

1. Holiness is that attribute of God the Bible emphasizes above all others

- A. An attribute that affects all others – God’s love is a holy love. Wrath a holy wrath... patience, wisdom...
- B. Because holiness is such a crucial part of God’s make up we are exhorted to address Him as the holy one
Ps 111:9 (ESV) He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. *Holy and awesome is his name!*

I. HOLINESS DEFINED

1. Defined: An absolute freedom from all moral evil = morally perfect

Tozer explains it like this: ‘Holy is the way God is. To be holy he does not conform to a standard, *He is that standard*. He is absolutely holy with an infinite, incomprehensible fullness of purity that is incapable of being other than it is. Because He is holy, all his attributes are holy; that is, whatever we think of as belonging to God must be thought of as holy.’

- A. Everything about God must be thought of as being entirely free from any moral imperfection
1 Jn 1:5 (ESV) This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and *in him is no darkness at all*.
 - 1). That is why Samuel was right when he declared
1 Sa 2:2 (ESV) “There is none holy like the LORD...”
 - a). No one else is absolutely pure and free from any hint of moral imperfections
Whose every attitude, thought, action and words are morally perfect

2. The importance of re-capturing this thought of the holiness of God

- A. I think we live in an age where the church doesn’t really want a holy God
We want a loving God, a merciful God, a kind and patience God but not a holy God
 - 1). Why? Because a holy God isn’t always comfortable to be around
 - a). He points out sin and expects compliance to His will
 - 2). We’d rather have a God who is relaxed about our sin – willing to overlook it
 - a). A God who gives to us but demands nothing in return
- B. But this is a god of man’s imagination – not the God of the Bible
 - 1). The true God does make holy demands and expects people to comply with them
 - a). When they don’t He deals with that rebellion
 - 1a). For the unbeliever – there is eternal damnation
 - 2a). For the believer – there will be loving but painful discipline – Heb. 12

Transition: This idea of God’s holiness being uncomfortable shows us something we must realize

- A. This attribute affects us differently than all the others

3. Many of the attributes bring comfort into our life – holiness doesn’t

- A. Sovereignty and omnipotence comfort us because it shows us God is in control
His wisdom comforts us showing us we can trust His leading
His love comforts us showing us we can trust in His provision and protection etc.
- B. But holiness rather than comfort us – can confront us and overwhelm us
 - 1). In His presence sin must be dealt with

Transition: Because of this – if a person is not REALLY willing to deal with that sin
They will not REALLY want to draw near to God

- A. It will hinder them - They will try to keep Him at arms length
- B. Going to look at Isaiah – in the presence of God – a shattering experience – but necessary

In the Presence of a Holy God

Is 6:1–5 (ESV) In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ⁽²⁾ Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ⁽³⁾ And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” ⁽⁴⁾ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁽⁵⁾ And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

1. Isaiah was humbled in the presence of God – that is normal

- A. When I see a proud Christian I can assume they know little of the presence of God in their life
- 1). Pride is destroyed in the presence of God

Question: Why did Isaiah react this way?

- A. Not because he was some terrible sinner – worse than most? He was a prophet – used by God
- 1). But in the presence of God’s absolute holiness the vileness of his sin was magnified
 - 2). By contrast the holiness of God showed how sinful the sinfulness of Isaiah was

2. Notice Isaiah’s reaction when he saw who he truly was

Is 6:5 (ESV) And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

- A. What was happening to Isaiah? Remember how R. C. Sproul explained it?

“What Isaiah was expressing is what modern psychologists describe as the experience of *personal disintegration*.”

- 1). He was falling apart – he was being dismantled
He was seeing he wasn’t who he thought he was
- 2). This is what we call being broken – not comfortable but necessary for growth

- B. I love what “Drew Dyck said in “Yawning at Tigers”

At this point we might expect the seraphim to swoop down and comfort Isaiah. Maybe even throw an arm around his shoulder and say, “Calm down, Isaiah. What’s all this talk about unclean lips? God’s calm with you just the way you are.”

That’s what I would expect to happen. After all, Isaiah was the godliest person in Israel. He was chosen to be the very mouthpiece of the Lord. Why would he be in danger of death because he caught a glimpse of God?

But the angels didn’t seem to share my perspective. They did little to assuage Isaiah’s fears. In fact, they seemed to acknowledge the gravity of his predicament. It was not safe for him, a sinful mortal, to behold the unmediated glory of God.

Death or cleansing—these were the only two solutions for Isaiah’s predicament. Fortunately for Isaiah, the seraphim chose the latter.

Is 6:6–7 (ESV) Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁽⁷⁾ And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”

- A. God didn’t have to say a thing – Isaiah got into His presence and was shattered

- 1). The contrast of absolute purity revealed the ugliness of his sin

And something had to be done with that sin

- B. Fortunately Isaiah chose the right thing – He confessed it

- 1). If he didn’t – conjecture – I imagine he wouldn’t have survived this encounter

- C. He confesses – then there is cleansing – then God sends him out to be used

Is 6:8–9 (ESV) And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.” ⁽⁹⁾ And he said, “Go, and say to this people: “ ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’”

- 1). He was a prophet of God – but there was something holding him back - sin

- a). He enters into the presence of God and his sin is revealed
He is willing to give it up and now God can use him

Thought: We talk about wanting to know God but do we really mean it?
Do we really want to be in His presence?

- A. We can be experts at saying things that sound so spiritual
While at the same time have finely honed skills at keeping God at bay
 - 1). Just close enough to feel like were Christians
But distant enough that we still hold the reigns of our life – doing what we want to do
 - 2). Because we don't want to take the chance that He is going to want our sin
 - a). We don't want what Isaiah experienced
 - b). Deep down we understand who God is and were afraid of what He might demand
1 Pe 1:16 (ESV) it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."
 - 3). Then we wonder why Christianity isn't very exciting!
 - a). Christianity apart from the touch of God is just religion = boring

3. Here is a choice everyone must make – Him or sin

- A. Can we claim to follow a holy God while we have no desire to be holy ourselves
 - 1). Can we claim to have the Holy Spirit in us and be led by Him
Without being led into greater holiness (He is the Holy Spirit after all)
- B. Can Christianity really take off until we decide for God over everything else

Rom 6:9-14 (NIV) For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. (10) The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. (11) In the *same way*, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. (12) Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. (13) Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. (14) For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

- 1). He died to sin once for all – in same way consider yourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God
- 2). Therefore do not offer your bodies for sin – but offer them to God

Thought: You have to settle that issue – THEN you won't be afraid of getting into God's presence

- A. What if He asks you to give up something? ***Fine! I've already settled that issue***
Ps 139:23-24 (ESV) Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! ⁽²⁴⁾ And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!
 - 1). Now you can run freely into God's presence – nothing hindering
 - 2). Knowing that anything He asks you to give up is only for your good – comes out of love
- B. Afraid to do that! Then ask God to help you – admit it – tell Him all about it
"God I want to. I know it makes no sense. I know whatever you ask me to give up or do is only because you love me and want me to be free from this world so I can soar in you. I know you want to lead me to abundant life but I'm afraid. Help me Lord to surrender to you. Give me the grace I need."

Transition: We must decide for God against sin – so we won't be afraid of being with Him

- A. That will allow us to relish the thought of a holy God – so important
 - 1). God lite – the kind of God man wants is not majestic enough to thrill you
 - 2). He's not attractive enough to keep the affections of your heart against sin
 - a). We need a huge view of God – we need a Biblical view of God
- B. I want to look at two primary places where the holiness of God is put on display – out of many

II. GOD'S HOLINESS ON DISPLAY

God's Holiness Is Put on Display in The Law

1. What is the law?

- A. The law is comprised of the first 5 books of the Bible
- B. Summarized in 10 commandments in Exodus 20
- C. Jesus made it simpler in Matthew 22 – reduced the headings down to two

Mt 22:36–40 (ESV) “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ⁽³⁷⁾ And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ⁽³⁸⁾ This is the great and first commandment. ⁽³⁹⁾ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁽⁴⁰⁾ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

- 1). All the commands in those first 5 books could be reduced down to fit under these two headings
 - a). Either falling under - Loving God or Loving your neighbor

2. What characterizes the law?

Ro 7:12 (ESV) So the law is *holy*, and the commandment is *holy* and righteous and good.

- A. The law is holy – Why? Because the one who gave it is holy – this is important
- B. Need to see this: The law is much more than just a bunch of do's and don'ts – rules - though it is that
The law gives us a picture of what God is like – it is a reflection of His holy character

Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The primary function of the law was to give expression to the holiness and the character of God, and the people were to live in that way because God is like that. So God was teaching about Himself in giving the law.

Thought: Think of what that means – whenever we break God's law – it is more than just breaking a rule
We are choosing to live in a way that is contrary to the very nature of God

- A. That is why we say when somebody is living in sin – they are living an *ungodly* life

3. What does the law do? What is its purpose?

- A. Wasn't given to save anybody
Rom 3:20 (NIV) Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, (Here is what the law does) through the law we become conscious of sin.
 - 1). It shows us clearly how unlike God we are – we become conscious of that
 - 2). That's a problem – Jesus said we are to be perfect even as His Father is perfect (Matt 5:48)
 - a). Perfect in holiness – one who keeps the law without failure = that is being like Him
- B. How it works – we think we're doing just fine
I'm sincere, nice, try to be helpful, I try not to hurt anybody...– *I'm not a sinner! I'll be fine*
 - 1). The law is meant to convince a person they're not fine
 - 2). See it all the time at the Spectrum – “You don't think you've sinned – can we check that?”
 - a). Ray Comfort – lied, stolen, looked with lust, used the Lord's name as a cuss word
So by YOUR own admission – you're a lying, thieving, blaspheming adulterer at heart
 - 1a). Now do you still think you haven't sinned? I've watched them melt!

Question: What has happened? The law has shown them what holiness is – and how unholy they are

- A. How unlike God they are!
- B. Now you bring alongside scriptures like this
“You've admitted you've sinned. Admitted you're not holy... what about this?”
Heb 12:14 (NIV) ...without holiness no one will see the Lord.
- C. The law has done its work – preparing them for grace – their need of Christ
Gal 3:24 (NIV) So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.
- D. In a sense the same thing is happening in the law that happened to Isaiah in the presence of God
 - 1). The great contrast of true holiness and the way they live is put on display

- a). I have seen it be quite dramatic – the humbling of a proud rebel who begins listening

Transition: So God's holiness is displayed in the law

- A. It shows us what God is like – it shows us what holiness looks like – what it acts like
B. For those rejecting what the law is doing – trying to lead them to Christ – the next point comes into play

God's Holiness Is Seen at The Cross

1. The cross is the greatest demonstration of how holy God is

- A. While it is the *love* of God that makes the cross *possible*
It is the *holiness* of God that makes the cross *necessary*

- 1). It shows us that sin cannot be tolerated by a holy God – it must be punished

Transition: Let's think this through – this is important

2. If God could overlook any sin it would have been on the cross

- A. If there was ever any time God could have said "I guess it's all right" it would have been there

- 1). When His own precious son – was hanging there
2). The only one who could ever say

Jn 8:29 (ESV) ... I *always* do the things that are pleasing to him."

Point: If sin could be overlooked – certainly that would be the time

- A. But the Father cannot overlook sin – even when it is placed upon Jesus – Why? *He is holy*

- 1). And a holy God cannot overlook sin – He must respond to evil – justice must be done
2). Therefore the moment our sin was placed in Christ's account
a). The wrath of God – that holy hatred of sin lashed out against Christ

- B. Because God is holy He hates all sin – because He is absolutely holy He absolutely hates it

- 1). He will not allow any sin into His presence

3. This shows the folly of anybody thinking they will get away with sin

- A. If God must judge our sin on His Son who always lived to please Him

Then He will certainly judge it on those who reject Him and have no desire to please Him

CHS: The most terrible warning to impenitent men in all the world is the death of Christ. For if God spared not his own Son, on whom was only laid imputed sin, will he spare sinners whose sins are their own?

- B. If we had any idea of how evil sin is we would never dream of God overlooking the sin of man

John Bunyan: Sin is the dare of God's justice, the rape of his mercy, the jeer of his patience, the slight of his power and the contempt of his love.

Jerry Bridges: Sin is a serious business to God, and it becomes serious business to us when we reflect upon the fact that every sin, regardless of how seemingly insignificant it appears to us, is an expression of contempt towards the sovereign authority of God.

- 1). That is what sin is – therefore God will not allow that to go unpunished

Transition: That's how this thought of the holiness of God should affect the unbeliever – turn them to Christ

- A. As believers how should this affect us?

III. THE THOUGHT OF HOLINESS AND THE BELIEVER

1. It should produce a thankfulness in us that we have been saved

- A. That God would place my sin on His Son at the cross
and pour out the fierceness of His wrath on Him

- B. Because Jesus was willing to take my place and bear the judgment I deserved

Point: In Christ I find a shelter from the right and holy wrath of God that must judge sin

- A. In Him I find a total acceptance with God and a place of security as I look into the future
Jn 10:27–29 (ESV) My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ⁽²⁸⁾ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ⁽²⁹⁾ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.
- 1). From a child of wrath to that! I am grateful!

2. An awareness of the holiness of God should affect the way we worship

- A. Remember when God approached Moses through the burning bush
- 1). God told Him to take off his shoes because he was standing on holy Ground
 - 2). What made that ground holy was that God was there!
- Thought:** We get a good picture of how we are to approach God in worship from this story
- A. We see that it is not this flippant familiarity with God we see today
- 1). It contains an awe, a wonder and a deep reverence
 - a). That should be there whether you’re worshipping with contemporary songs or hymns
- B. We must never forget who we are standing before – who we are singing too – that same God!

The Approach to God Illustrated in the OT Temple

- A. God symbolically dwelt in the Holy of Holies – separated from the people by a thick veil
- 1). Veil was to keep them from wandering into the presence of God with sin on them – being killed
 - 2). One man once a year could go behind that veil – but only after ceremonially cleansing himself
 - a). I’m sure the whole time he was doing that he was thinking of the holiness of God
 - b). Because if he didn’t do it correctly – entered God’s presence with sin still on him = die

Point: His approach to God wasn’t flippant – it was reverential – respectful – going before a holy God

- A. But Jesus died and that veil was rent – giving us all access to God
- 1). Listen – though we all have free access - He is the same Holy God
- B. Therefore before we go before Him and worship – we would do well to take a moment
- 1). Think about who were going before – take off our spiritual shoes in a sense
 - a). Approaching Him reverentially and humbly
 - b). Not flippantly – treating God as if He were just one of the boys – He’s not
 - 2). That would bring a depth into our worship that is lacking in the church today

3. An understanding of the holiness of God should affect the way we live

- A. The command goes out to us “Be holy for I am holy” Lev 11:45, 1 Pet 1:16
- 1). Praise God He didn’t say that we are to be holy AS He is holy
 - a). That would be impossible – nobody can live out an absolute holiness like He does
 - 2). None the less there is a degree of holiness that God demands from His people
- B. AND One proof we are Christians is we find a desire in us to live out a holy life
- 1). That is simply the longings of the new nature put into us when we were born again
Donald Grey Barnhouse: The renewed heart has within it the desire to glorify God by presenting a moral life.
 - 2). Therefore if you say your saved but have no longing for holiness something is wrong

CONCLUSION

1. The holiness of God

- A. He is absolutely morally perfect – there is no moral flaw in Him – never has been one
- B. Because of His holiness – He can only allow moral perfection into His presence

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- 1). Anything less must be judged
 - 2). But Jesus was morally perfect and died as a substitute so we could dwell in God's presence
 - a). God is willing to place His moral perfection – perfect obedience into our account
 - b). Jesus as a man kept the law perfectly – lived like God without failure

2. Because of the holiness of God this should affect

- A. Our thankfulness – that we are saved – that God provided a solution
- B. Our view of worship – showing us that we need to approach Him humbly, reverently
 - 1). While we are in relationship with Him as our Father
 - b). We dare not treat Him as one of the boys – a irreverent flippancy
 - 2). Therefore while we can draw near boldly in Christ – we draw near reverently
- C. Our view of living – If we claim to know Him – we must have the evidence
 - 1). He is a holy God – and our lives must reflect that