

Knowing God Series #8



“Our Infinitely Pure Righteous God”

Introduction

Hosea the prophet called the people of God to return to Him from a state of distraction. He promised healing and restoration if they would press on to know the Lord. That is just what we have been trying to do this summer in a series of messages on the attributes or character of God.

I. The nature of God

II. The Attributes of God

A. God is infinitely GREAT in His ability / capacity

B. God is infinitely PURE in His morality

1. God is HOLY

He is infinitely separated from all that is contrary to His own moral character and law.

2. God is RIGHTEOUS / JUST

Every person has a God-ingrained desire to be right to live uprightly. This internal desire to live right stems from being created de in Gods' image. Mankind works hard at trying to be right even if he has to adjust the standard of measure. Every group and society develops a standard of behavior. Even gangs demand adherence to a code. The only group that society condemns for calling people to a code of behavior is Christians. The declaration of God's righteousness and the necessity of all who would approach Him to be righteous, resound through the Scriptures as loudly as the holiness of God and insistence on holiness in His followers.

This is the core of the Gospel message. It is the companion doctrine to holiness. It means to “cut straight”, to conform to a standard. The translators usually translate the terms into one of two English words: “Righteous” and “Just”. Other forms of the same root appear as righteousness, justice righteously, justly, justify, justification. It has to with conforming to a set standard. These references appear just as often as the root related to holiness.

Police may be heard to declare, “It was a righteous bust.” They mean that the arrest conformed to every policy and standard adopted by the police force. To “justify one's actions” is to explain how our actions perfectly conformed to accepted standards. Holy actions are those actions which do not violate accepted standards. Righteous actions are those which fully comply with accepted standards.

God expects His followers to absolutely avoid anything He asks us not to do. (Be holy)
Don't steal, lie, murder, hate, judge, quarrel, gossip, grumble, dispute. That is what it means to live holy.

God also expects us to perfectly conform to everything He asks us to do. (Be righteous)

Love without hypocrisy. Share with those in need. Humble yourselves. Give your bodies a living sacrifice. Forgive, forbear, encourage. Love the Lord with all your heart. That is what it means to live righteously. Why? Because God is Righteous and Holy. God perfectly conforms to His own standard. God infinitely avoids everything that does not conform to His own moral standard. God practices EVERYTHING He requires. He perfectly practices what He preaches. How refreshing!

We live in a culture of rampant unrighteousness. We live in a culture where justice stumbles in the streets. It's nothing new.

Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far away; for truth has stumbled in the street, and uprightness cannot enter. Isaiah 59:14

Roam to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and look now and take note. And seek in her open squares, if you can find a man, if there is one who does justice, who seeks truth, then I will pardon her. Jeremiah 5:1

Biblical Declarations of God's Righteousness

The Scripture declares that God is righteous. He absolutely conforms to His own moral and ethical standard. He IS the standard of what is right. There is an absolute standard and it is God. He declares it. He lives it. He cannot do otherwise. It is who He is.

The Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. Psalm 92:15

The LORD is righteous, and he loves justice. Those who do what is right will see his face. Psalm 11:7

Reverence for the LORD is pure, lasting forever. The laws of the LORD are true; each one is righteous altogether. Psalm 19:9

Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the ocean depths. You care for people and animals alike, O LORD. Psalm 36:6

As your name deserves, O God, you will be praised to the ends of the earth. Your strong right hand is filled with righteousness. Psalm 48:10

I will tell everyone about your righteousness. All day long I will proclaim your saving power, for I am overwhelmed by how much you have done for me. I will praise your mighty deeds, O Sovereign LORD. I will tell everyone that you alone are righteous and good. Psalm 71:15-16

Your righteousness, O God, reaches to the highest heavens. You have done such wonderful things. Who can compare with you, O God? Psalm 71:19

Your throne is founded on two strong pillars—righteousness and justice. Unfailing love and truth walk before you as attendants. Psalm 89:14

Everything God does reveals His glory and majesty. His righteousness never fails. Psalm 111:3

I will proclaim the name of the LORD; how glorious is our God! He is the Rock; his work is perfect. Everything he does is just and fair. He is a faithful God who does nothing unjust; how righteous and upright He is! Deut. 32:3-4

*The LORD is righteous in **everything** he does; he is filled with kindness. Psalm 145:17*

My righteous rule will never end! Listen to me, you who know right from wrong and cherish my law in your hearts. Do not be afraid of people's scorn or their slanderous talk. For the moth will destroy them as it destroys clothing. The worm will eat away at them as it eats wool. But my righteousness will last forever. My salvation will continue from generation to generation. Isa 51:5

Surely the godly are praising your name, for they will live in your presence. Psalm 140:13

But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world where righteousness dwells. 2 Peter 3:13

Many of God's actions and declarations seem to us to be unjust.

What about those who have never had a chance to hear?

What about those who only turn to Him at their death bed?

What about those who were "good" all of their life?

What about all the genocide in the Old Testament?

What about babies who die before they have a chance to choose?

What about God choosing some but not choosing others?

"My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts."

Isaiah 55:8-9

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! Romans 11:33

It is not our standard that evaluates God's actions as just or unjust. God never deviates from His own standard. Men often judge God's actions. "I could never serve a God like that!" We are in no position to judge God's plans or methods. Many people carry a hidden bitterness against God because He didn't do what they thought He should.

You let my child die. You didn't keep me from getting sick. You let my mom die of cancer. You didn't answer my prayer. You didn't let me win the lottery. You didn't heal me. If God is so good, then why do such bad things happen in the world?

Whatever God does is right and one day all will acknowledge and embrace His righteousness.

Let all the world look to me for salvation! For I am God; there is no other. I have sworn by my own name, and I will never go back on my word: Every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will confess allegiance to my name." The people will declare, "The LORD is the source of all my righteousness and strength." And all who were angry with him will come to him and be ashamed. Isaiah 45:22-24

Some base their doctrine on what **they** feel is right. One particular group denies that hell is an eternal place of torment but a final annihilation not on the Biblical data but on their own sense of right and wrong. I wouldn't do that so a good God would not do that. It is not our standard however that matters, it is God's. Isaiah the prophet pronounce woe on the people for rejecting God's standard.

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Isaiah 5:20

The Biblical standard of righteousness

I have mentioned God's absolute conformity to His own moral standard. What is the standard? Of course modern day philosophy and culture absolutely denies the existence of an absolute standard of truth. We live in a relative culture where truth depends. All people's viewpoint is equally valid. (except Christians)

God IS the standard and He communicates that standard in the Word of God.

When I learn your righteous laws, I will thank you by living as I should! Psalm 119:7

At midnight I rise to thank you for your just laws. Psalm 119:62

My eyes strain to see your deliverance, to see the truth of your righteous word. Psalm 119:123

Your justice is eternal, and your law is perfectly true. Psalm 119:142

Your decrees are always right; help me to understand them, that I may live. Psalm 119:144

All your words are true; all your righteous laws will stand forever. Psalm 119:160

Proverbs 1:1-3 These are the proverbs of Solomon, David's son, king of Israel. The purpose of these proverbs is to teach people wisdom and discipline, and to help them understand wise sayings. Through these proverbs, people will receive instruction in discipline, good conduct, and doing what is right, just, and fair.

We have developed a wrong view of the law. We view the law as bad and evil and something to be avoided replaced by grace. It is not the law that is bad it is **legalism** that is bad. The law expresses God's perfection and attitude. It is the standard for functioning in the world God created. It is the manufacturer's standard operation manual. It has not changed or become invalid. It is the way God made us to best function as a people. It is what God promised to write on the heart of His followers.

"But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." Jeremiah 31:33-34

It is still the standard of right and wrong in God's eyes. Here is God's view of the Law.

The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. Psalm 19:7-9

David maintained an exalted view of the Law.

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers. Psalm 1:1-3

Psalm 119 is all about the glorious character of the Law; God's word. Legalism seeks to please God by law keeping rather than God trusting (hearing with faith). The law continually demonstrates how unrighteous we really are and how desperately we need a Savior and sanctifier. Everyone feels righteous until compared to God's absolute standard. Every man looks good in their own eyes. People compare themselves to each other.

“I’m not as bad as ? or I’m better than ?.” We all fall far short as soon as we compare ourselves to what is right in God’s eyes.

Personal Implications of serving an absolutely Righteous God

1. It helps me deal with things I don’t understand.

This clear teaching that God cannot do anything but what is right has personal implications. There are two things to remember.

1. Whatever God does is right.
2. If it seems wrong, then refer to principle #1

I often fall back on this clear teaching when life gets hard to figure out. I don’t understand it but whatever God does is right. When we see history from His eternal perspective the congregation of the redeemed...

Will proclaim how glorious is our God! He is the Rock; His work is perfect. Everything He does is just and fair. He is a faithful God who does nothing unjust; how righteous and upright He is! Deut. 32:3-4

2. It exposes my own unrighteousness and need for justification

You can’t look at God’s righteousness without realizing the glaring contrast with our blatant lack of righteousness or our unrighteousness. We don’t really want justice. What we really want and need is mercy. None of us can survive the just judgment of a righteous God.

Hear my prayer, O LORD; listen to my plea! Answer me because you are faithful and righteous. Don't bring your servant to trial! In your sight, no one living is righteous. Psalm 143:1-2

Well then, are we Jews better than others? No, not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin. As the Scriptures say, "No one is good— not even one. No one has real understanding; no one is seeking God. All have turned away from God; all have gone wrong. No one does good, not even one." Romans 3:9-20

All have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard. Romans 3:23
Behold then the kindness and severity of God...Romans 11:22

It is clear that righteousness is out of our reach. But it is also clear that just as no one will see the Lord without sanctification. No one will see the Lord without justification. We need a righteousness that exceeds even our best efforts.

3. It explains the reason for wrath and necessity for judgment.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Romans 1:18-21

We would never tolerate an earthly judge who refused to punish those who violate the law. Such an action violates the moral code imbedded in our heart by a righteous God.

An hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment. I

can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. John 5:28-30

4. It motivates deeper appreciation for our justification

So how can a just God justify an unjust sinner? Praise God that even as God made a way for the unholy to become holy; He made a way for the unrighteous to be righteous.

God justified us as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith...for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Romans 3:24-26

Paul wrote the whole book of Romans to explain how the unrighteous could enjoy full reconciliation with a righteous and holy God through justification by faith.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." Romans 1:16-17

God made Jesus who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Corinthians 5:21

Lovingkindness and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Psalm 85:10

WHAT ABOUT TODAY?

Today, affirm and fully embrace a God of righteousness.

Today, acknowledge our own need for a righteousness outside of ourselves

We need more than forgiveness of our violations of God's standard.

We need more than an absence of evil deeds or negative righteousness.

Forgiveness brings our righteousness account to zero. We need a positive balance in our account.

For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. Isaiah 64:6

Today, celebrate the work of Jesus who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30).