

# Worth And Unworthiness

## Unworthy in terms of God's holiness and justice

When seen from the perspective of God's infinite holiness, purity and perfect justice, humans are totally unworthy of receiving anything good from Him. Hebrews 2:2 reveals God in His perfect justice must punish every violation of and disobedience to His commands: **"...and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward."** Habakkuk 1:13 reveals God's eyes are too pure to tolerate any evil, even the slightest. James 2:10 shows all we have to do is disobey one of God's commands and we are as guilty as if we had disobeyed them all: **"For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all."**

Isaiah 59:2 proves any sin, even the slightest, unless it is pardoned through Christ and His death, will separate us from God: **"But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear."** Galatians 3:10 shows unless every moment of every day we perfectly obey God's Law given to Moses, we are under God's curse: **"...for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.'"**

It is little wonder the great prophet Isaiah saw how sinful and totally unworthy he was in God's sight in relation to God's perfect holiness and associated perfect justice. Isaiah 6:1-5 expresses this. When Isaiah said **"I am a man of unclean lips"** in verse 5, he was referring to his own sinfulness. His expression **"Woe is me"** in the same verse relates to his total unworthiness in terms of God's perfect holiness and justice.

This revelation and experience of God was part of Isaiah's call to be a prophet (see Isaiah 6:1-13). Isaiah did not come into bondage from having this revelation from God. Instead this revelation was one of the foundations of Isaiah's ministry. His ministry emphasised God's mercy and loving kindness to fallen humans (see Isaiah 14:1, 16:5, 30:18, 49:10, 49:13, 54:8, 54:10, 55:7, 60:10 and 63:7), being righteous by His grace (see Isaiah 45:24) and the Messiah's future substitutionary death (see Isaiah 52:13-53:12). But note it is *impossible* to understand the depths of God's mercy, grace and love without also understanding how sinful and undeserving we are according to God's perfect holiness and justice.

In Romans 3:12, Paul says all humans have **"become unprofitable"** (N.K.J.V.) or **"become useless"** (N.A.S.B.). In Greek, the phrase **"become unprofitable"** or **"become useless"** is a form of the word "achreioo" which means "make useless, become depraved, worthless".<sup>1</sup> So according to God's infinite holiness and perfect justice, all humans are worthless or useless.

The importance of having a God-given revelation of our total unworthiness in terms of God's infinite holiness and perfect justice is seen in Matthew 3:11, 8:8 and Luke 18:10-14. In Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist insisted he was so unworthy in God's sight, he was not worthy enough even to tie up Jesus' sandals: **"...He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry..."**

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<sup>1</sup> Bauer, page 128.

Even slaves could tie up their master's sandals in the age in which John lived. But John knew in terms of God's perfect holiness and justice, he was *not worthy enough to even be God's slave*, let alone His son. Jesus did not criticise John for having a terrible self-image but instead praised his attitudes in Matthew 11:11: ***“Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist...”***

In Genesis 32:10, we see how the previously very selfish and fleshly Jacob came to recognise how unworthy he was of God's mercy. Luke 18:10-14 records Jesus praised the tax collector who emphasised his own sinfulness and unworthiness in his receiving of God's undeserved mercy and grace. But notice in the same passage, Jesus condemned the Pharisee who ignored his own total unworthiness in terms of God's holiness and justice.

Matthew 8:5-12 records a Roman Centurion had a God-given understanding of faith, associated total submission to Jesus Christ and his total unworthiness to receive anything from Christ. Jesus had nothing but praise for this Roman's attitude.

A false understanding of our own unworthiness leads to other errors. For example, I recently read one Pentecostal leader claiming believers are “worthy of success”. Such an attitude is based on the *legalistic* idea that humans can be worthy of God rewarding them with earthly success because of their actions or works. But according to God's justice and holiness, no human, except Christ is worthy of meriting success in this earthly life as a reward.

## **Enormous worth in terms of God's love**

When viewed, however, from the perspective of God's perfect love, every individual human is regarded by Him as having enormous worth. In Matthew 6:26, Jesus Christ says we are valuable or have great worth in God's sight: ***“Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?”*** Here Jesus is talking about how God views us in terms in terms of His love and not His perfect holiness and justice. See also Matthew 10:29-31.

In Romans 5:7-8, Paul told the Roman Christians who included many non-Israelites: ***“For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*** Here we see God regards wicked humans of such awesome worth, He had Jesus Christ die for them. God sent Jesus to die for humans who at the same time were treating Him like an enemy and were doing the thing He hates most – sin or evil.

Jesus Christ's sacrifice of Himself for us is *proof of how precious we are to God*. Anyone, who thinks God does not love him or he is not precious or of enormous worth to God, has little understanding of Jesus' death. John 3:16 is a verse many people wrongly treat as a religious cliché instead of as an absolute truth: ***“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*** The world here includes all humans who are rejecting God and His Christ and who do evil.

In the story of the Prodigal Son, we see part of the restoration in the relationship between the father and the rebellious sinful son was the son admitting how unworthy he was (see Luke 15:11-32). In verse 21, we read: ***“And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.’”*** Here the son speaks in terms of perfect justice. According to justice, the son was totally unworthy of being treated by the father as a son. But note the father treated the repentant son as being worth

an enormous amount according to his love as a father. Verses 22-24 express this: ***“But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found.’ And they began to be merry.”*** According to perfect justice, the selfish rebellious son should have been rejected and punished. But according to the father’s love, he was treated the opposite.

Jesus’ words in Luke 15:4-7 show how God *treasures* even one person: ***“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost! I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”***

## **Feeling worthless and a nobody**

Sadly, many Christians feel they are worthless and nobodies. As a result, they are often downhearted and very insecure with other people. They may feel inferior to almost every other person. They concentrate only on their weaknesses in relation to intelligence, physical appearance, behaviour and so on. They even find it hard to accept God really loves them. They may think, “How could God love someone like me?”

The answer to the above problem is to meditate often on the truths found in the Scriptures quoted in the previous section and to *change* your *thoughts*, *words* and *actions* to agree with what these verses say about you. We can believe what God says because He is not a liar.

## **Believe God loves you and value yourself as He does**

I know Christians who have heard many times how much God loves them and how He values them enormously, but they do not really deeply believe it. They may even *repeat like parrots*, “I praise God that He loves and values me”, but in their hearts they believe ideas contrary to these two wonderful truths. As a result, they remain in bondage. Satan will try hard to keep all Christians from knowing and really believing how much God loves and values them.

Also, I know other believers who refuse to value themselves like God values them. As a result, they suffer from a wrong self-hatred and sometimes an accompanying Satan-inspired desire to harm or punish themselves because of their sins. God does not want any Christian under such wicked bondage. So believe He loves you and value yourself as He does.

## **Final comments**

It is impossible for us to realise how valued we are by God in relation to how much He loves us, unless we firstly understand how totally unworthy and eternally condemned we were in relation to His holiness and perfect justice. If God did not love and value us enormously, He would have simply condemned us to eternal punishment without even bothering to try to save us through sending His Son to die for us.

We are worth an awesome amount to God the Father and to Jesus in terms of His love. But we are totally undeserving or unworthy in terms of God's holiness and supreme justice of receiving anything good from Him.

#### Bible Study Questions

1. What does it mean to be unworthy in terms of God's holiness and justice?
2. Explain what the expression "*became unprofitable*" in Romans 3:12 means.
3. Why can a lack of understanding of our unworthiness in terms of God's holiness and justice lead us to become legalistic?
4. What does it mean to be of enormous worth in terms of God's love?
5. If a born-again Christian feels worthless and inferior to other people, what should he or she do?