

Defending the Faith



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May 2017

What Is Meant by God Is Holy?

The word Holy means set apart. Other synonyms include consecrated, sacred, sanctified, hallowed and purified. God is pure goodness and perfect divine love. He is set apart from evil. God is the source of pure divine love. Evil is the lack of love. When we sin, we are withholding our love from God and/or from our neighbors. “Our flesh is self-willed and self-centered. We do not fully comprehend that love is an action, which requires the sacrifice of self. Our love often becomes distorted by our self-interests and desires. It is not always the pure sacrificial love that is of God. We want to be loved, but we do not fully comprehend that divine love has nothing to do with receiving love or how we feel. Divine love is an act of pure giving and expecting nothing in return” (from *A Journey Toward Perfection*, 2016). Because God is Holy and the source of love, He has set apart and separated Himself from us. He cannot be in the presence of sinfulness. Only when we are perfected by Christ can we stand in the presence of God. Only when our hearts are purified and made holy will we be able to live with God in eternity.

God’s Holiness is best described by how it affects us. His Holiness creates in us an incredible awe! His pure divine love is overwhelming to us. It can be seen as a radiant pure white light, brighter than anything we know. Moses saw God in the burning bush. “*And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God*” (Exodus 3:6). In scripture, fear of God is generally equated with a sense of awe. Later, when Moses returned from being with God on Mt. Sinai, “*the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him...When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face*” (Exodus 34:30-33). His face became so bright from being in the presence of the Lord, the people could not look upon him, unless he veiled his face. Paul saw the risen Christ on the road to Damascus. “*Suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground*” (Acts 9:3-4). He was blinded by the bright glory of the Lord. Christ’s transfiguration also depicts the radiant glory of His Holiness:

“Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white...

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suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear" (Matthew 17:1-6).

Many Biblical accounts describe people falling to their knees in the presence of God, "When I (John) saw him (Christ), I fell at his feet as though dead. But he placed his right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one" (Revelation 1:17-18). John even fell to his knees in the presence of a Holy angel, "Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, 'You must not do that! I am a fellow servant'" (Revelation 19:10). Perfect goodness brings us to our knees and is so bright it can blind us.

God's pure goodness and divine love also create in us a revelation of our own imperfections or sinfulness. This is why so many turn away from God. They do not want to be confronted by their own sinfulness, their own lack of love. When Isaiah saw God, sitting on His throne, he declared, "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" Job proclaimed, "I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 45:5-6). God's Holiness, His pure divine love, reminds us that our hearts are not pure. All sin is rooted in a lack of love for God and for others. Even denying God is rooted in pride, a refusal to love God and to acknowledge our own sinfulness. Christ said that all of God's commandments can be fulfilled by simply loving God and loving others. Yet our selfishness and pride often prevent us from loving perfectly, which is a pure act of giving, without consideration of our own self-interests.

Imagine God in His radiant glory, so bright from goodness and love that we, in our corruptible flesh, cannot look upon Him. What kind of love is so brilliant and overwhelming? We cannot fully fathom God's Holiness, just as we cannot fully fathom the depth of His love. Yet, God called us to Holiness. In Leviticus 20:26, God declared to the Israelites, "You shall be holy to me; for I the LORD am holy, and I have separated you from the other peoples to be mine." In 1 Peter 1:15-17, Christians are also called to be Holy. "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." We are to separate ourselves from all sin. We are to always love God and love others. Christ tells us to "Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). To love perfectly, we must be able to deny ourselves and let go of our egos and selfish desires. We must become humble and meek. We must take up our crosses and endure the suffering denial causes us, sacrificing our self-centeredness. With Christ at our side and the Holy Spirit within us, we are able to endure the trials and tribulations of this life. We follow Christ's example. When we do, we experience true freedom, freedom to love selflessly. We are loosed from the bondage of sin, and we discover the joy of giving, the joy of divine love.

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“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isaiah 6:3). God is thrice Holy to emphasize His infinite Holiness and because He is a triune God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He is three, yet one in essence. The whole earth is filled with His glory because His creation, everything we see and experience with our senses, is a result of God’s divine love. We should stop and appreciate the amazing beauty, complexity, and awe-inspiring world God made for us. We should be thankful for the sparkling stars, the clouds interspersed with brilliant color, resplendent mountains, and the life-giving oceans, rivers and lakes. We should care for the variety of vegetation, flora and magnificent creatures, all living in a delicate balance, blessed by God. All in our world is interconnected and dependent on one another. We human beings are also interconnected and dependent on one another. It is God’s love that holds it all together. We do not always take the time to appreciate the splendor of God’s glory in creation, but when we do, we are able to experience God’s love and Holiness.

God is also Holy because He is different from us. God is Spirit. We are flesh. However, if we have faith in Christ and love God, He sends His Holy Spirit to live within us. That part of us is Holy. Yet, we do not fully understand the depth of the love God has placed within us. We do not comprehend the Holiness inside of us. This is because our flesh wars against our spirit. We become conflicted, when we are faced with temptation. We can access that part of us, the love inside of us, through the Holy Spirit. This is why Christ could proclaim, *“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect* (Matthew 5:48). When we choose to live in the Holy Spirit and to walk with Him daily, we are setting ourselves apart from sin. We choose to deny ourselves, and instead, we choose to act in love. During those moments, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are able to experience God’s Holiness. God becomes real to us. We are able to experience God’s divine love.

As hard as it is to believe, our God came into this reality and visited us. He came in person to offer us an incomprehensible love and nothing more! It is up to each and every one of us to make the decision to accept His love or reject it. And what does He ask of us in return? He only asks us to love Him and to love our neighbors. God asks us to share His love with others through our own actions. The next issue of **Defending the Faith** will focus on “What Is Sin, Really?” Why is immorality, lust, envy, and pride sinful? Those types of sin do not hurt anyone, do they? After all, we are not stealing or killing anyone.

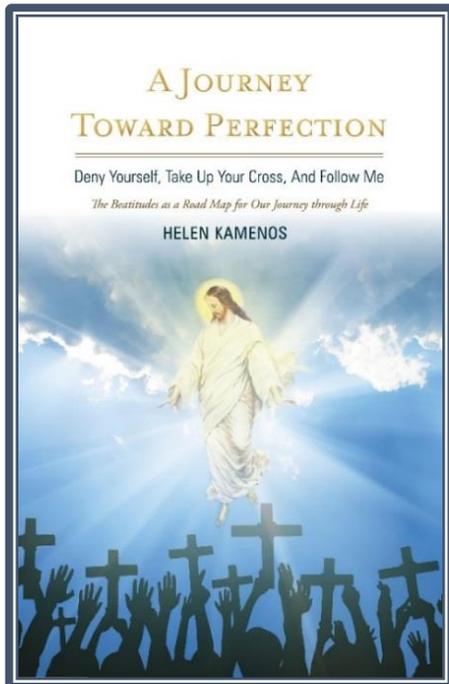
Remember, Christ said, *“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened”* (Matthew 7:7-8). God answers seeking hearts.

Helen Kamenos
Readers' Favorite Author

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Experience God

Unlike any other book on Christianity that you have read, *A Journey Toward Perfection* leads you on a journey to experience God. It reveals a path toward developing an intimate personal relationship with God. God's love for us extends beyond His one act of sacrifice on the cross. To fully comprehend God's love for us, it is necessary for us to understand Jesus, God's beloved son, who left His throne of glory to live among us, to become vulnerable like us. To fathom God's love for us, it is essential for us to experience His journey through life, what He endured and suffered, by walking in His footsteps, by traveling life's journey as He did. As we embark on this journey, we learn how to endure and overcome the trials and tribulations of our lives. We learn how to cultivate a relationship with God, communicating with Him in a two-way dialogue, not only speaking to God, but also being attuned to His voice.

Christ gave us a road map to follow through the Beatitudes. By following this path toward Christ, God is revealed to us in an unprecedented way and becomes a beacon in our lives. Two thousand years ago, Christ ignited a fire, which changed the world. For those who seek God, that fire continues to burn brightly in our hearts today.

"I truly was blown away by *A Journey Toward Perfection*...It's a very good study tool and is also enjoyable reading in its own right." (Mary C. Blowers - reviewer for Readers' Favorite)

"This book was written with a pure heart and soul. You can feel Helen Kamenos' love for Jesus in her words and how much she wants everyone to feel as close to Him as she does. It was exciting to read her words because she was excited to tell us what she thought...It was a wonderful experience." (Rabia Tanveer - reviewer for Readers' Favorite)

"An uplifting book for all those who seek the love of Christ. The book leads readers into a deeper relationship with God and reiterates the power of God's love." (Mamta Madhavan - reviewer for Readers' Favorite)

"It reinforced and gave a new perspective to lessons I learned and absorbed at my mother's knee...The book is beautifully written, logically organized, and will definitely help you on your personal journey." (Ray Simmons – reviewer for Readers' Favorite)

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Dedicated to My Father with Love

A TRIBUTE TO MY FATHER



This issue of **Defending the Faith** is dedicated to my father, Martin (Marty) Kamenos, who passed away peacefully on April 27 at the age of 94. I have been blessed to be his daughter. He is now enjoying the rewards in heaven for a life lived filled with love. He loved his family, especially his wife of 64 years, my mom, Mabel (Menie). He was a humble man, who never spoke negatively about anyone. He loved Greek music, especially when he could kick up his feet to a Zeibekiko. He was known as "smiley," always warm and friendly. My father loved God and took us to Sunday School every week, even though he came home from work at 2:00 am the night before. He lived his faith by example, showing us what it meant to love God. He was a patient man, content with the simple things in

life. He was generous and compassionate, always offering a meal to the homeless, when they came to his restaurant needing help. I thank God for giving me such a wonderful father, who always put his family first in all that he did. His family has grown from two sons and two daughters to seven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren with one more on the way! He left our hearts filled with the love he shared with us and with many happy memories.

I am thankful that Christ came to defeat death as declared in 1 Corinthians 15:54-55:

"When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:

"Death has been swallowed up in victory."

"Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?"

Xristos Anesti! Christ is Risen! God bless you all!

To receive **Defending the Faith** each month, sign up at: www.helenkamenos.com

Forward this to your family and friends, so they can sign up, too!