

Consider These Things

Sunday, May 13th, 1990

Psalm 130: 3-4

If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.

There is a passage of scripture in the Book of Psalms. I'd like for you to turn to Psalm 130, verses 3 and 4. Are you familiar with that Psalm? The scripture says, "*If Thou Lord, (who is Lord), shouldest mark iniquity, (if Thou shouldest charge men with all their iniquities), O Lord, who shall stand?*" But, here is good news; "*But, there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared.*"

This message that I am going to bring to you today is entitled: "Let's Consider These Things." Let's think a little bit and consider some mighty important things. This message is a message that I wish I had heard many, many years ago. I did hear it about 40 years ago. I wish I had heard it when I first became interested in religion. I really wish I had.

This message is the message that the entire world really needs to hear, but it's not hearing it. This message is not being preached. If I had only one message to preach, I believe that this is the message that I would bring. I thought about this a great deal, if I had only one sermon left to preach, and my audience was the whole world, I believe that this is the message that I would bring.

This message consists of three serious and yet simple questions. These are three and yet simple questions. Actually, I use the word, vital; these three are vital questions. The first one is: Just how Holy is God? The second question is: How sinful is man? The third question is born of those two: If God is perfectly and immaculately Holy and man is infinitely, unchangeably wicked, then how can man be just with God? "*How can he be clean that is born of a woman?*" These are three good questions.

First: The Word of God plainly declares in Psalm 99, "*The Lord reigneth. Let the people tremble. Exalt the Lord our God and worship at His footstool for the Lord our God is Holy.*" God is Holy! Habakkuk said, "*The Lord is in His Holy temple.*" It did not say that the Lord was in His loving temple; "*He is in His Holy Temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.*" In Zephaniah 1:7, it says; "*Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD,*" for He is Holy. "*O man who art thou that replies against God? (Romans 9:20). "Holy, Holy and Reverend is His name" (Psalm 111:9).*

How Holy is God? I wish I could answer that question. I know that I can't. If I could, there wouldn't be any breath left in you or me, either one. When Isaiah saw the holiness of God, and literally beheld the Holiness of God, he said, *"In the year that King Uzziah died; I saw the Lord high and lifted up. His train filled the temple and the cherubim's and seraphim's around the throne cried, 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts.'" He cried, "I am cut off; I am undone. I'm a man of unclean lips. I'm surrounded by a people of unclean lips."*

John saw the Holiness of God on the Isle of Patmos. He was a 90-year-old disciple. *"He heard the voice as of many waters. He turned to see the voices that spake to him. He saw and he beheld the Son of God in His glory and he said, 'I fell at His feet as a dead man.'"*

Job saw His Holiness. He said, *"Lord, I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear. Now, mine eyes seeth Thee. Wherefore, I hate myself. I abhor myself. I put my hand on my mouth."* This is Job, Job the righteous, and Job the patient one. Here he is putting his hand over his mouth and says, *"I have spoken about things that are too wonderful for me."*

Holiness is God's chief attribute. If I were to ask you today, in one word, to describe God, the word would be Holy. Most people would say that God is love. God's love is a Holy love. His angels are called the Holy Angels, not the loving angels. His temple is called the Holy temple, not the loving temple. The place of worship is the Holy of Holies. His Word is called His Holy Word. When the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies, he wore, written on his miter, not that God is love, but *"Holiness to the Lord."* God is Holy.

How holy is God? He is so holy that even Moses couldn't look upon God and live. Aaron had two boys and they offered strange fire. God is so holy that He sent fire from heaven to consume both of them. How holy is God? When they were transporting the Ark back to its rightful place, Uzza reached back to touch the Ark from falling off the ox cart and God killed him for touching the Ark of the Covenant. God is so Holy that good king Uzziah was smitten with leprosy. He was trying to burn incense in the presence of the Lord. He was usurping the office of the Priest. He is so holy that the seraphims around the throne cover their faces and their feet when they are in His presence. He is so holy that He deserted His own beloved Son when He was hanging on that cross bearing our sins. God is Holy!

I will tell you this, if you would learn anything of the living God, learn first that God is Holy. I'm telling you the truth. If you would learn anything about the living God, let this

be the first lesson, *“Come My children, I will teach you, Fear the Lord.”* The beginning of wisdom is not that God is love. The scripture says, *“The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord.”* God is Holy and that is where you start. You need to start in kindergarten and learn this lesson first.

Have I over estimated? Have I exaggerated? No sir; let me tell you something, I have understated God’s Holiness. Paul said he knew a man that *“was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”* It is not possible to put in human language, the Holiness of Heaven, and the Holiness of God’s presence. His presence is so majestic and so magnificent that no human words can carry or convey what it is. That is the Holiness of God. He is the Holy Father, the Holy Son and the Holy Spirit. *“We named Thee, while in essence; Thou art one living God. We praise Thee. We fill the heaven with one accord, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord.”* He is Holy.

Here is the second question: How sinful is man? Do you know why I asked that other question first? Everything starts with God. The Bible starts with God. The scripture says, *“In the beginning God.”* The reason I asked the question “how holy is the Lord?” first, is because a man’s understanding of sin and the nature of the flesh depends upon his understanding of the Holiness of God. That’s right! You have to have something with which to compare it.

How sinful is man? Well, if you compare yourself with me, you don’t come out looking very bad. If you compare yourself with the fellow next to you, you don’t lose much either. Do you see what I am talking about? You need to compare yourself with yourself. But, when you know what true holiness is, then you know who God is and how Holy God is. You start looking at your love compared to His love and your forgiveness compared to His. You start looking at your morality compared to His and your holiness compared to His. You find that you are in trouble (and I am too). Do you see what I am saying?

Sin you see, is against God. David said, *“Against Thee and Thee only have I sinned.”* Sin is against God. Sin is a transgression of God’s law. So, if you want to know what sin is, you have to look at sin in the light of God’s Holiness. The blackness of sin is understood in the light of God’s Holiness. The white, burning light of God’s Holiness reveals sin.

Go through the scriptures and you will see that all the prophets and the apostles realized their sinfulness only after they saw God’s Holiness. I know there are a lot of people today claiming to be “holiness people.” They claim that they have “holy lives.” What they call holiness is that they say that they don’t read dirty books, they don’t smoke and

they don't drink, and they don't go to the picture show on Sundays. They say they don't go to the ballgames on Sunday, they don't play cards and they don't play poker or shoot pool.

Adam didn't do any of those things either and he fell. You see; sin has to be seen in the light of God's holiness and not in the light of "dos" and "don'ts" or geographical requirements. Job was an honest man among men. God called him. God called him a righteous man, yet, when Job saw God's holiness, he saw his sinfulness.

When Isaiah was a preacher, he was a prophet. In Isaiah Chapter 5, he was really lambasting everyone. Five times he said, "*Woe is you, woe is you, woe is them.*" Then, in Isaiah 6, he saw the Lord. What did he say then? "*O Woe is me.*" He thought that he was a pretty good fellow until he saw the Lord. He thought he was a pretty good fellow in the light of the fellows around him. When he saw the Lord, he said; "*Woe is me; I am a man of unclean lips and I do dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.*"

Daniel is another example. He was a man of devotion and dedication. He was a man of prayer. When he saw the Lord, he said; "*When I saw the Lord, my comeliness, (my strength), melted into corruption.*" Daniel saw his corruption in the light of the Lord's presence.

Peter saw the power and Holiness of Christ. Do you know what he said when he saw the power of Christ? He said, "*Lord, depart from me, I am a sinful man.*" He was implying that God had no business in being in His presence. He was saying that he wasn't fit to be in His company.

Saul of Tarsus said that when he saw the holiness of God's law, "*I died.*" I literally died. That is the reason that I say that people today only talk about their holiness because they have never seen God's Holiness. That's right! He said, "*You are not wise when you compare yourselves with yourselves.*" That is not smart. That is like one worm comparing himself or herself to another worm. They are both worms. He may have more legs or pretty spots, but he is still a worm. He is still a worm! We justify ourselves before men, but God looks on the heart. That which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination to God.

Here is what God says about it. I know what we think but here is what God says; "*Every imagination of man's heart is evil continually.*" Everything we think is selfish, sinful, and sensual (and you could keep on going). In Psalm 14:2, "*The Lord looked down from heaven on the children of men to see if there was any that did understand and seek God.* He said, "*They are all gone aside; they are all together become filthy* (stinking is the

word). *There is none that doeth good. Man at his best state is altogether vanity. There is not a just man on this earth that doeth good and sinneth not.*” This goes for all these so-called Hollywood TV preachers also.

“We are all as an unclean thing,” just like the leper in the Old Testament. He was unclean. *“Our righteousnesses are filthy rags.”* The best that you can do before a Holy God is repulsive. What is the word? The word is repulsive in God’s sight when you do the best that you can do. *“We fade as the leaf. Our iniquities have separated us and our God.”*

I heard a preacher preach a sermon one time on, “God Dwells in No-man’s- Land.” That would shock a lot of folks wouldn’t it? God dwells in no-man’s-land. Where did he get his text? *“No man can look upon God and live. No man has seen God at any time. No man knoweth the Father except the Son. No man can come to me except the Father draw him. God dwells in a light to which no man can approach.”* That is no-man’s-land. Do you see what the Word of God is saying? It is saying that God is infinitely, unchangeably, incomprehensively, Holy. He is Holy, Holy, Holy.

And us? We are unchangeably evil, and sinful, at our best state. *“Can the Ethiopian change his skin?”* That is what Jeremiah asked, “Can he?” The answer is no, it is his nature. *“Can the leopard change his spots?”* No, that is its nature. God asked the next question, *“Can you do good?”* No, that is not your nature. Our nature is sin.

That is the reason that people have to be born again. That is the reason why you have to be regenerated. That is the reason that you have to have a re-creation, a new creature in Christ Jesus. I haven’t overstated this. If at all, I’ve understated it. I haven’t begun to describe to you the wickedness and sinfulness and evil of this human flesh. *“In the flesh no man can please God. In the flesh, dwelleth no good thing.”*

All right, the third question: This question is asked repeatedly in the Book of Job about four times. *“How can man be just with God? How can man be clean that is born of a woman and born flesh?”* He said, *“The stars are not pure in God’s sight. He charges His angels with folly. Then, how can man who drinks iniquity like water, (who is the very source and pit and fountain of evil); how can he be clean? Lord, if Thou shouldest mark iniquity, who is going to stand?”*

“How can man be just with God?” People have considered that question and I’m not the first one to do it. Some have turned to sacrifices; some have turned to ceremonies, ordinances and baptism, but only to find, *“It is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin.”* God said, *“Your new moons, your Sabbaths and your feasts are*

an abomination to Me.” You see; we just add to our sin by trying to establish a righteousness in sin. That just makes sin worse.

Some have turned to Sinai and the law, only to find, *“By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified.”* The law can’t forgive. The law can’t pardon. The law can only sentence. The law can’t pardon you. Some have turned to religious works, only to find, *“It’s not by works of righteousness which we have done.”*

Some have turned to religious heritage. They go back to their mommies and their daddies. Paul said that one time, he said; *“I was a Hebrew of Hebrews. I was born a Hebrew, a tribe of Benjamin.”* What he is trying to say is, “I have a good family tree; I have a good line. *“He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly. Circumcision is not in the flesh; it is in the heart.”*

Some have turned to the human will only to find, *“It is not of him that willeth but it is of God that shows mercy.”* Some have turned to duties of religion. That is what those people claimed at the judgment in Matthew 7, they said; *“We have preached in your name.”*

Can you imagine a man standing in the judgment and finding out that he is damned? He may even say, “I have preached for 35 years. I was a pastor for 30 years. I did many wonderful works. I’ve built buildings, built orphanages and all of these things. Lord, wait a minute, I have even cast out devils.” Christ said, *“I never knew you.”* That is not the way to God. Works is not the way to God. Good deeds won’t take care of your evil deeds. Good deeds won’t put away sin.

Is there an answer? Yes! *“How can he be clean that is born of a woman? How can man be just with God?”* Is there an answer? Yes, the scripture says, *“There is forgiveness with Thee.”* The answer is with Him and not with the church, the water, or the bread and the wine. The answer is not in these things. It is not in you or mom and dad, the preacher, the priest, or the confessional booth. *“There is forgiveness with God.”* That is where it is found. That is the source of forgiveness. That is the fountain of grace:

Come thou fount of every blessing
Tune my heart to sing Thy praise.

There is forgiveness with God. We better find out how we can receive it, hadn’t we? We don’t need to be running all over the place trying to establish a righteousness of our own. We don’t need to claim to be what we are not. We are just liars and hypocrites. You say, “I’m good and getting better all the time.” That is not so! You may be satisfied with

your life, but God is not. You may say that you are doing the best you can, but you are not. You are lying and God knows you are lying. *“There is forgiveness with God.”*

Turn to Romans 3. I want you to listen to this. I’m just going to go down through here and show you some things. If you have any intention of ever finding the way to God, you will listen. Turn to Romans 3:19. *“Now we know, that what things so ever the law saith it saith to them who are under the law.”* That is talking about you and me. We are under God’s law and are subjects of God’s universe and He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We are subject to His law and are under His law. *“That every mouth may be stopped and all the world become guilty before God.”*

Is that clear? That is you and me. Shut your mouth and stop your mouth. Quit making alibis, excusing, lying and shut your mouth because you are guilty. You are flat guilty. *“To offend in one point of God’s law is to be guilty of the whole thing.”* Therefore, in verse 20; *“Therefore, by the deeds of the law, by the works of the flesh, shall no man be justified in God’s sight. For by the law is the knowledge of sin.”*

The law can’t save anyone. Is that clear? *“But now”* (look at this closely), *“But now, (right this minute), the righteousness of God, (the true Holiness of God), without the law, (and without our obedience), is manifested, being witnessed (or testified by the Word of God) by the prophets.”* What is it? In verse 22, I want you to listen; *“It is the righteousness of God which is by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ.”* That is so important!

There is a Holiness. The Holiness is not in this pretended stuff; it is in Christ. This is by His life, by His death, by His person, by His work and through His blood. There is righteousness without your works and obedience. It is by His faithfulness and His obedience.

Who is it for? *“It is unto all and is upon all who believe.”* It is unto all and upon all who trust in Him and who look to Him. There is no difference. Look at that word; there is no difference or no exception. You might say that you will find an exception. There is no difference. It doesn’t matter if you are Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female, old or young, black or white, there is no difference. In verse 24, it says, *“Being justified freely by His grace, by God’s grace, not by works, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”* Where is He? He is in Christ Jesus.

It is not in a church. It is not in an altar. It is not in front of the church or in the preacher’s hand. It is not in a profession. It is not in your creed or catechism. It doesn’t matter if it is in the Westminster confession, Heidelberg confession, London or Philadelphia confessions. You won’t find salvation except in Christ Jesus. *“Whom God*

has set forth to be a propitiation, (a covering and a mercy seat, and an atonement for sin), to declare His righteousness. That He might be just and justify all who believe.”

There you have it! You have a just God and a sinful man. You have a justifying Saviour in Christ by faith.