dead, and carried her out, and buried her beside her husband." Look at this, verse 11, "And great fear came over all the church, and all who heard of these things."

So this is really when God killed people at church, isn't it? When you have it happening in the temple, but here we have the New Testament church forming, and some leaders, some known people in the church. You're familiar with the end of Acts 4. This had to have been one of the greatest times in the history of the church to be a part of the church. As they were just coming together, and people were selling their stuff, they were bringing their money, and they were living among one another. They were doing life together, as we would say. And the fellowship was great, and the joy was great. And it was not commanded to do that, by the way. They were never commanded to sell their stuff and to bring everything to the apostles for them to divvy it up. It's not prescribed. It was just the overflow of their hearts, the joy of their hearts, to come together and to be together with the people of God. And we see that with Ananias and Sapphira. Peter asks them, he gives them every opportunity to get out of this, especially Sapphira.

I mean, we were prefaced there in the first few verses that says that he sold the piece of property, but he kept some of the price for himself with his wife's full knowledge. But then he brought a portion, laid it at the feet, and said, this is all of it. He could have come and laid it at the Apostles'

feet and said, this is some of it. "I'm going to keep this part." And that would have been perfectly acceptable. This wasn't a prescribed, a prescription of the New Testament. But the issue is he lied to God. He lied to the Spirit. Good proof text. Holy Spirit is God. All right, he lied to the Spirit, and immediately God struck him dead, and then his wife came into the same thing. She was struck dead. Why? People lie to God here. Why are we not being struck dead? What was going on here? Well, this was the early church. This is where God was establishing some things. This is where pillars were being built. This is where things were being set into place. And the whole point of this is the end is verse 11. "And great fear came over the whole church and over all who heard these things."

But there was a fear that was struck in the people of God that day. A fear like you and I have never known. As they watched their friends die in front of them, taken out and buried because they simply gave a portion and said they gave all. God was making a point to the church as a whole as it was beginning that He is and to the leadership that He is holy. That when you're coming to worship God as this corporate body that Christ has purchased with His own blood, that this is a time where we are approaching a holy God. So we're not coming before Him with sin in our hearts. We're not coming before Him with sin on our hands. We are dealing with that, and we are coming before Him in a holy way. See, that had to be established. The church had to understand that, and so God dramatically dealt with these folks. But it's just a simple demonstration of His holiness for thinking about it properly. Sin couldn't be in His presence, and so God struck them dead.

One final example I want us to see is in Isaiah 53. That's the cross. When we think about the holiness of God, we think about an example of the holiness of God in the Scriptures. How is this perfection played out? We think of Isaiah 53. I think we have to. Verse 4, speaking of Christ, the suffering servant,

“Surely our griefs He Himself bore,  
And our sorrows He carried,  
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,  
Smitten of God and afflicted,  
But He was pierced through for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities.  
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,  
And by His scourging, we are healed.

All of us like sheep have gone astray.  
Each of us has turned to his own way,  
But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.”

Drop down to verse 10.

“But the Lord, Yahweh, was pleased to crush Him,  
Putting Him to grief.  
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,  
He will see His offspring.  
He will prolong His days,  
And the good pleasure of Yahweh will prosper in His hand.”

Listen, God executed His holy justice In the crushing of His Son in the place of the undeserving sinner. You want to see a picture of the holiness of God? You want to get a clear representation of this perfection that our God is? The greatest place we can go is the cross. Because there sin is represented in its complete and total awfulness and depravity. And the holiness of God is on display as He is crushing, the text says, crushing His Son for our iniquity, so that we can become acceptable before Him. God's holy justice had to be carried out against sin. Sin has to be dealt with. And so it's either dealt with through this means, through this method that is Christ and the cross, or it's dealt with through punishment for eternity in hell.

Because that's how holy God is. There is no possible way for one who has sinned to ever be in the presence of God, without the remedy of His holy justice being satisfied. There's no possible way. And that's why all who reject that are cast away from His presence for all of eternity. There's no coming to Him in any other, any other mode, any other means, no other path. This is why Jesus says, I'm the way, the truth, and the life. “No man comes to the Father but by me.” Because the holy justice of God had to be satisfied for there to be any reconciliation for sinful

man and holy God. And that was the cross. And it's good that we reflect upon that. It's good that we study that. It's good that we set our gaze on that fact.

Again, like I said at the beginning, when you start studying these things, it brings an immense humility. It also brings an immense gratitude, doesn't it? That there would be a way, that there would be a path, with such a distinction, such a separation from sin, that we have seen in these texts, where Isaiah thought he was going to die in the presence of a holy God because he had a sinful mouth. Such a separation, that there would even be a means for us to be reconciled to that holiness, fills us with gratitude.

So, what are some implications for us of God's holiness? Well, there are three of them, and you'll know where I'm going after you see the first one. But the first one is justification, isn't it? Because of God's holiness and Him dealing with sin, you and I, Christian, have the privilege of being justified before this holy God. Romans 3:21, "But now apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all of those who believe. For there is no distinction. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption, which is in Christ Jesus, whom God publicly displayed as a propitiation in His blood through faith, this was to demonstrate His righteousness. Because in the forbearance of God, He passed over the sins previously committed. For the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be the just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

Just the holiness of God gets magnified when we think about the reality of justification. That the holy God can somehow declare righteous the sinful man. And that coming through Christ. So God's holiness and His holiness in carrying out the dealing with the sin that is separate from Him enables us, He fulfills, enables us to thereby be declared righteous. A.W. Pink, in his work on the attributes of God, said this, "God's holiness is manifested at the cross wondrously, and most solemnly does the atonement display God's infinite holiness and abhorrence of sin. How hateful must sin be to God for Him to punish to its utmost deserts the one when it was imputed to His Son." God crushed His Son because He hates sin that much.

Men, this declaration of righteousness, based on the finished work of Christ, makes you judicially holy. So not only do we go from being completely separated from God and separate from Him in sin, but now we are declared righteous. We are judicially holy. Christ's perfect life and sacrificial death enables His righteousness to be imputed to the person who comes to him by faith, which results in justification. It's Romans 5:18-19.

There's a second implication. That's sanctification. J.C. Ryle in his book *Holiness* defined sanctification this way. He says, "Sanctification is the inward spiritual work which the Lord Jesus Christ works in a man by the Holy Ghost when He calls him to be a true believer. He not only washes him from sins in His own blood, but He also separates him from his natural love of sin in the world, puts a new principle in his heart, and makes him practically godly in life. The instrument by which the spirit affects this work is generally the Word of God."

In that definition, Ryle is simply giving us the two aspects of sanctification. The first one being positional sanctification. We have been set apart as holy by God. Second Corinthians 5:17, we are made new creatures in Christ. Second Corinthians 5:21, we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Because God's holiness, His righteousness has been imputed to the believer, positionally we have been separated, set apart as His holy ones.

The second one you know well: the progressive sanctification. We are constantly being made more into the image of Christ as we fight sin and pursue holiness, because God is holy. So legally, He separates us out and deems us holy; doesn't count our sin against us. But now, He's making us more holy because of His holiness. He wants us to become like Him. So day by day, He changes us. He conforms us to the image of Christ.

As Colossians 3 talks about, we set our mind on things above and on the things of the earth. We do that as we kind of establish this understanding of who God is. Then He says, "Therefore, consider the members of your body is dead to sexual immorality and purity, passion, evil desire and greed which is in you." And so we begin to, as He says, consider it dead, put it to death daily. That's an implication of the holiness of God. Because Peter repeats it. Repeats what Leviticus says in Leviticus 19. He says, "Be holy for I am holy."

You and I are becoming more like Christ as we wash ourselves in the Word, and the Spirit takes the Word, and changes our thinking, and changes our speech, and our actions. He's molding us

more into the image of Christ, and preparing us for the final implication, really, which is glorification. One of my favorite verses in Scripture is 1 John 3:2. As John says, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him because we will see Him just as He is.” And then there's the motivation, verse 3, “and everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies Himself just as He is pure.”

Listen, men, as mind-blowing as this is, and it's not mind-blowing in the sense that we don't know it intellectually, and we don't understand it theologically, but practically this has to be mind-blowing to you. I mean, one day, this sin that we wake up with every single day, the sinful thoughts that start to flood our minds when we're a little grouchy when we get out of bed, when the alarm got us at the wrong time, when you walk down and the breakfast isn't quite what you were hoping, when you get to work and you have that altercation, and the sinful thoughts continue to flood your mind, and maybe a sinful word comes out of your mouth, and maybe you act sinfully in some sort of revenge situation with somebody who... There's not going to be even one iota of that.

The moment Jesus returns, the moment the Holy One returns in all of His glory, and the moment we lay eyes on Him, men, we are going to become like Him, because we will see Him as He is. And all of the sin that we have fought to the death in our lives, and all of the sin that at times have fought us to the death, will be completely removed, because this Holy God made a way for you and I to come to Him, and not only made a way for us to be justified so that we don't get hell and separation from Him, but He made a way for us to come to spend eternity in His presence with Him. The Holy God will be there, and we will be with Him forever and ever. That is an amazing thing. This is glorious truth to dwell on. This is our hope. One day, because of Christ's work to positionally make us holy, sin will be completely eradicated from our lives.

John Owen, in his work, *The Mortification of Sin*, stated it this way. He said, “The contest with sin will continue whilst we live in this world, but the absolute conquest and destruction of it is reserved for glory alone.” Finally, John Calvin, in his commentary on Roman 7, says this. He says, “Believers groan under the burden of sin, but the Lord will at length deliver them when He

shall fully restore them to holiness.” This distinctly holy God has paved the way for us to be in His holy presence forever because of Christ. We rejoice in that. Let's pray.

Lord, thank you for your Word. Thank you just for a few moments this evening to reflect upon these truths. Father, help these men to take what I've said, to chew on the meat and spit out the bones, and to hopefully be encouraged and just challenged in terms of reflecting rightly upon who you are and who you have said yourself to be in your Word.

And Father, to reflect upon your holy nature, your essence that is distinct and other, completely, morally separate from sin. Father, we long for the day to be like you. We long for the day to be in your presence. We know that is only possible because of Christ, absorbing your holy justice against our sin and His body, bearing it. The full weight of the punishment that we might be declared righteous, and then made righteous progressively, and then one day made righteous fully.

Father, we rejoice. We give you thanks. Humble our hearts. Fill us with overwhelming gratitude as we reflect upon this truth.

We thank you for it in Christ's name. Amen.