

THE HOLINESS OF GOD

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May 16, 2009

*“Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. 2 And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. 3 And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. 4 And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. 5 And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is **holy ground**.” Exodus 3:1-5, “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, **whose name is Holy**; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” Isaiah 57:15*

Two weeks ago we spoke on Isaiah 57:15 to Isaiah 58:1 and the first point was God's character which is God Holiness. Because I had 7 points to my message I knew I could not cover this attribute of the holiness of God in 10 to 15 minutes because of its immense subject. Not saying either that this topic can be covered in a 45 minute sermon, no but I can cover more in that time and if need be, we can continue next week.

Now, we said two weeks ago that in this chapter Israel is being reprov'd for her awful idolatry and rebellion against God, but God in wrath also remembers mercy and promises to revive and heal those who turn to Him with a contrite and humble spirit. This text teaches us that He who inhabits eternity is called HOLY! The high and lofty One that inhabits eternity has a name and His name is HOLY. Again, in Psalm 111:9 it says, “...*holy and reverend is his name.*” Holy and reverend is His name, this is why I prefer to be call Pastor Joe and not Reverend Joe, because holy and reverend is His name. This is the character of God, He is Holy God, yea, a trice Holy God. What a blessing to consider that this holy God dwells with those of a contrite and humble spirit, to which, He promises to revive the hearts of His people. No question we need reviving in our hearts, but our subject this morning is the character of God, i.e. HIS HOLINESS.

Sad to say, but this subject of the holiness of God seldom preached on. We need to constantly be reminded of this solemn and reverential attribute of the Holiness of God. I take the position that this attribute of the holiness of God is the chief jewel upon the crown of His attributes.

The Holiness of God is the central theme in both the O.T. and N. T. Now, the Old Testament sets forth God as distinguished from the pagan Gods on the basis of His holiness. When God overthrew Pharaoh's bondage over the Hebrews, that is, when God manifested His great and mighty power and led them out with a strong hand, Ex.6:1 says, “*Then the LORD said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for*

with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.” After God delivers them completely, they sing a song to Him, notice the contrast between the True and Living and God and the pagans gods of Egypt, Exodus 15:11-13, “*Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? **who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?** 12 *Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them.* 13 *Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.*” As a matter of fact, this is the first time the word holiness is mentioned in the Bible and the word holy is first mentioned in Exodus 3:5, where again God told Moses, “...*Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is **holy ground.***” In the New Testament, consider these two verses, Revelation 3:7, “*And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith **he that is holy**, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.*” Revelation 4:8, “*And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, **Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty**, which was, and is, and is to come.*”*

No question that of all the attributes that are set forth in the Bible, the one emphasized the most is the holiness of God which is gloriously and powerfully set forth. Again, you don't have to agree with me in my assessment. Now, by no means am I saying or indicating that all the rest of God's attributes are less in quality or inferior, no, but that every attribute of God is, for lack of a better word, enhance by His Holiness, that is, if we speak of God's love, it is a HOLY LOVE, if we speak of the justice of God, we speak of a JUST HOLY God, if we speak on the wrath of God, it is a HOLY WRATH! The attributes of God are like the spokes in a wheel, the hub is His Holiness which affects each of the attributes of God. Ps.145:17, “*The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy **in all his works.***” If God saves a sinner, it is a holy work, if He damns a sinner in hell it is a holy work, everything He does is Holy and Righteous. This is why He has to judge sin, because He is a HOLY GOD, Hab.1: 13, “*Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity...*” But after listening to the teaching and preaching of our day you would think that the love of God is the chief attribute of God.

Let me say this about God's love, His love is one of the most blessed attributes found in the word of God. Without the love of God, no sinner would be saved, for it was His love that motivated Him to save sinners. In His decree of predestination, the love of God is set forth in the work of salvation. Eph.1:3-5, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him **in love:** 5 **Having predestinated us** unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.” I believe that in the Greek verse 4 ends with the word him and then in verse 5 it begins, ‘in love having predestinated us.’ Thus, the love of God is seen in the giving of His only begotten Son on the cross for sinners. We do not deny the importance of the attribute of God's love, but as much as we enjoy the blessing and assurance of God's love for His people, but the Scriptures emphasizes the holiness of God above and beyond the love of God. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself to us and He reveals Himself in His holiness. Do you know that*

the first and last song sung in the Bible speaks of the holiness of God, not His love? I don't think that there is a song in the Bible of God's love. I am just making a point regarding the holiness of God and not attacking the love of God. When the Apostle John got a glimpse of God, what did He see and hear the Angels proclaim regarding God? He saw the same thing Isaiah saw in Isaiah 6, read with me in Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4. On two separate occasions we see the Seraphim's in heaven singing, HOLY, HOLY, HOLY. Not, Almighty, Almighty, Almighty, nor Merciful, Merciful, Merciful, or Powerful, Powerful, Powerful or Glory, Glory, Glory or LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, no, but instead we read HOLY, HOLY, HOLY!!! This is the only attribute of God spoken like this, 3 times in a row. It is repeated for emphasis not just to take up space. Not only this, but the Holiness of God, that is, that our God is HOLY, is used more often as a prefix to God's name than any other attribute. When God speaks of His Spirit, it's the HOLY Spirit or HOLY Ghost and when speaking of His Son, He is called the HOLY ONE! God is called the Holy one 48 times in the Bible, 29 of those are alone in the book of Isaiah. God is called the Mighty one 4 times in the Bible, interesting to note that not once do you find the phrase, the LOVING ONE or the LOVING GOD in the Bible. Now, do not misconstrue my words, I am not trying to make light of the love of God, my point is, that when emphasis is always on the LOVE of God without acknowledging or mentioning the Holiness of God something is wrong with that person's theology. Now, I understand clearly if the subject is the Love of God, but when sinners are only told about the love of God and never once told about the holiness of God, you have an unbalance gospel. In other words, I'm just saying that there is something wrong with a gospel which chiefly espouses the love of God and never is something mentioned about the holiness of God. God salvation is based on His love, but my dear brethren, God's salvation is also based on the HOLINESS of God! I'll get back to this in a moment, but let me define the holiness of God; I'll give you my definition of holiness and then quote some others:

- God holiness is His nature, it is His character and He could not be God unless He is HOLY. Holiness is but the perfection of deity. God is infinitely Holy, there never was a time He was not Holy, nor, will there ever be a time that He is not Holy. God is so holy that He describes Himself as a consuming fire, Deut.4:24 & 9:3 and Hebrews 12:29. God is essentially and morally holy, for in Him there is no darkness at all, this is why He is also called light. Out of all His attributes this is the only one in which He swears by, Ps.89:35, "*Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David.*" God holiness is far above any of His created being whether they are angels or man. The Holiness of God makes man uncomfortable because it exposes their sinfulness. When you consider the glory and brightness of the Sun at high noon, it is nothing compared to the intrinsic Holiness of GOD! If the created sun can blind you, what can you say about God holiness? Especially when we are told this in Job 15, please turn there, verses 14 – 16, "*What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? 15 Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; **yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight.** 16 How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?"*

When you think about the brightness of the sun and consider that this star is not clean in His sight, it magnifies the splendid and magnificence of God's Holiness! In heaven there is no need for the sun, Revelation 21:23, "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Revelation 22:5, "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever." The Holiness of God is the highest revelation of who He is!

- John Gill says, "Holiness is the purity and rectitude of his nature; whose nature is so pure, as to be without spot or stain, or anything like it: he is light and purity itself, and in him is no darkness or impurity at all; as "he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity", so he is of a purer heart and mind than to have one sinful thought in it: his thoughts are not as ours; he is the pattern of purity and holiness, and to be copied after: men should be holy, as and because he is holy; it is one of the imitable perfections of God, in which he is to be followed; though it cannot be attained to, as it is in him, (Lev. 11:44, 45, 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15, 16) Holiness is an essential attribute of God; it is his nature and essence; it is himself; he is holiness itself; "he swears by himself, because he can swear by no greater"; and he will not swear by any less, and yet he swears by his holiness, (Heb. 6:13; Ps. 89:35; Amos 4:2, 6:8) which places put and compared together show that the holiness of God is himself."
- A.W. Pink says, "God only is independently, infinitely, immutably holy...God's holiness is manifested in His **works...in His law...at the Cross...Because God is holy He hates all sin.** He loves everything which is in conformity to His law, and loathes everything which is contrary to it...Unregenerate sinners cannot conceive of God's holiness, much less begin to believe in it. Many, then, presume that God's character is one-sided, that His merciful disposition will override everything else, and thus there is no cause for much alarm....They think only of a "god" patterned after their own evil hearts. Hence their continuance in a course of mad folly...The "god" which the vast majority of professing Christians "love" is looked upon very much like an indulgent old man, who himself has no relish for folly, but leniently winks at the "indiscretions" of youth...Because God is holy, acceptance with Him on the ground of creature-doings is utterly impossible...But blessed be His name, that which His holiness demanded His grace has provided in Christ Jesus our Lord."
- Thomas Watson says, "God is holy transcendentally. 'There is none holy as the Lord.' I Samuel 2:2. No angel in heaven can take the just dimensions of God's holiness. The highest seraphim is too low of stature to measure...holiness in God is far above holiness in saints or angels."

Back to our statement that there is something wrong with a gospel which chiefly espouses the love of God and never is something mentioned about the holiness of God. The nature and character of God necessitates a certain kind of salvation which is centered around and in harmony with God's moral character. This is why Paul makes that powerful point regarding the gospel in Romans 1:16 & 17, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 **For therein is the righteousness of God revealed** from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." In the gospel is proclaimed the righteousness and

holiness of God, which is why, we must be careful to maintain an unadulterated gospel, because when you lower the standard of the gospel you lower the standard of who God is. Salvation is a work of God based also on His Holiness. This is why when preachers sugar coat the gospel they water down the gospel and whether they realize it or not they are basically lowering the standard of the righteousness of God in the gospel. This is also known as an easy believism gospel. As salvation is also based on God's holiness, His justice is equally based on His holiness. Deut.32:4, "*He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment (or just): a God of truth and without iniquity (or injustice), just and right is he.*" This is why Paul is so bold in declaring the gospel there in Romans 1:16 & 17, then in Romans 3:26 he hits the nail on the head for he says, "*To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness (His justice): that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*" Because of His holiness and righteousness, God is the just and justifier of those who believe in Jesus. Because God is holy He must act in justice, this is why He sent His Son to die on the cruel cross of Calvary, that is, that sin would be judge on Christ, in behalf of all those whom He has saved and will save, so that God the Father would be free to forgive sinners and still maintain His holiness, His righteousness and His justice, because Christ satisfied all the holy demands of the Father and thus, God can be the JUST and JUSTIFIER of all those who believe in Christ Jesus. It is not that God just arbitrarily forgives sins, because He is some giant Santa Claus in heaven, NO SIN MUST BE JUDGE, because of His Holiness and therefore SIN WAS JUDGED AT THE CROSS! Not one speck of His Holiness was affected, because sin was dealt with. That is the whole issue between you and God this morning if you are outside the Lord Jesus Christ, your sins and if you die in that condition, that is, die in your sins without Christ, HIS HOLINESS demands, His RIGHTEOUSNESS proclaims and His JUSTICE declares that you should be punish with out mercy or grace in the awful darkness of the pit of hell. In John 8:24 Jesus Christ told those religious Jews, "*I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*" This is the worse thing that can happen to you, dying in your sins. How awful is that, to die in your sins, now just a few sins here and there, but all your sins, every single one of your sins? Dying in your sins and then facing an IMPECCABLE HOLY GOD!

This is why we must preach an unadulterated and pure gospel and in doing so we proclaim and set forth the righteousness and holiness of God. Again, we must understand something of the holiness of God. God is essentially and inherently HOLY! That is His nature because He cannot but be HOLY. When the Bible sets forth the holiness of God it means that He is completely free from all sin. God totally and perfectly hates all that is sin. Ps.5:4 - 6, "*For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. 5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. 6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.*" God loves all that is right and good. Ps.11:7, "*For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.*" Both of these aspects of His holiness are set forth in Scripture, that is, hating sin and loving righteousness. We also see this in Ps.45:7, "*Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness ...*" If you die without Christ you will be met with God's Holy WRATH, with God's Holy HATRED! Paul preaching at

Mars Hill warned his hearers to repent so that they would not fall into the judgment of God, Acts 17:30 & 31, "...but now commandeth all men every where to repent: 31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness ...". God is perfectly holy in every aspect of His being, I love what the Puritan Thomas Brooks said, "God's holiness and His nature are not two things, they are but one. God's holiness is His nature and God's nature is His holiness." Hanna praying in 1 Samuel 2:2 make this blessed truth known, "There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God." No one can be compared to God, not his angels, not any human being for there is none holy as the LORD! We are all sinful and God is all holy. This is why both in the Old Testament and New Testament we are told, "Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." 1 Peter 1:16. God makes us righteous at salvation because He imputes the righteousness of Christ to us, not because we have any righteousness of our own. Any holiness we have, that is, those whom God has saved, is by the imputation of His righteousness. Therefore man is only holy in a relative sense, because God alone is holy in the absolute sense.

In our text in Exodus 3, when Moses met with God in the backside of the desert, he experienced the awesome glory of God's holiness. Moses was instructed to remove his shoes because God's presence was there and His holiness affected that bush and the ground around it, Ex.3:5, "...Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." God did not try to make Moses feel comfortable, God did not try to make Moses to feel at ease or relaxed or to feel happy and giddy, oh no. God cause Moses to know and realize His Holiness! In other words it made Moses UNCOMFORTABLE! Most people don't want to approach a God that makes them feel uncomfortable. Ex.3:6, "Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." Think about that for a moment. We live in a time and day when many religious preachers try to make church a place for people to feel comfortable with God. When God came in contact with His people, whether it was Moses, Daniel, Joshua, David, Isaiah or even the Apostle John in the island of Patmos, they all felt uncomfortable and were afraid being in the presence of God. Remember what would happen if a person entered in the holy of holies in the temple, they would immediately be struck dead. But in our day, preachers want to make people comfortable to hang out with Jesus; you know Jesus He is a good old boy. Even the worship services are set forth with the style of music and vocabulary about God to increase a comforting feeling about God. Dim the lights a little bit, make the atmosphere right, make everyone feel good. How contrary to what happened with Moses at the burning bush. God did not seek to make Moses comfortable or have a happy feeling; no God wanted Moses to be in awe and in reverence to Him, to His holiness. When God meets with His people He is not interested in making them feel good and comfortable, no, no, no, but to have a holy reverence for Him. Look at Joshua 5:14 & 15, consider Isaiah 6:1-6. Can you imagine Isaiah saying something like, cool Lord, wow this is neat, but this is the mentality of our day because we have lost something of His Holiness, God help us. You see when you get in the presence of God and see and feel His holiness you will see your SINFULNESS, this is what Isaiah felt and said, woe is me! Oh to God that you would

get a glimpse of His holiness so that you can see your sinfulness. Oh to God that you would see something of the holiness of God. None of the judgments of God upon wicked man like the fire and brimstone that fell upon Sodom and Gomorrah or like the plagues that fell upon Egypt, or the awful flood of Noah's day can demonstrate the holiness of God like the death of His Son upon the cross. Turn to Matthew 27:34-46; 47-54. It was the holiness of God that came between the separation of the Father and the Son. God is Holy and when sin was laid upon His Son, He had to separate Himself from His Son. This is why God again is the just and justifier of all those who believe in Jesus Christ because judgment and righteousness met at the cross, in Psalms 97:2, it says, "*Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.*" When Christ died at Calvary justice and mercy met at the cross.

Therefore, this is your only hope this morning, laying hold the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Acts 4:12, "*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*" You do not want to die in your sins and meet an Immutable Holy GOD!

Oh dear sinner friend, come in repentance towards God and in faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's pray.