

THE LORD IS GOD

Psalm 100

Intro: Many of us have spent the last ten to twelve weeks memorizing verses which have to do with *the attributes of God*. I say “ten to twelve weeks” because not everyone is finished with the twelve weeks of verses. We are divided into various groups, and meet in homes on the same night, or day, each week, to recite our verses. Sometimes our groups are not able to meet for one reason or another, and so we do not all finish at the same time. But, for the greater part of the twelve weeks, we are very close to each other in our timing. Some of the groups finished last week; the group Lucille and I are in finishes this week.

I have heard many comments from those involved in memorizing these verses, that it has been one of the best memory periods we have had--and there is every reason why it should be. When we speak of the attributes of God, we are speaking of the character of God--His love, grace, mercy, power, wisdom, and so on. These verses on the character of God help us to know God better, and there is no greater blessing that any of us can seek than to get better acquainted with our God and heavenly Father. So it has been a time of rich blessing for all of us, and I wish all of you could have been involved with us. It still can be done. All you have to do is to get one of the memory books, and get started. There are a lot of us around here who would be glad to hear you recite your verses each week. So let us know if you want to reclaim the blessings which you have missed.

As a follow-up on what we have been doing, I felt inclined (and I trust this is the leading of the Lord) to spend a few weeks looking into some of the attributes of God. One of the passages we have learned is the Psalm which I want to consider with you today. And this, in turn, will lead us to some of His attributes which are found in the last verse of this Psalm. When we say, as we read in verse 5, that “the Lord is good,” *good* is one of God’s most prominent characteristics, or attributes. And then verse 5 goes on to speak of God’s “mercy.” *Mercy* is also one of God’s greatest attributes. And then the Psalm ends with the statement, “and His truth endureth to all generations.” *Truth* is also one of His characteristics. And the word *truth* is most likely used here as it is many times in the OT, to speak of *the faithfulness of God*. And when you read the verse carefully you will see that implied in the verse is the clear indication that God is *unchanging*. “His mercy is everlasting; and his truth” (or faithfulness) “endureth to all generations.” It wouldn’t help us very much to find out what God used to be like, would it? Psalm 100 is right up-to-date. What

God has been, He still is, and always will be. So we can rejoice in His goodness, and in His mercy, and in His faithfulness, just like the person did who wrote this Psalm, and just like the thousands upon thousands of people who have sung it in the past, and continue to sing it right down to this very day.

Now this is the only Psalm in the book of Psalms that is actually called, “A Psalm of Praise.” It is not the only one which commands us to praise the Lord, but it is the only one which bears that name. So this is really what it is, *a call for all nations to give thanks to the Lord*, as verse 1 indicates. That is not being done today, and never has been done. But some day it will be done, and then the Lord will be praised as He deserves to be praised.

Now let me give you a brief outline of the Psalm.

The Psalm gives us two calls to praise the Lord. The first is in verses 1 and 2; the second is in verse 4. Each of these calls is followed by reasons why we should praise the Lord. And so our outline can be as follows:

- I. A Call To Praise the Lord (Psa. 100:1-2).
- II. The First Reasons for Praising the Lord (Psa. 100:3).
- III. The Call to Praise the Lord Repeated (Psa. 100:4).
- IV. The Second Reasons for Praising the Lord (Psa. 100:5).

Now let us consider the first section:

I. A CALL TO PRAISE THE LORD (Psa. 100:1-2).

Notice that there are seven commandments in this verse. And it is not to Israel alone that these commandments are addressed, but to “all...lands.”

This is the equivalent of saying, *all nations*. Spurgeon said,

In every land Jehovah’s goodness is seen, therefore in every land should He be praised. Never will the world be in its proper condition till with one unanimous shout it adores the only God (II, 233).

This verse is like Psa. 98:4. (Read.)

It is not a boisterous, rowdy shout, Like a crowd might shout which is out of control, but this is a loud shout, an enthusiastic shout, but a shout becoming to the God of heaven and earth and a proper expression of a people who joyfully acknowledge the many gifts of God’s love which He has freely given to us, His people.

Notice the emphasis on “the Lord” in verses 1 and 2, and, in fact, that emphasis upon the Lord continues right on through the Psalm. (Read.)

— Notice in verse 2 that service and worship are placed together. When we praise the Lord in song, we are worshiping the Lord, and this is one very important way that we serve the Lord.

And we are to “serve the Lord with gladness,” not with sadness. We come to the very presence of the Lord with singing. Singing is an expression of our gladness, and it implies what Derek Kidner called “no uncertain voice” (p. 356). These verses speak of the enjoyment of the Lord and of His blessing--as “singing” is used in other passage, a liberation, a deliverance (which has many application in the lives of those who know the Lord. This is not the way we are to approach God occasionally, but constantly! Spurgeon quoted a verse of that old hymn, a little differently from the way we usually sing it, but the message is there:

Let those refuse to sing who never knew our God;
But favourites of the heavenly King must speak their joys abroad.

— Thomas Watson, the Puritan, said, “It is a sign the oil of grace hath been poured into the heart “when the oil of gladness” shines on the countenance. Cheerfulness credits religion” (Spurgeon’s *Treasury*, II, 235). Think of how offended we would be if someone were serving us, but doing it in a sullen, unhappy frame of mind. Remember the words of the hymn in our book which speaks of serving the Lord with gladness:

Dear Lord and Master mine, Thy happy servant see;
My Conqueror, with what joy divine Thy captive clings to Thee.

Verse 1 of Psalm 100 sounds like Psa. 98:4. (Read.)

But let us go on to the second part of this Psalm:

II. The First Reasons for Praising the Lord (Psa. 100:3).

Compare this verse with Psa. 95:6-7. (Read.)

— Our worship of the Lord will be more constant and more joyful if it is based upon what we *know* of God and His Word. As I mentioned before, praise is more spontaneous and constant if it is based upon the certainties of Scripture. The Psalmist here gives three reasons which should prompt us to praise the Lord.

A. “Know ye that the Lord He is God.”

Jehovah is God! He is the living God! He is the unchanging God! And He is the only God! There may be made gods (with a small “g”), but there is only One Who is worthy of that title. He is the Supreme God. He is very God. He is the great and mighty God. This we need to “know.” We need to understand this, and to be assured that it is true. The world with all of its wisdom does not know God, and is incapable of knowing God. And Kidner is right when he says that this is *a gift*. What man cannot know by what he sees, nor by what he hears, nor by what he is capable of comprehending with his heart, God has revealed this great and glorious truth to us. We don’t believe in evolution; we believe that God is our Creator. We don’t believe in the so-called Mother Nature; we believe that God controls the sun, and the rain, and all of the incidents of the weather. We believe that God is God, and that He is not accountable to us for anything that He does.

And this leads me to the second reason that Psalmist gave for praising God:

B. “It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves” (Psa. 100:3m).

He is our Creator, and He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. And as the Creator, He is the Possessor of heaven and earth. And not only that but He is the Sovereign over all of creation.

The Hebrew, because one word can be translated two ways, can justify the translation, *It is He that hath made us, and we are His!* He made us, and by creation we belong to Him. The earth belongs to Him. The nations belong to Him. And we are responsible to Him. People in the world don’t believe this, but it’s because they don’t know what we know. However, their ignorance must not cause us to doubt what God has made known to us. He made us by His wisdom and power; we are the work of His hands, created in God’s likeness.

But then the Psalmist gave us a third reason for praising the Lord:

C. “We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture” (Psa. 100:3b).

This goes beyond the preceding statement. “His people” and “the sheep of

His pasture” speaks of our salvation. Do you remember what Peter said when he wrote his first epistle to the Jews who had been scattered for their faith in Christ? Listen to these words:

9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:

10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy (1 Pet. 2:9-10).

So we are His people by redemption.

And what about “the sheep of His pasture”? It was David who, speaking as a sheep, said, “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures...” (Psa. 23:1-2a). We are God’s sheep by election and by our redemption. The world needs to praise God because He is God. And the world needs to praise God because He is the One Who made them, the One Who provides for them, and the One Who protects them. *But you and I who know the Lord have a reason to praise God that the world does not have. We need to praise Him constantly because He chose us, and He has redeemed us, and because He will never leave us nor forsake us, nor can anyone ever pluck us out of His hand.* So this last reason for praising God belongs only to those of us who are His people, those of us who are His sheep.

We have much for which to praise the Lord throughout every day, but our greatest praise needs to be reserved for God as our Savior from sin.

Having said this, the Psalmist went on to continue his exhortations.

III. The Call to Praise the Lord Repeated (Psa. 100:4).

In verse 2 we were told to “come before His (God’s) presence with singing. Notice how that is expressed here in verse 4--we come through His gates, and into His courts, with our praise and with our thanksgiving.

The gates were shut to anyone who was unclean and thus unfit to enter into the temple. So to be commanded to enter into His gates implies that we are clean, not unclean! And to come into the courts of God speaks of a fellowship with God beyond our comprehension. You will remember how Queen Esther took her life into her hands by going before her husband, the King, because he had not called her in. Here we see that we have a permanent invitation to come into the very courts of God whenever we

want to. But none of this is ours because of any merit we have, nor because God is rewarding us for something that we have done. *This is all of grace, and we know that such a high and holy privilege is ours only because the Lord Jesus Christ, our precious Savior, has opened the new and living way for us by His blood.* Listen to what is written in Heb. 10:19-22:

- 19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,
- 20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;
- 21 And having an high priest over the house of God;
- 22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

But let us remember that point that this Psalm makes. We can come to seek mercy and find grace to help in times of need (of which we have many), but priority must be given always to giving our thanks to Him, and blessing His Name. We bless God's Name when we praise Him. We bless His Name when we thank Him. We bless His Name when we worship Him. With all that is said in Scripture about praise and thanksgiving, we should never come to God without praising Him, and often we should come *only to praise Him*. Remember Psalms 50:23:

Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.

Cf. thanksgiving in Phil. 4:6-7 and 1 Thess. 5:18. (Quote.)

Now we come to the last verse of the Psalm.

IV. The Second Reasons for Praising the Lord (Psa. 100:5).

We have already learned that we need to praise and give thanks to God because 1) He is God, and 2) because He is our Creator, and 3) because He is our Redeemer. In this last verse the Psalmist gives us three of God's glorious attributes, or characteristics, to provoke us to worship and to praise our great and wonderful God.

A. "For He is good" (Psa. 100:5a).

Two of the verses we learned in our Bible memory were Psalms 107:8 and Nahum 1:7. (Quote.) And in the same lesson we learned, or will learn, Psalm 100.

The Lord willing, I want to come back to these three attributes which are mentioned in verse 5, but let me make just a brief statement about each one as I close today.

First, “He is good” because He always does that which is going to benefit us the most. It is God’s nature to seek our greatest good.

B. “His mercy is everlasting” (Psa. 100:5m).

Jeremiah linked the mercy of God and His faithfulness in two of our other memory verses: Lam.3:22-23, “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.”

Dr. Johnson reminded us when he was here that mercy has to do with our miseries--and we have many of them, don’t we? But chiefly we need to remember that sin is the main thing that makes us miserable. And it is God’s mercy that meets and drives away our misery. And “His mercy is everlasting.” It will never be exhausted. God will never cease to be a merciful God. And for that we can offer endless praise. You see many illustrations of the mercy of God in His dealings with sinning Israel. Time and time again they sinned, and just as often it seems that they cried out to the Lord for help, and He heard their cry and delivered them because He is a merciful God.

Finally, we have,

C. “And His truth (faithfulness) endureth to all generations” (Psa. 100:5b).

Often the passages in which a word is found will help us to understand what a word means. For example, in Psa. 89 when the Lord was speaking about David and his sons, he made this promise concerning them. He had been speaking of those times when David’s sons would fail Him, and how it might be necessary to judge them. Yet the Lord followed those statements with this:

33 Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.

34 My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips (Psa. 89:33-34).

How is this a definition of God’s faithfulness? Well, we can see that although David’s sons might fail the Lord, and they did, yet the Lord

made it clear that He would not go back on His Word, nor would He change any promise that He had made. The Apostle Paul stated it this way: "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim. 2:13).

Concl: Don't these wonderful truths move your hearts to praise the Lord, and to thank Him that He is "good," always "good," and that He is "merciful," always "merciful," and that He is "faithful," always "faithful"?

Here in this Psalm we have six commands telling us to praise the Lord, and where we should praise Him. And we have six reasons why we should praise Him. Let me ask you to do something. Before this day is over will each one of you take this Psalm and praise Him for the six reasons the Lord has given us here, and relate it to the circumstances of your life today. If you do that, you can be sure that the Lord will lift your drooping spirits, and you will find yourself praising the Lord for many of the other blessings for which you have forgotten to praise Him.

Perhaps as you have been listening, some of you have been saying, "I wish that I had a God like that." You can, before you leave this place. But you must come to Him through Christ. You must come to Christ as a guilty sinner, seeking God's mercy and grace, and then trusting the Lord Jesus Christ to save you. He died on the Cross to save sinners, and our Lord promised that whoever would come to Him for forgiveness and salvation, would never be cast out. So come to Him now. You can go out of here today with Christ as your Savior, and with God as your God and your heavenly Father.

“THE LORD IS GOOD”

Psalm 100

Intro: Today I want to consider with you a portion of the Psalm we considered together last Sunday: Psalm 100. In it we noticed that there were *two calls to praise the Lord, or to worship the Lord*, and each of these was followed by *reasons as to why we should praise the Lord*. The first reasons in verse 3, as you can readily see, are:

- 1) Because He is God.
- 2) Because He made us; He is our Creator.
- 3) Because He is our Redeemer. “We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.”

Then as we move down to the last verse of the Psalm, the Psalmist gives us three more reasons as to why we should continually be praising the Lord--and these have to do with His attributes, or characteristics:

- 1) Because “the Lord is good.”
- 2) Because “His mercy is everlasting.”
- 3) Because “His truth endureth to all generations.” I suggested last week that “truth” here is probably a reference, not to the Scriptures (although the same statement would apply to the Scriptures), but that it was a reference to *the faithfulness of God*. It is translated that way in the NASB and in the NIV.

When you study the attributes, or characteristics, of God in the Scriptures, you find that there is often much overlapping when it comes to defining the characteristics of God. And you can see this even in this last verse of Psalm 100. For example, we could change the semicolon after “good” into a colon (since the punctuation marks are not inspired). If we did that I think that it would help us to see that the main point that the Psalmist was making was that “the Lord is good,” and that evidences of His goodness are that “His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endureth to all generations.” So we see evidence of God’s goodness when we experience His mercy, and we see His goodness again when we experience His faithfulness. This does not mean that we can’t explain “mercy” and “faithfulness” apart from the goodness of God. We can, and, the Lord willing, we will. But still we can say that two proofs of God’s goodness are His mercy and His faithfulness to us.

To say that “the Lord is good” is very close to what the Apostle John had to say when twice in his first epistle in the NT he made the statement, “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16). The Lord is the One Who gives good, or goodness, its definition. The Lord made that point when a certain rich

young man came up to Him and said, “Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” See Matt.19:16. And the Lord responded in the next verse by saying, “Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God” (Matt. 19:17). The Lord Jesus was not denying His own Deity when He said that; He was merely pointing out that the only Persons about Whom you can use that term “good” in an absolute sense, is God--God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit.

Paul was using the word “good” in that same absolute sense when he said in Rom. 3:12b, There is none that doeth good, no, not one.” God is good, and always does good, and never does anything but good. Man at times, and from a human standpoint, may do good things, but there are times when he also does bad things. So the only One about Whom we can say that He is always good, and only good, perfectly and absolutely good, “is God.” This is what the Psalmist had in mind when he said, “The LORD is good.”

But we still need to clarify what is meant when the Scriptures tell us that “the LORD is good.” Many different words are used in our Bibles to translate the Hebrew verb for “good.” As you might expect, because it is a word which is used to describe the very nature of God, it is a wonderful word. It is a very short word, consisting of only two consonants, with a vowel which has been added to aid us in its pronunciation. It is the word טוב. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, in his Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 206, said,

This attribute, if contemplated as that which is without God, is akin to His holiness; if contemplated as that which proceeds from God, is akin to love. The infinite goodness of God is a perfection of His being which characterizes His nature and is itself the source of all in the universe which is good.

And then Dr. Chafer went on to say that God’s goodness includes His benevolence, mercy, and grace.

Dr. Charles Hodge, who also wrote a Systematic Theology, agreed with Dr. Chafer, but added love to mercy and grace, and described benevolence as “the disposition to promote happiness” (Vol I, p. 427). And then he made this interesting observation:

The goodness of God in the form of benevolence is revealed in the whole constitution of nature. As the universe teems with life, it teems also with enjoyment. There are no devices in nature for the promotion of pain for its own sake; whereas the manifestations of

design for the production of happiness are beyond computation (*Ibid.*).

— This would mean that the seven times that the word “good” appears in Genesis 1 with respect to creation, each is an indication that what God made had His full approval, that He was infinitely pleased with what He had done, and that He made what He made to provide for the complete happiness of man, made in his own image and likeness, the crowning point of all of His creation..

So all of this means that only a most thorough study of the Scriptures can fully provide us of the meaning of that little statement which we are thinking about today when we say that “the Lord is good.” He is good, and He would not only *do us good*, but He would *make us good*.

Now, for the remainder of our time together this morning, I want to take you to several passages of Scripture which speak of the goodness of God. We all can say that God is good and has been very good to us. But it always makes us more inclined to be thankful to Him when we look at some of the details of His goodness toward us.

— Let us look first of all at:

I. ROMANS 2:1-4.

All around us we see people who do not know our God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the worst part is that they do not want to know Him. They may not feel entirely content with their lot, but they believe that they hold the key to their happiness, and so they go on their own way not knowing that they are, as Isaiah 53 :6, going astray! And when we look at the world today, who among us has not asked ourselves the question suggested by Isaac Watts in one of his hymns,

Why was I made to hear Thy voice,
And enter while there's room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
and rather starve than come?

— Do you know the answer to that question? It is given here in Rom. 2:4, “the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.” The Apostle Paul made it very clear in 2 Tim. 2:24-26 that God is the one who gives us repentance. Listen to what he wrote there. He was instructing Timothy in how gentle and patient he need to be in instructing people who really did not

want to hear what he had to say:

24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

This means that we owe our salvation to the goodness of God. All of us here today who know the Lord would have been just as content to live our lives without God and without Jesus Christ if God had not intervened in our lives by His goodness. And He determined to save us, not when we were born, nor when He thought that we would be receptive to Him. He knew that we would never bring ourselves to want to be saved. No, He set His goodness upon us before there was a world. We were chosen in Christ in eternity past, and at the Lord's time, not ours, He drew us to Himself, gave us repentance, and saved us. And the reason is not to be found anywhere in us (because no reason is there). The reason is to be found in the goodness of God.

We should never see that expression, *the goodness of God*, without remembering that it is only because of God's goodness that we know the Lord, and are gathered here today as His children.

But some of you might say, "I am not a Christian. Jesus Christ is not my Savior. How do I know that there is hope for me?" Well, the first answer I would give to that question is that you are here today. You could easily have been somewhere else. And from the words which I just read to you from 2 Timothy, the Apostle Paul said that we are to be gentle to you, in meekness instructing you in the Gospel *because it may be that God brought you here today to give you repentance for your sins, which means that He brought you here because this is the time and place where from eternity past He ordained that you would believe in the Lord Jesus Christ Who died to save sinners from their sins.*

How thankful we all should be for the goodness of God! It is because of God's goodness that He determined that there would be salvation for anyone, and it is a token of His great goodness that He has saved you and me. God's goodness is His grace in action because you and I cannot produce one single reason as to why the Lord should have saved us.

Remember that we need to think of the goodness of God as that which, first of all, is pleasing to Him, and secondly, that which is going to be of the greatest benefit to us. What He has ordained for us is for our blessing, for our happiness, in the light of what His purpose is in saving us from our sins.

And so I invite you to consider with me one of your favorite verses.

II. ROMANS 8:28.

I imagine that all of us who know this verse have notice the word “good” in it. I prefer the reading of this verse which is found in some of the older MSS of the book of Romans. It goes like this as it is found in the NASB:

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to {His} purpose (Rom.8:28 - NASB).

It is not that things just automatically turn out for “good,” but it is that God is the One Who produces that result. He makes sure that the outcome of the circumstances in our lives is “good.” Not everything in itself is good. Sometimes very heavy trials come to those of us who are the people of God. But here the Apostle Paul was speaking of the outcome. It is always “good,” meaning that God is accomplishing His purpose, doing His will, and a good God cannot have things turn out in an evil way.

In addition, this means that God makes sure that result is for our benefit--always spiritually, and often in other ways as well.

And then this verse means that we will be happy about it. It is good in that sense.. But the goodness and the sweetness of it will be in direct measure to the way that we trust our God in our trials.

When David wrote Psalm 34 He was speaking about his fears, and about his troubles, and how he had cried to the Lord in his distress. But the note which is dominant throughout the Psalm is a triumphant one. And having seen how the Lord worked in his troubles to meet his needs and to calm his fears, this was his message to those of us who would read it in the coming days:

O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him (Psa. 34:8).

When we turn to the Lord, and cast ourselves upon him in faith, trusting Him to meet our needs, we learn more about His goodness, and we are given the gift of happiness to see how sufficient the Lord is to meet our

needs, and how unexpected are the blessings which He bestows upon us.

In the book of Lamentations which was written by Jeremiah the prophet, there is a very precious section in the third chapter which speaks of the goodness of the Lord. And Jeremiah was one who suffered greatly as a prophet of God. But this is what he said:

22 It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed,
because his compassions fail not.

23 They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

24 The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I
hope in him.

25 The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul
that seeketh him.

26 It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for
the salvation of the LORD.

27 It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth
(Lam. 3:22-27).

The prophet had a good word to say about the Lord, and he, too, knew about the trials of life. This is one of our memory verses, and I hope that you keep it in your memory: Nahum 1:7:

The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he
knoweth them that trust in him.

Solomon had very similar words to say which are recorded in Prov. 18:10:

The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth
into it, and is safe.

There are many ways in which the goodness of the Lord is shown in Scripture where the word "good" or the word "goodness" might not be used. The Lord has given us our homes where we live. The Lord has been good in watching over us during the night. He has given us food to eat. He has given us the health that we have. He has given us our families and our dear friends--among whom some of the dearest are our friends right here today. In Psa. 40 5 David testified to the goodness of the Lord, and we can all say "amen" to what he wrote. This is what he said:

Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast
done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be
reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of
them, they are more than can be numbered.

Even the way God thinks about us is "good." Listen to what the Lord told the people of Israel through the prophet Jeremiah:

10 For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be

accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

12 Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

13 And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

14 And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive (Jer. 29:10-14).

In preparing this message I discovered that the Bible is full of passages that speak of the goodness of the Lord. Let me close by giving you one more. It is taken from the life of Moses and it is found in:

III. EXODUS 33:18-19.

This has to do with a different kind of a situation. We have been thinking about trials that we go through; now let us talk about those all too frequent times when we fail the Lord.

The children of Israel had grown impatient in waiting for Moses to come down from the Mount, and so they got Aaron to make a golden calf for them which they proceeded to worship. When Moses came down from the mount and found out what the people had done, he was both indignant and angry, but also brokenhearted. The Lord was going to destroy the nation and make another nation of Moses' family. But Moses pled with God to spare them, and even told God that if He could not forgive them, then he, Moses, wanted to be blotted out of the Lord's book. The Lord spared the people after judging some. But then He announced to Moses that He would not go up in their midst, but would send an angel before them. This alarmed Moses as much as the Lord's word that He would destroy the nation. And so he told the Lord, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence" (Ex. 33:15). And then Moses continued

16 For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth. (Continued on next page.)

17 And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name (Ex. 33:16-17).

And then notice the prayer that Moses prayed in verse 18, and the Lord's answer in verse 19:

18 And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.

19 And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy (Ex. 33:18-19).

Concl: We experienced God's goodness when He chose us, and then sent His Son to purchase us, and then He drew us to Himself. And since then we have experienced God's goodness in all that He has been teaching us--sometimes in great trials. But it is most amazing, isn't it, that we continue to experience the Lord's grace when we fail Him, when we sin against Him, and when we have not trusted Him. His goodness is still the same. Nobody can force Him to let us go. And some day we are going to experience the fulness of God's goodness when our Lord comes, and we see Him face to face, and are finally made like God's precious Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

I conclude with the words of Psa. 107:8-9:

8 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

9 For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

PSA. 27:13-14

GOD IS MERCIFUL

Psalm 100

Intro: During our morning service for the past two Sundays I have been considering with you Psalm 100. This is a Psalm many of us either memorized for the first time this year in our Bible Memory book called, *The Attributes of God*, or, if we had known it before we reviewed it to make sure that we could say it accurately. Many of you have told me what a blessing this Psalm has been to you. And I have found it an excellent Psalm from which to begin a series on the attributes of God.

In our first Sunday on this Psalm, I made the point that is found in verse 3, “Know ye that the Lord He is God.” Last Sunday I spoke about the goodness of the Lord from the beginning of verse 5--the first of three reasons for thanking and praising the Lord that are given in that verse. Today I want to take the second reason: “His mercy is everlasting”--the mercy of the Lord. God is a merciful God. And to say that “His mercy is everlasting” is to say that there never has been any end to His mercy, and there never will be! Matthew Henry said that God’s mercy is a fountain that will never run dry, and he added that throughout eternity the people of God will be monuments of God’s mercy. This is like saying that we will be trophies of God’s grace.

However, before we speak more about the mercy of God, let us make sure that we know what we are talking about.

I. WHAT IS MERCY?

As I think I have pointed out before, mercy is one of those characteristics of God which goes along with His love, His grace, His kindness, His compassion, His goodness, and His faithfulness--and all other similar characteristics. So when the Psalmist said that we should give praise and thanksgiving to the Lord,

For He is good; His mercy is everlasting; and his truth (faithfulness) endureth to all generations,

he was enlarging with each statement upon the goodness and love and tenderness of God. *And yet we must say that each of these words, though similar, have distinctive characteristics about them. And it is in knowing those special ways in which they differ that we come to a greater understanding of the character of our God. At the same time, we can use some of these other words to aid us in our understanding of the particular word that we might be considering.*

To say that God is a merciful God is to say that He is a God of compassion. It is to say that He is a God Who is characterized by kindness. But many expositors have pointed out that God's mercy has to do in a special way with the miseries of life.

We all know what it is to be miserable, but let me point out what we mean when we say that we are miserable. We mean that we are unhappy. It may mean that we are depressed. It can mean that we are full of anxiety and fear. We are miserable when we are apprehensive about conditions over which we have no control. There are many different conditions which can make us miserable, and the answer to each one is the mercy of God because God's mercy brings peace. God in His mercy meets our needs. He may not immediately remove the condition that makes us miserable, but we find His mercy is sufficient to bring us to a place of rest in Him.

I have been listening again to some of the messages which Jerry Bridges brought to us when he taught us that we do not obligate God to ourselves by our performance. That is, we can't say that because we are faithful in reading our Bibles, praying, and attending church, that the Lord is obligated to help us in our needs. And that is true. But let me approach that from a different point of view. What about a situation where I have done something that has gotten me into trouble with the Lord; does this mean that I can't expect the Lord to help me? Many Christians are inclined to feel that way.

On one occasion Spurgeon preached a sermon entitled *Mercies Devices with the Inconstant and Obstinate*. An inconstant person is an unfaithful person. He is hot one minute, and cold the next. He is unstable, fickle, subject to changes. An obstinate person is a person who does the wrong thing even when he knows that it is wrong. Can such a person expect to receive and profit from the mercy of God?

Well, those words, inconstant and obstinate, have been words that could describe us, all of us, on more than one occasion. Let me give you an example of an obstinate person, one who did the wrong thing even though he knew it was wrong. You find it in the first man and the first woman who ever lived on this earth: Adam and Eve. God judged them for what they did, but does Genesis 3 which tells us about their sin, indicate anything of the mercy of God? Of course it does! God gave them a promise of a Redeemer before He put them out of the Garden, and to illustrate it

He sacrificed an animal and took the skins of the animal to make clothing to cover their nakedness. Think of Cain, and what God did to protect him even though he had killed his brother Abel.

The Bible is full of illustrations of God's mercy. The word *mercy* is not always used, but mercy is there, and that is why we need to know what God's mercy is.

If you are reading your Bible on our schedule, you read 2 Samuel 11 last Thursday. I think I dislike that chapter more than any other chapter in the Bible. It tells us of David's tragic sin of adultery with Bathsheba, and then what he did to have Bathsheba's husband killed in battle. And the chapter ends with this statement, "But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord" (2 Sam. 11:27b). On two counts, according to the Law, David should have died. Did he die? No. Was he removed as king? No. Did he suffer for his sins? Yes, he suffered a great deal. But did he ever see the blessing of God again? Yes. Why? The only explanation is the mercy of God! Do you remember how his Psalm of confession, Psalm 51, begins? This is what David said:

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness:
according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my
transgressions (Psa. 51:1).

All David could plead with God was His mercy.

Does, then, the mercy of God allow us to be careless about sin? Definitely not! The mercy of God is designed to make us marvel at the kindness and compassion of God when we have gotten ourselves into a miserable situation, and He comes to relieve us, and to forgive us, and to cleanse us. That must have been one reason for what Jeremiah wrote in Lam. 3:22-23:

22 It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed,
because his compassions fail not.
23 They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness
(Lam. 3:22-23).

Even with respect to our salvation, it is the mercy of God that has been made manifest in our redemption. When the Apostle Paul was describing the doctrine of election, and how he chose Jacob and rejected Esau, he raised the question, and then gave us the answer:

14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with
God? God forbid.

15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will
have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have

compassion.

16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy (Rom 9:14-16).

— So you see, even the fact that we have been saved is traceable to the mercy of God. Did we deserve to be saved? Not at all. But God has taken mercy upon us.

Listen to what David wrote in Psalm 145, the first nine verses:

1 I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever.

2 Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever.

3 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.

4 One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.

5 I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works.

6 And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness.

— 7 They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness.

8 The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.

9 The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.

You all remember the story of Jonah, how when the Lord told him to go to Nineveh, he got a ship going in the opposite direction and he took it. The Lord brought a mighty wind upon that ship, and, without going into all of the details, Jonah was thrown overboard, a great fish swallowed him, and then vomited him out on dry land. That was mercy! Jonah deserved to drown, but God had mercy upon him.

But the mercy of the Lord is not limited to the OT. Think of the people the Lord healed of their physical troubles, and most of them could only say, "Lord, have mercy upon me" Matthew tells us that on one occasion He was leaving Jericho, and this is what happened:

— 30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.

31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.

32 And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?

33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.

34 So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him (Matt. 20:30-34).

Think of how the Apostle Paul described his own salvation in 1 Tim. 1:12-17:

12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;

13 Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

And how did Paul describe our salvation when he wrote to Titus. Listen to these words found in Titus 3:4-7:

4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

It is by God's mercy that you and I have been delivered from the misery that is caused by sin, and time and time again since we have been saved we have been the recipients of God's mercy. It is no wonder that David

closed the twenty-third Psalm as he did:

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me (pursue me) all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever (Psa. 23:6).

I have already read many passages of Scripture to you, but I want to read one more. There is one Psalm which is devoted entirely to exalting the mercy of God. I want to read it, and then apply it to your life and mine. The Psalm is 136, and it has to do with:

II. THE RECOGNITION OF GOD'S MERCY IN ALL OF OUR WAYS (Psa. 136).

I will read the first part of each verse, and I want you to read the last part, the part that says, "For His mercy endureth for ever." (Read.)

This Psalm was surely written to cause us to think about our own lives, and how at every turn we are met with the mercies of God. (Explain by pointing out what we have all experienced this morning.) Even in our trials and struggles and battles, the mercy of God is ours.

Now let me conclude by asking,

III. WHAT SHOULD BE OUR RESPONSE?

The first comes right out of Psalm 100:

A. Praise: "Be thankful unto Him, and bless His Name."

I hope that all of us will leave this place of worship today with God's praise in our hearts and perhaps even on our lips. What a marvelous God we have, and what a precious Savior, and what a mighty Holy Spirit. They pour out their mercy upon us, and if we have no other reason to pray, let us go to take our praises to the Lord.

The second response is found in Heb. 4:14-16:

B. Prayer.

Do you remember these wonderful verses? Let me read them to you.

14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profes-

sion.

15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:14-16).

Even our Lord Jesus Christ, when He was here on earth as a Man, had to depend upon the mercy of God. That is why He spent whole nights in prayer. That is why He went into the Garden of Gethsemane. That is why He prayed the prayer we had this morning in John 17. The word *mercy* is not used in the Gospel of John, but evidence of God's mercy is in every chapter of the book. It is everywhere in Scripture, and it is everywhere in life. If it were not for the mercy of God, the Bible could not have been written, Jesus Christ would never have come, and you and I would not be here today rejoicing in this wonderful salvation that is ours because God is merciful.

Concl: So let us praise God for His mercy. He often gives it even before we ask Him, but He also waits for us to come to the throne of grace where we can "obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." We all have those times. Every day in one way or another is a "time of need." And so let us avail ourselves of the gracious and merciful help that is available as we come to God through Jesus Christ, our precious Lord and Savior. He never will fail us.

GOD IS FAITHFUL

Psalm 100

— **Intro:** This is the fourth Sunday that I have spoken on Psalm 100 as we have been considering together *The Attributes of God*. And this will be the last Sunday in this particular Psalm. As we go on to other attributes besides those mentioned in Psalm 100, I will be using other passages of Scripture.

Since I have been away for the past two Sundays, let me briefly review what we have done, and this will enable our visitors to see where we are in considering the attributes of God, His glorious characteristics.

On the first Sunday I sought to give an exposition of all of Psalm 100, but emphasizing especially verse 3 and the statement, “Know ye the Lord he is God.” And I pointed out, as the Psalm indicates, that *the Lord is God*. He is our God by creation. He made us. But He is also our God by redemption: “We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.” Those are terms which are used in Scripture to designate that who are the people of God by salvation.

— Verses 1 and 2 of the Psalm encourage us to worship and to praise the Lord. And verses 4 and 5 do the same. (Read.) But, in addition, verse 5 gives us three reasons why we should praise the Lord constantly:

- 1) Because He is good--and this is the attribute that we considered on the second Sunday.
- 2) “His mercy is everlasting”--and this is the attribute we considered on the third Sunday.

Now we are ready for the fourth message on this Psalm:

- 3) “His truth endureth to all generations.”

Goodness, and mercy, and truth are all attributes of God.

— We understand this about God’s goodness, that it describes the kind of a God He is. And we understand this also about the Lord’s mercy. The Bible is full of references both to the goodness of God and to the mercy of God. But when we read that last statement we are inclined to think of the Word of God. Our Lord Jesus Christ said in His high priestly prayer in John 17, “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17). And it is true that God’s Word does endure to all generations. But those who have made a special study of the language of Scripture, tell us that “truth” is often used, especially in the OT, to speak of *the faithfulness of God*. And this is why I have taken

as my subject for today, **“GOD IS FAITHFUL.”**

I don't want in any way to minimize that God's Word, His truth in that sense, “endureth to all generations,” because we all know that it does, and it has. And this is one very important reason for us to praise and worship God. What would we do if we did not have His Word. And we can be thankful not only that God gave His Word, but that He has preserved it for us, and has been pleased to teach us as much as we know about it. But I believe that the Psalmist was not speaking about the Word here, but was adding another of God's glorious attributes and that He was reminding us *of the faithfulness of God.*

The Hebrew word that the Psalmist used here for “truth” can be translated as “*to be faithful, trustworthy, sure*, such as one can lean upon. It is used of God in Deut 7:9:

Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.

Listen also to Isa. 49:7:

Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.

It is a word which is sometimes used of a pillar--that which is firm and stable. When used of God it speaks of the certainty that He will fulfill His promises. He will stand by His Word.

The NASB translates it as “faithfulness.” And so does the NIV. I think that we would be interpreting Psal. 100:5 correctly if we were to say that God's mercy and His faithfulness are evidences of His goodness. And the whole verse taken together is evidence of God's eternal nature, which implies that He never changes. What He has been, He always will be, and that should bring great comfort to our hearts. The Bible does not tell us how God used to be, but is no longer. It tells us what He was in past days, assuring us that He is still all that He was then.

There are two very interesting statements in Psalm 89 regarding the faithfulness of God. The Psalmist was recording the promises of God to David. And this is the promise that God made to him in Psal. 89:24:

But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him: and in my

name shall his horn be exalted.

And then the Psalmist continued recording the words of the Lord concerning David's descendants. And the Lord said that if David's children would forsake His law and refuse to walk in His judgments, He would punish them, but then He added this in Psa. 89:33:

Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him,
nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.

This is like the Apostle Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:13, "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." To "deny Himself" would mean that He would back down on His promises, or change His purposes. He will never do that. When Joshua said concerning God that "there failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass" (Joshua 21:45), he was giving testimony to the total faithfulness of God.

Now think with me for a few minutes about:

I. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Let me mention some of the outstanding examples of the faithfulness of God in the Old Testament.

A. The faithfulness of God to Abraham and Sarah.

For the greater part of his life Abraham was faithful to God, and the same could be said for Sarah. But there were times when they were not faithful. Take, for example, their unbelief in going down into Egypt when they found a famine in the land of Canaan. And remember also when Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham so that they could have a child. Think also of how Abraham and Sarah were able to have a son even after they were too old to have children. And don't forget how God provided a wife for Isaac.

Abraham and Sarah were like we are--sometimes faithful, but many times unfaithful. But God's record was perfect. He was always faithful. Abraham's biography could be entitled, *The Faithfulness of God*.

B. The faithfulness of God to Joseph.

The life of Joseph is the closest to a perfect life that we have in the Old Testament. This does not mean that Joseph was perfect, but the Holy Spirit has omitted the blemishes that he obviously had, probably so he could appear in the OT as a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. But Joseph had

troubles which were inflicted upon him by others. His brothers got rid of him by selling him as a slave into Egypt. Potiphar's wife lied about him when he refused to commit sin with her, and he was cast into prison. And the butler forgot about Joseph for two full years while he remained in prison. However, when he did remember, it not only led to Joseph's release from prison, but also to his amazing exaltation to be an associate with Pharaoh over the land of Egypt. How do we explain the life of Joseph?

His biography could also bear the title, *The Faithfulness of God*. If God had not been watching over Joseph, caring for him day by day, and ordering the circumstances of his life, Joseph would never have seen his dreams fulfilled.

Let us take another example from Scripture:

C. The faithfulness of God to Moses.

You talk about a man who had people against him, hindering him almost daily; that man was Moses. It is a testimony of God's faithfulness that Moses was able to get the children of Israel to the promised land. Yet his record was not perfect either. He struck the rock twice instead of just speaking to it as the Lord told him to do. As a result he was forbidden to enter the land. However, the Lord brought Israel through all of those forty years, and they finally got into the land. His life cannot be explained except in terms of the faithfulness of God.

The whole history of Israel is one long confirmation that God is faithful. Through Joshua's life, through the period of the judges, and throughout the period of the kings, Israel's history is a testimony to the faithfulness of God. His people failed him repeatedly, but He never failed them once.

Let me cite one more example, and perhaps you have already been thinking about:

D. The faithfulness of God to David.

Again we have the account of a most remarkable life--not perfect by any means, but remarkable nevertheless. David was hated by his brothers. He was hated and pursued for years by Saul. And yet all that people did against him could not keep God from fulfilling His purposes with David. Look at his entire life, and you will quickly see that it would have been

altogether different if it had not been for his faithful God. And we can trace the faithfulness of God right down to the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. The fact that prophecies were fulfilled in the birth of our Savior with minute exactness, can be explained in no other way than what we see in the life of David and the history of Israel from David to Christ is a testimony to the faithfulness of God. Time and time again things looked impossible from a human perspective, but time and time again we see how God in His faithfulness was sufficient for every obstacle which stood in the way of the fulfillment of His promises and purposes.

I could go on to speak of God's faithfulness to the Apostles Peter and John and Paul, and the same emphasis could be made in each of their lives: God is faithful!.

But instead of citing other examples from the Word of God, I want to spend the rest of the time pointing out specific verses in the NT which speak of the faithfulness of God. And I trust that these will be a great encouragement to all of us to know that we, too, are the recipients every day and in every way, of the faithfulness of God. The very fact that we are saved is evidence of the faithfulness of God. He set His love upon us in eternity past, and nothing has kept Him from fulfilling His purpose in claiming us for Himself.

But let us look now at a few NT passages which speak specifically of the faithfulness of God and of Christ.

II. NEW TESTAMENT VERSES ON THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

The faithfulness of God touches every facet of our lives, and it has to do with the great doctrines of Scripture as well as all that the Bible says about what you and I are to be and how we are to live. But I am thinking now of verses which refer to the faithfulness of God and of Christ. Let me begin with Christ. The verse is:

A. Hebrews 2:17-18.

The writer was speaking of Christ. This is what these verses teaches us:

17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation [propitiation] for the sins of the people.

18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

— The incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ is an evidence of the faithfulness of God and of Christ. His death on the Cross is evidence of His faithfulness. The fact that He made propitiation for us is evidence of His faithfulness. All that He experienced here on earth prepared Him to be now our “merciful and faithful high priest.” And because of all that He suffered, He is uniquely prepared to help us in our trials.

Closely related to these verses is a verse which Paul gave to the Corinthian church:

B. 1 Corinthians 10:13. (Quote.)

— “Tempted” in this verse includes everything that comes our way by way of testings and trials. This was true also in OT times, but it was spelled out by the Holy Spirit through Paul when he wrote his first letter to the church at Corinth. God in His faithfulness to us sets limits on our trials. He is the One Who says, “So far, and no farther,” with respect to our trials. And not only that, but He sees to it that our trials, instead of hurting us, produce the greatest benefits for us. This is what Rom. 8:28 teaches us. This is why Joseph’s brothers didn’t kill him. This is why Saul was never able to kill David. And this is why God in His faithfulness did not deliver Paul from his thorn in the flesh. The Lord wanted to show Paul that he could actually glory in his infirmity with the power of Christ resting upon him.

Let me give you a third verse.

C. 1 John 1:9. (Quote.)

One ominous fact of life is that we are all sinners. And even as the Lord’s people we still continue to sin. I am sure that I am right when I say that every one of us has this morning sinned in some way--possibly in several ways. We sin by what we do, or think. But we also sin by what we fail to do. And sin always affects our fellowship with God.

— In 1 Cor. 1:9 Paul wrote to that church at Corinth that “God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” And in His faithfulness He has made provision for that which is needed to maintain us in our fellowship with Himself. It is forgiveness and cleansing--not just one or the other, but both. And He does this

— primarily out of faithfulness to His Son, but also to us because we are in His Son. And so we are indebted to the faithfulness of God for keeping us in fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ. How thankful we should be. It is no wonder that the writer of Psalm 100 admonished us in such strong language to offer our thanks and worship to God for His faithfulness.

Now for a final two verses which appear together in Paul's first letter to the church at Thessalonica:

D. 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24.

This is what Paul had to say in these verses:

23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

— Our whole spirit and soul and body are important to God in salvation. God intends that the evidence of our salvation be seen in every part of our being. That is a big order, and it would never be possible if it were not for the faithfulness of God. Verse 24 does not mean that there is nothing for us to do in seeking to be blameless before God. We need to read our Bibles. We need to pray. We need to be in church where we can hear the Word of God. We need the fellowship of other believers. But it is God in His faithfulness who moves us toward a holy life, and He it is Who makes what we do effective for our edification. His purpose in saving us is to make us like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Concl: I close with three verses from Psalm 36: verses 5, 6, and 7:

5 Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.

6 Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.

7 How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

— What should our response be to all of this wonderful truth? This last verse which I have read to you gives us the answer. "Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings." *Since God is faithful, always faithful, eternally faithful, we simply need to trust Him.* It is

foolish for us to do anything else. And this is what will make us faithful. The proof that we understand and believe in the faithfulness of God, is that we will be faithful in trusting Him. God's word for us is found in what our Lord said to Thomas: "Be not faithless, but believing."

I trust that our time together in the Word today has made us more aware of the continuing faithfulness of God in our lives, and that, as a result, we will be faithful in trusting God today, and every day. And let us give Him the glory for all that we have and all that we are, trusting Him to continue to work in our lives to make us all that He wants us to be.

A GOD OF KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM

Romans 11:33-36

Intro: If you were involved in our Bible Memory work earlier this year when we learned verses on *The Attributes of God*, you learned the last four verses of Romans 11 -- verses 33-36. The heading of the particular assignment in which we gave you these verses to learn, was *The Wisdom of God*. I hope you remember that we learned James 1:5 and also Jude 24-25 the same week. They all have to do with *the wisdom of God*.

As I begin my message for today, I want you to quote or read the last four verses of Romans 11 with me because they have to do with both *the knowledge and wisdom of God* which is my subject for this hour. I trust that it will be a blessing for all of us to think together today about these two distinct, and yet closely related, attributes of God.

(Quote or read Rom. 11:33-36.)

During the last four Sundays when I have spoken on Psalm 100 I mentioned a number of times that there was a close relationship between the goodness of God, and His mercy, and His faithfulness--the three attributes that are mentioned in verse 5 of that Psalm. It may be that the Psalmist meant to indicate that the God's mercy and His faithfulness were evidences of His goodness. And we could add God's grace and His love along with other attributes like that which can be classed in the same category.

The same is true of God's wisdom. This includes His knowledge (which the Apostle Paul joined together in verse 33 of our text. But it would also include such characteristics as God's understanding and prudence. The Bible also speaks of the foreknowledge of God. A term which theologians use to describe God's knowledge is *omniscience*. This is not a Bible word, but it is a word which describes the knowledge of God. There is nothing which God does not know either from the past, or what is going on in the present, and certainly all that applies to the future. The Psalmist wrote in Psalms 147:5, "Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite." Isaiah tells us in Isaiah 40:28b that "there is no searching of His [God's] understanding."

In our text (Rom. 11:33b) the Apostle Paul linked God's judgments and His ways with God's knowledge and His judgments. This would fit in with what we have in Isaiah 30:18 where we read a very wonderful verse:

And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him.

— This is like saying that *the LORD is a God of discretion*. He always knows what to do, and how to do it, and when it should be done. And we are often ignorant on all three of those counts. That is the reason that the best course of action for any of us is always to “wait for Him.”

One great passage on the knowledge of God is found in the first six verses of Psalm 139 where David clearly enunciated the amazing knowledge of God:

- 1 O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.
- 2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.
- 3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.
- 4 For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.
- 5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.
- 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

Now David said all of this about himself. But it applies equally to you, and to me. In fact, there is no reason at all to limit this just to the people of God. It applies to every person on the face of the earth living now, and every person who has ever lived! Think of it! God has such intimate knowledge of all of us that He knows all of the time what we are doing. He knows every word that we speak. Not only that, but He knows what we are going to say. No camera nor surveillance instrument nor detection device of any kind can even come close to knowing what God knows. God is unique in His omniscience.

As we go on in Psalm 139 David related the extent of God's knowledge with the extent of His presence. See verses 7-12:

- 7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
- 8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.
- 9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
- 10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall

hold me.

11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

So distance does not keep Him from seeing us, neither does the night. That which might greatly distress wicked men, is the source of the greatest joy and peace for the child of God.

Even before we were born, the Lord was well acquainted with us. See Psa. 139:14-16:

14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

15 My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

Then the Psalmist added these words in Psa. 139:17-18 to show not only his approval, but his great delight in the knowledge of the Lord:

17 How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!

18 If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.

I could go on and on reading passages which speak of the knowledge and wisdom of the Lord, but now I want to define what we mean by God's knowledge and His wisdom, and then comment on our text in Rom. 11:33-36.

I. WHAT IS KNOWLEDGE?

I am thinking now of the knowledge of God, the knowledge which God Himself possesses. It speaks of His perfect apprehension of the truth, in contrast with either ignorance or error. He has full understanding of all things. Our knowledge is always limited, and imperfect, and too often even erroneous. But that is never the case with God.

When Hannah prayed her wonderful prayer after Samuel was miraculously given to her, she called God, "a God of knowledge" (1 Sam. 2:3). When

Solomon prayed at the dedication of the temple, he asked the Lord to forgive those who came to Him confessing their sins, because, as he said, God would know the person's heart, and that only He knew human hearts. He even said that God know "the hearts of all the children of men"

(1 Kings 8:39). Our Lord Himself gave us some very valuable information about our heavenly Father when He said this about prayer:

7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him (Matt. 6:7-8).

And then the Lord added these words on down in Matt. 6:

31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things (Matt. 6:31-32).

What comfort those words should bring to our hearts: "Your heavenly Father knoweth"! He perceives everything on His own. He discerns the true state of things. He is continually aware of everything, and is never deceived as to the true state of affairs. God is never deceived about anything, nor is He ever ignorant of anything.

We will see more about this when we come to our text.

II. WHAT IS WISDOM?

Wisdom has been called *knowledge in action*. Solomon said in Proverbs 4:7-8,

7 Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.

8 Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her.

And James promised us in James 1:5 how we are to get wisdom.

The Lord was pointing out the difference between knowledge and wisdom after He had washed the disciples feet. You will remember He said this:

For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you (John 13:15).

And then He added: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17). It is not enough to know the truth; we must obey it, and it is obedience to the truth which we know which makes us wise. But this is where we often fall short.

Theologians have defined the wisdom of God as striving “for the best possible ends, and” choosing “the best possible means” (Berkhof, Louis, *Systematic Theology*, p. 69). God did this in creation. He did this in working out our salvation. And He does it as He works out His purposes in our lives. God’s will is the expression of His infallible wisdom.

III. WHAT IS FOREKNOWLEDGE?

Does this merely mean that He knows all things before they come to pass? He knows that, but this expression goes beyond that. Does it mean that He knows the future because He knows what we will do? He know that, too, but His foreknowledge goes beyond that.

This is a very strong word, and means that God has ordained that which will come to pass. We are God’s elect according to His foreknowledge as the Apostle Peter declared in 1 Pet. 1:2. But the Apostle Paul brought out the true meaning of the word when he said what he did in Rom. 8:28-30:

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Thayer called foreknowledge *God’s prearrangement*.

But now let us look at our text:

IV. ROMANS 11:33-36.

After all that we can say about God wisdom and His knowledge, we have to face its “depth,” i.e., that it is so profound that we can never plumb its depths. At the same time we have to admit that there is a fulness, an abundance, in the wisdom and knowledge of God that can never be exhausted. We can devote our entire lives to the study of the Word of God, and draw daily upon its promises, with no fear that we can ever exhaust the truth that God has given us.

“His judgments” are “unsearchable.” “His ways” are “past finding out.” We can know the great truths of Scripture, but never exhaust their full

meaning. It will always be true that “now we see through a glass darkly” (1 Cor. 13:12). But some day we will know as we are known. But this character of Scripture should help us to realize that it is the Word of God. As we come again and again to the same passages of Scripture it seems that our understanding increases as we continue to grow in the Lord.

“Who has known the mind of the Lord?” Robertson called this “a timeless aorist, implying that it means “did know, does know, will know” (IV, 400). Can you think of anyone in the past or the present who has fully understood the mind of the Lord—who knows as much as God knows? Some people seem to claim that they do. But no one ever has!

“Who has been his counsellor?” Do you ever find God in Scripture seeking advice from anyone? Can you name one person who has taught God anything? How can you teach One Who has infinite, perfect knowledge? God never learns anything because He already knows everything. Has anyone ever made God his debtor? Can we claim that we have obligated God to us? He owes us nothing. All that He has given us has been given in infinite grace.

“By these three prepositions [”of...through...to”] Paul ascribes the universe...with all the phenomena concerning creation, redemption, providence to God as the *Source...*, the *Agent...*, the *Goal...*”

Concl: In the study of all of the attributes of God, the purpose is that God should be exalted and glorified, and that we should be humbled to worship the great God that we have.

Theologians of past days have divided the attributes of God into those that are communicable and those that are incommunicable. That is, those attributes which He shares with us, and those which He does not share. God is good, and He makes us good. God is merciful and He makes us merciful. And God is faithful, and He makes us faithful. And after today we can say that God possesses knowledge, and He imparts knowledge to us. And He is infinitely wise, and He alone can make us wise.

But His goodness is infinite; He is without sin. His mercy is perfect; ours is imperfect, but hopefully growing. He is always faithful, but we still have our times when we do not believe. His knowledge and wisdom are infinite; we still have a long way to go. But since God’s purpose is to make us like Christ, becoming like Christ means that we are growing in goodness, in mercy, in faithfulness, and in our knowledge of God and His

truth, as well as in wisdom. Christ personifies every attribute of God. Christ is “the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:24), and the more we learn of Him, and the more we grow to be like Him, the more will we in our lives display in a much more limited way, the glorious attributes which God in His grace communicates to us.

But there is one other point that needs to be made before I close. It is this: Should we not trust implicitly, unreservedly, completely, such an infinitely wise and all-knowing God? Is it not foolish for us to do anything less? As I thought again about the knowledge and wisdom of God, I was thankful all over again for verses like those we find in Psalm 32:8-11,

8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

9 Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.

10 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.

11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

Not only should we trust such a God, but He wants us to trust Him, and He has pledged Himself to teach us and to guide us when we do.

If it should be that you are one who does not know the Lord, may the Lord extend His grace to you this morning so that you will seek Him with all your heart, and come to Him through Christ. Seek Him and you will find Him when you search for Him with all your heart. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you most certainly will be saved.

GOD IS RIGHTEOUS

Romans 1:16-17

Intro: After considering the goodness of God which He has manifested in His mercy and His faithfulness, we looked last week at the knowledge and faithfulness of God. All of the attributes of God are perfect, and they bring great comfort and blessing to those of us who are the people of God. Actually everyone benefits from the attributes of God, but those who do not know the Lord are not aware of the manifold blessings which come to us every day because God is the kind of a God that He is.

Today we want to consider *the righteousness of God*. God is righteous, and this we find emphasized all through Scripture. He is righteous by nature, and He is righteous in all that he does. Although I doubt if any of you need proof that God is a righteous God, let me give you some of the statements of Scripture which refer to His righteousness.

I. STATEMENTS IN SCRIPTURE WHICH SPEAK OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Actually, although the word is not used, it is apparent from the time of creation that God is righteous. He placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden with the restriction upon them that they were to obey Him. The one thing which they were not to do, which they did anyway, was to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They violated the will of God, and so became *unrighteous* in themselves.

Abraham was one of the first to give expression to the righteousness of God when he was interceding for Sodom where there was so much sin. He began his prayer by addressing God as the Judge of all the earth, and he asked God to spare the city of Sodom if there were fifty righteous people there. The courage he got to make such a request for such an evil city is seen in this question: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" See Gen. 18:25.

In that great song which Moses taught the children of Israel just before his death, one verse in that song declared this, speaking of God:

He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he (Deut. 32:4).

David was marveling at the righteousness of God in Psalm 36:6 when he penned these words:

Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.

In Psalm 40 we find David reveling again at the righteousness of God, and this is what we find in verses 9 and 10:

9 I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest.

10 I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.

We don't know who wrote Psalm 71, but whoever he was, he was guided by the Holy Spirit to write in verse 19,

Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee!

In Psalm 116:5 we read, "Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful." Psalm 119:137 tells us, speaking of God, "Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments."

You can see from these verses that the righteousness of God was not a truth that the people of God fear, nor were they afraid to talk about it, but it was a truth that the delighted in!

Nor were the prophets silent about the righteousness of God. Isaiah records these words from God Himself showing that the righteousness of God is unique in all the universe:

Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me (Isa. 45:21).

When Jeremiah was confused about the prosperity of the wicked, he began his prayer recognizing that God was a righteous God, and that He could only do what was right. Listen to Jer. 12:1:

Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?

One of the greatest of the OT passages on the righteousness of God is found in Jer. 33:15-16. It is great because it relates the righteousness of God to our Lord Jesus Christ. This is what Jeremiah wrote:

15 In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute

judgment and righteousness in the land.

16 In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.

Remember that the attributes of God are the attributes of Christ, which also are the attributes of the Holy Spirit. They are co-equal in their Deity so that once we have established a special attribute of One we have established the same attribute for the Other Two Persons of the Godhead.

Micah pointed out to the people of God in his day that the righteousness of God was apparent in their history, in particular with Balaam. Listen to what he said:

O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD (Micah 6:5).

The righteousness of the Lord is written upon every page of Israel's history.

And right at the end of the OT we have these words from Malachi which also refer to our Lord Jesus Christ:

1 For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

2 But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall (Mal. 4:1-2).

Going into the NT we find that our Lord spoke of the righteousness of God in His Sermon on the Mount. You will remember these words I am sure:

31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6:31-33).

And as the Lord concluded His great prayer in John 17 which we studied not long ago, we find Him addressing God in this way:

25 O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I

have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.
26 And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them (John 17:25-26).

The NT, like the OT, is full of passages that speak of the righteousness of God and of Christ, but let me give you just one more found in 1 John 2:1-2 where the Apostle John lovingly said,

- 1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:
- 2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

So we have the teaching of Scripture that God is righteous, the Lord Jesus Christ is righteous, and the Holy Spirit is also righteous or He would not be called *the Holy Spirit*.

But now let me ask and attempt to answer the question:

II. WHAT IS RIGHTEOUSNESS?

Both the Hebrew word for *righteousness* in the OT, and the Greek word for *righteousness* in the NT suggest *a standard of measurement*. Thayer, in his Greek Lexicon, or Dictionary, says that a righteous person is one who is "*such as he ought to be*" (p. 148).

If you go into military service there are certain physical qualifications that you have to meet--and other qualifications as well. If you don't meet those qualifications, you will be rejected. If you are going to get a driver's license, you have to pass certain physical and mental tests. If you don't meet those qualifications, you will not get a driver's license. If you are going to get a high school or college diploma, you have to pass certain tests, you have to earn certain credits. If you don't have those required credits, you don't get your diploma or your degree.

Now when we are talking about *the righteousness of God*, we are talking about the standard by which people are admitted to heaven. You have to measure up to the standard of admittance to heaven. What is that standard? *The standard is God Himself. God is the standard. You have to be as righteous as God is!* How righteous is God? He is *perfectly righteous*. *He has no unrighteousness in Him, and so He has never been*

guilty of unrighteousness in any way. Abraham was speaking the truth when he asked the question, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Of course He will! He has never done anything else. He is perfectly holy. He is perfectly faithful. He is perfectly truthful. He is perfectly good. *There is absolutely no imperfection in God at all!*

Now, if God is the standard, how do you and I measure up? What are our chances for being admitted to heaven? Would you say about yourself that you are all that you should be? Do you measure up to your own standards of what is right and what is wrong? Have you always done the right thing in every circumstance?

I suppose we can all point to good things which we have done, but have we only done good things? Have we never had an evil thought? Have we never said an unkind word?

This word *righteousness* is called by most grammarians and most theologians, *a forensic term*. That means it is a legal term. It belongs in a court of law. It has to do with whether a person is guilty, or not guilty. We all will stand before the One Whom Abraham called, “the Judge of all the earth.” How does the case stand before us?

God has given us His Word so that no one will be confused about this. What does the Bible say about us?

When the Apostle Paul wrote the book of Romans, he gathered the evidence for us. At one point he quoted identical passages from the OT. One is in Psalm 14; the other is found in Psalm 53. And when we see that Paul, directed by the Holy Spirit as David was when he wrote Psalms 14 and 53, wrote it for a third time, we have evidence that stands loud and clear, evidence against each one of us which we cannot afford to overlook. What is the evidence?

It is “that there is none that doeth good, no not one.” This means, as Paul said, “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10). Solomon said long before the Apostle Paul lived that “there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Ecc. 7:20). The prophet Isaiah said, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way...” (Isa. 53:6). Paul’s words in Rom. 3:23 are that “all have sinned.” And the Lord Jesus said in John 3:18 that we don’t have to do anything to be condemned. In the court of heaven we are “condemned already” (John 3:18).

What possibility is there that we will be accepted as we are? *There is no possibility at all!* What about all of the good that we have tried to do? The prophet Isaiah answered that question seven hundred years before Christ was born. This is what he said:

6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

7 And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities (Isa. 64:6-7).

If the good things that we try to do are like “filthy rags” to God, then how terrible must be our sins. Isn’t there anything that we can do for God that will make us acceptable to Him? *Absolutely nothing.* When Paul wrote to Titus he told him that it is “not by works of righteousness which we have done.” To the Ephesian church Paul said that our acceptance with God is “not of ourselves” and “not of works.”

Well then, is our case hopeless? Humanly speaking, it is. You see, we didn’t become sinners in God’s sight back in time when we committed our first sin. We were born sinners. Our sins just manifest what we are by nature. We are sinners by nature first, and then sinners by choice. The case against each one of us is so overwhelming if it were left up to us, or to what our friends might do to help us, then our case is hopeless. Joining a church won’t take away any of the charges. Giving money to the church won’t buy salvation for us. Being baptized won’t do it. If we do any of these things seeking to earn our salvation, God puts it with all of the rest of our “filthy rags.”

But I have good news for you. You need to see the bad part before I tell you the good because you won’t know how much you need the good until you see how hopeless you are in your sins. Let me speak to you for a few minutes about:

III. IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS.

That word “imputed” is a word which we do not use every day, so let me explain what it means.

If something is imputed to you, it is charged to your account. Sometimes that can be bad. If someone steals your credit card, and runs up a lot of charges on it, those charges are against you; they are imputed to you. But

it can have a good interpretation, too. Let me give you a simply illustration of imputation. I have used this before, so those of you who have heard it will bear with me while I repeat it. When I was in high school, I delivered newspapers--early every morning before I went to school. To do it, I needed a bike, so with my Dad's cooperation I bought a nice bike from Western Auto Supply Co. And each month I faithfully went down to the company and made my payment. I had gotten it almost paid for, when I went in to make one of my payments, and the man behind the counter told me that my bike was paid for. I didn't understand and was really amazed until he told me that my Dad had come in and had paid my account out in full! My Dad didn't have to do that; he was exercising grace toward me. But the money he gave he "imputed" to my account so that I had nothing more to pay.

Now that is not a good illustration of the Gospel because I could have finally paid off my own account. But I can't do that, and neither can you, as far as our obligation to God is concerned. As sinners before God, charged with our sins, we are helpless, and hopeless. But this is why the Gospel, the good news, is so good! What we could never do, and what we never could deserve, God in His grace has done for us. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:21 and Isa. 53:6.

Cf. Romans 4:20-25 to see what Paul said about *imputed righteousness*:

20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

And so where do we find the perfect definition of *the righteousness of God*? We find it in the Gospel. Cf. Rom. 1:16-17.

Salvation is ours, we stand righteous before God in His own righteousness through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Concl: Are you trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior? All you

need to have perfect acceptance with God can be found only in Him. He is not just one of many ways of salvation; *He is the only way*. If Christ is not your Savior, you face eternity under the judgment of God. If He is your Savior, you have nothing to fear, but only greater blessings to anticipate. 2 Chron. 12:6. 1 John 2:29.

(Close with Rom. 5:1-2.)

1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

GOD IS HOLY

Psalm 99

Intro: There is no question but that the holiness of God is one of the grandest of all themes of Scripture. It is the doctrine which enables us to understand the majesty and glory of God, but it also is essential for us to comprehend if we are to understand the nature of man. It was when Isaiah had that glorious vision of God, recorded for us in Isaiah 6, that after seeing and hearing the seraphim proclaim the holiness of God, that he immediately cried out,

Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts (Isa. 6:5).

And this, in turn, enables us to see the need for salvation. It was after Isaiah expressed his distress that we read these words in Isa. 6:6-7:

6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

It is because people have such a *low* understanding of the holiness of God, or *no* understanding of the holiness of God, that they do not recognize their desperate need of salvation. And this is apparent every day in the world in which we live.

But let me get us started by seeking to define the words *holy* or *holiness*.

I. THE MEANING OF HOLINESS.

As I am sure most of you have been told many, many times, the basic idea in the word *holiness* is that of a *separation*. But that word alone does not tell the whole story. Many feel that the word *holiness* has special meaning with reference to the world. He is holy; the people of the world are unholy. This is what we are by birth and by nature, and this is why we need to be saved.

Isaiah has given us a very interesting statement regarding God which we find in Isa. 57:15a. This is what it says: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, ..." The word "holy" so perfectly identifies God that He has taken the word as His Name. Unlike you and me, God is completely without sin. He is incapable of sinning. He is absolutely pure in His

character. He is a holy God--and as Isaiah tells us over and over again, there is none like He is! When the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, they sang a great hymn which is recorded for us in Exodus 15. One of the verses in that song exalts the holiness of God. Listen as I read to you Ex. 15:11:

Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

And so this means not only is different from us with regard to sin, but that He is exalted above us. His very holiness calls for us to humble ourselves before Him, to submit ourselves to Him, and to worship Him. The word that theologians use to describe the greatness of God is that He is *transcendent*! This means that "God is above and beyond us" (Sproul, R. C., *The Holiness of God*, p. 55). This is what the Bible has in mind when it speaks of the greatness of our God. He is infinitely above us, and infinitely beyond us. Yet in spite of God's holiness and His greatness, we read this in Psal. 138:6:

Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.

Such truth as this is a manifestation of the grace of God. Such a holy God could have nothing to do with us if it were not for His grace. In Hab. 2:20 we have an admonition that we all would do well to pay attention to. It is this: "But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him." The people who speak of God or of Christ as though They were just like we are, show that they little or nothing about the absolute holiness of God.

But the idea of holiness is meant to convey to us another important aspect of this attribute of God. It is that God, because He is holy, *does all things for His own glory, for His own honor*. And so when we do things for our own glory, that is sin against our holy God. Do you remember what Isaiah wrote in Isa. 42:8? He there gave us the very words of the Lord Himself. Listen to what the Lord said:

I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

This is why idolatry is abominable to God, and why it should be abominable to us. No man-made image of what men might think God is like, nor any image or supposed picture of our Lord, can possibly portray their glory. When the Apostle Paul was describing the utter sinfulness of man, this is one thing that he wrote to the church at Rome:

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are

made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things (Rom. 1:20-23).

No picture, no statue, can possibly depict the glory, the majesty, the holiness, of our God, or of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And any attempt on our part to depict the Lord in those ways is just as abominable in God's sight as if we were to fall down before the image of some false and heathen God. The way men will apparently not hesitate to play the part of our Lord in some movie or some dramatic production, shows how we have lost whatever appreciation we used to have of the holiness of God. It used to be that even unregenerate actors who refuse to play the part of God or of our Lord because they knew they could never represent Deity. But people do it today without giving it a second thought. And people who profess to be Christians have no hesitation in going into their churches where there are images of Christ, and bowing down to them.

Even such things as they are a major part of what we as a nation are doing to provoke God to judge us.

So let us keep in mind that when we speak of *the holiness of God* we need to have two things in mind concerning God:

1) That He is morally perfect with no imperfections whatever. He is absolute purity in character and in all that He does. He not only has not sinned, but, being God, *He cannot sin*. And beyond this, we learn from Scripture that not only is God without sin, but that He *hates* sin! The writer of the book of Hebrews, in quoting from Psalm 45, verses 6 and 7, applied those words to our Lord and to God the Father. This is what we read:

6 Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.

7 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows (Psa. 45:6-7).

Several years ago Dr. Bruce Waltke joined with R. Laird Harris and Gleason L. Archer, Jr. to produce what they called a *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. It is a two volume set, published by

Moody Press. These men had this to say about the meaning of the word *holy*:

That which is “holy” is not only distinct from the profane, but in opposition to it as well. God, therefore, hates and punishes sin (Vol. II, p. 788).

- 2) The second truth about the holiness of God is that He is devoted to His own glory. This was true of creation. Cf. Ps. 19:1, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handywork.” But it is also true of our salvation. Paul brought this out in Eph. 1:11-12 where he wrote:

11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ (Eph. 1:11-12).

We see all of these facets of the doctrine of the holiness of God in Heb. 7:26-28:

26 For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

Now, for the remaining time, I want to direct your attention to Psalm 99.

II. PSALM 99, A PSALM OF GOD'S HOLINESS.

The holiness of God and of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, being the same, is seen throughout the Bible, in both the OT and the NT. So there are many passages to which we could go to speak of *the holiness of God*. But this Psalm touches especially on the theme of God's holiness. See verses 3, 5, and 9. And it seems that these three verses mark out the divisions of this Psalm. So the first part would be verses 1-3; the second part, verses 4-5; the third part, verses 6-9. In the first section we see *the greatness of our holy God*. In the second section we see *the government of our holy God*. And in the last we see *the grace of our holy God*. We could justly call *holiness*, as some have, *the attribute of all of God's attributes*, be-

cause all of God's attributes bear the mark of His holiness. For example, God's righteousness is a manifestation of His holiness. God's grace cannot be understood except in the light of His holiness. We can only understand the wrath of God and the judgment of God in the realization of His holiness. And we could go on and on speaking of each of God's attributes in the same way. And we could easily feel that since God is the holy God that He is, He is out of our reach, and that we could never find any hope in Him because we are full of sin and He is perfect in holiness. We can understand how the Apostle Paul felt when he wrote the words we find in 1 Tim. 6:13-16. Paul had been telling Timothy what he needed to teach the Lord's people, and also what he himself needed to do. And then he gave Timothy this charge:

13 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;

14 That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

15 Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;

16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

We can't approach God in our sins, but that is where the Gospel comes in. The Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 3:18 shows how we can come to God, and the only way we can come:

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.

The Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, came to earth as a Man to suffer and die for sinners so that He could bring us to God where we would find forgiveness and cleansing from our sins, thus becoming fully acceptable to God. Now Psalm 99 anticipated all of that.

Notice the first part of this Psalm.

A. The greatness of our holy God (Psa. 99:1-3).

Notice, "the Lord reigneth." He is not reigning as one day He will reign upon the earth, but He reigns because He is sovereign over the affairs of all of the nations. He sits between the cherubim, and you will remember that this means *on the mercy seat*. He is great, and He is high. His name

is great also, and his name is terrible! This means that it is awesome! It causes people to bow and amazement and worship before Him--at His greatness.

— What were the people to do? “Let them praise...” (Psa. 99:3).

B. The government of our holy God (Psa. 99:4-5).

Things are so terribly wrong in the earth today, but the day is coming when the Lord will make things right in Jacob (Israel), and from there His reign will extend through all of the earth.

What are we to do in the light of this great truth? See and read v. 5.

Again praise is in order as God’s people are called upon to exalt the Lord.

C. The grace of our holy God (Psa. 99:6-9).

— Moses and Aaron and Samuel are singled out as men who called upon the Lord’s Name, and who experienced wonderful answers to prayer. Although they were not perfect, nor were the people whom they led, yet God forgave even though their wrongdoings and the wrongdoings of the people could not be undone. But the whole record was a record to God’s glory for which He alone should be exalted and worshiped “at his holy hill.” And the Psalm ends by stating again that “the Lord our God is holy.”

So, while the holiness of God was to be a sobering truth for all of the people of God, yet it was not a truth that was to make them afraid and to deprive them of all joy. Instead it was to be the cause for praise the Lord, exalting and worshiping Him (mentioned two times in v. 5 and then again in v. 9) “at his holy hill.

— Have you noticed how often the word “holy” is connected with the Lord and His works? When God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush, he was standing upon “holy ground.” The Sabbath was to be kept “holy.” The Tabernacle had a “holy place” and a “Holy of holies.” The nation was repeatedly called “an holy nation,” and continually held “holy convocations.” The priests wore “holy garments,” and the High Priest wore upon his head that golden plate which had the words on it, “Holiness to the Lord.”

But now let me close with a short word about:

III. THE CALL TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

For this let me take you to the First Epistle of Peter. Here we find these words which apply to our subject today on the holiness of God. I will read verses 13 through 16 of chapter 1:

- 13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;
- 14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:
- 15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;
- 16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy (1 Pet 1:13-16).

This last verse is a quotation from Lev. 11:44. For Peter to quote it and to make it a part of the NT, is to show that God's will for His people in OT times, and His will for His people in NT times, is the same. God wants us to be holy! We know that to become holy is to be like the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the purpose of our redemption. And we know that holiness for us will not be perfect until we are with the Lord. But we are to continue toward the goal, seeking in what we do, in what we say, and in what we think, to be a holy people.

And we have seen that this means:

- 1) That we are not only to avoid sin at all times, but we are to cultivate a hatred for sin as well as a love of righteousness.
- 2) Secondly, we are to seek to glorify God in all that we are, and in all that we do. The Apostle Paul told the Corinthian believers,
Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31).

To become holy is to be sanctified. It is a work of God, but we have certain responsibilities in becoming holy. Actually every commandment in the Scriptures has this in view, as its objective. I couldn't possibly state it any better than Paul stated it to the Corinthian church with words which we find in the last two verses of 2 Cor. 6, and the first verse of chapter 7:

- 17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,
 - 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.
- CHAPTER 7

1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor 6:17-7:1).

— **Concl:** It is a wonderful thing to know the truth of the holiness of God.

But it is equally wonderful to know that God has saved us to make us holy. A theologian in writing about the holiness of God, and God's will for us to be holy, asked this question which we all need to consider:

Are there activities or relationship in your present pattern of life that are hindering your growth in holiness because they make it difficult for you to be separated from sin and devoted to seeking God's honor (Gruden, Wayne, *Systematic Theology*, p. 208).

Let Psa. 19:14 ("Let the words of my mouth...") and Psa. 139:23-24 ("Search me, O God, and know my heart...") be the prayers of our hearts in these day when there are two few of the Lord's people who want to learn about our holy God, and still fewer, it would seem, who earnestly want to be holy as He is holy.

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