

I. The Glory of God

- A. Isaiah 6:1-5 . . . In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. [2] Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. [3] And one called out 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 trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. [5] Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."
- B. Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide Thee, though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see. Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee, perfect in power, in love, in purity.
- C. Prayer

II. The glory of God is revealed through His holiness

- A. What does it mean when we say God is holy?
 - 1. When we say God is holy, what we mean is that He is pure – pure righteousness. John tells us this in 1 John 1:5 . . . “God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.”
 - 2. Now words such as “holy” and “pure,” or a phrase such as “no darkness at all” should need no further explanation. However, due to the weaknesses of our humanity, it is hard for us to imagine anything being perfect – including God – which is why we tend to add qualifying words like “perfectly” or “totally” to the words holy and pure.
 - 3. Therefore, to help us gain a better sense of what we mean when we say God is holy, I will present three perspectives.
 - a. First, when we say God is holy, we are saying He is perfectly righteous in all His thoughts, words, and deeds. In other words, God is blameless, irreproachable, unimpeachable, completely guiltless, and perfectly innocent in all His ways. He has no defect, no sinful affections, and no questionable intentions. As James says: “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow” (James 1:17).

- b. Second, when we say God is holy, we are saying that His holiness separates Him from everyone and everything else – in the same way His glory sets Him apart from and above everyone and everything else. In other words, when it comes to God’s holiness, He has no equal.
 - c. Third, when we say God is holy, we are saying that His holiness permeates His whole being. Therefore, there is no part of His nature, character, thoughts, intentions, choices or actions which departs from holiness in any way.
 - d. In other words, all that God has been, is, and ever will be is holy.
- B. The scriptures speak – in a variety of ways – of the completeness, the supremacy, and the pervasiveness of God’s holiness. For example:
1. The scripture exhorts us to ascribe greatness to our God because His works are perfect, His ways are just, and He is faithful, righteous, and upright (Deuteronomy 32:3-4).
 2. In describing the holiness of God in relation to His glory, the scripture asks these two questions: (1) “Who is like our God among all the gods? (2) Who is like God, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders? (Exodus 15:11).
 3. The scripture says there is no one holy like the LORD, indeed, there is no one holy besides Him (1 Samuel 2:2). For the LORD is righteous, and He loves righteousness (Psalm 11:7). In fact, He loves righteousness and justice. Therefore, the earth is full of His lovingkindness (Psalm 33:5). His throne is forever and ever; a scepter of uprightness is the scepter of His kingdom. His righteousness is such that He hates wickedness (Psalm 45:6-7), and His righteousness is of such proportions that it reaches to the heavens (Psalm 71:19).
 4. Speaking further about His righteousness, the scripture says that the LORD is upright, and there is no unrighteousness in Him (Psalm 92:15). And we are exhorted to rejoice over the fact that God reigns, because righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne (Psalm 97:1-2). In fact, the LORD is righteous in ALL His ways and kind in ALL His deeds (Psalm 145:17).
 5. The scripture tells us that God’s righteousness endures forever (Psalm 111:3), because it is an everlasting righteousness (Psalm 119:142).
 6. In Habakkuk 1:13, we read that God’s eyes are too pure to approve evil, and He cannot look on wickedness with favor. In Mark 10:18, we read that no one is good except God alone. And in Revelation

15:4, we are reminded that one day all will fear and glorify God, for He alone is holy. In fact, all the nations will come and worship before Him on that day when His righteous acts are revealed.

C. God's glory sets Him apart from and above everyone and everything else in the universe, and His holiness is an aspect of His glory. However, God's holiness is no more than words in a book or in a hymn or in our ears if we do not see Him and deal with Him according to His holiness. Therefore, I want to remind you of three Bible stories that speak about people like you and me dealing with our holy God. And my purpose is to encourage a greater awareness of God's holiness and a greater vigilance in treating God as holy.

1. Moses and Aaron did not treat God as holy (Num 20:1-13; 27:12-14)
 - a. The Israelites arrived at Kadesh (*which means holy*), and while there, they ran out of water. The people grew angry over the lack of water and took their anger out on Moses and Aaron – accusing Moses and Aaron of getting them into this mess.
 - b. In response, Moses and Aaron came in from the presence of the assembly to the doorway of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to them; and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water.
 - c. However, by the time Moses, Aaron and the people assembled at the rock, it appears Moses had grown angry with the people for being so distrustful of God. So instead of speaking to the rock as God commanded, Moses struck the rock twice with his rod.
 - d. God's response to Moses and Aaron was: “Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them” (Numbers 20:12).
 - (1) Consider: God identified unbelief as the motivating factor behind striking the rock, and disobedience as a show of irreverence – or a failure on their part to treat God as holy.
 - (2) Or we can say it this way: Moses' anger with the people overpowered his reverence for God, which resulted in Moses showing disregard for the holiness of God.
 - e. And what were the consequences for failing to treat God as holy? Aaron and Moses were not allowed to lead the people into the Promised Land. Therefore, both died before Joshua led them in.

2. Uzzah did not treat the Ark of the Covenant as holy (2 Samuel 6:1-11)
 - a. The Philistines had captured the Ark of God and intended to keep it as a trophy of war. However, it soon became evident that the presence of the Ark brought suffering to those living near it. So the Philistines sent it back to Israel where it eventually was housed in the home of Abinadab for 20 years.
 - b. Soon after becoming King of all Israel, David, and a large group with him, went to Abinadab's home to get the Ark and return it to Jerusalem. They placed the Ark on a new cart with Uzzah and Ahio – the sons of Abinadab – leading the cart while David and those with him were celebrating before the LORD with all kinds of instruments. But when some movement of the oxen nearly upset the cart, Uzzah put his hand on the Ark to steady it – to which God responded with anger and took Uzzah's life right then and there. Why? Uzzah had shown irreverence for the Ark of God.
 - c. As you may recall, God declared the Ark to be holy, and therefore it was not to be touched by human hands. When moved, it was to be carried with poles inserted through its attached rings.
 - d. For any of us, irreverence for God or the holy things of God, even when we are trying to do what is right like Uzzah or when we are worshiping God like David and the people, is dangerous. The holiness of God is such that it demands reverence and at all times.
3. Ananias and Sapphira encounter the holiness of God (Acts 5:1-16)
 - a. Most of us know the story of Ananias and Sapphira. They chose to join other believers in selling their property and donating the proceeds to the church for the care of those in need. Their sin was claiming to donate all the proceeds from the sale when in fact they were donating only part of the proceeds and keeping part of it for themselves.
 - b. Peter became aware of their deception when Ananias presented the money to the church leaders. It was then that Peter confronted Ananias about his lie. Three hours later, Sapphira showed up and Peter asked her if the price claimed by Ananias was the amount received from selling the property. Not knowing what had happened to Ananias, she also lied by saying yes.
 - c. As most of us know, both Ananias and Sapphira died upon uttering their lie. Why?
 - (1) Because they lied to Peter and the other leaders of the church – thus treating what belongs to God and is holy as unholy. And according to the scripture, they also lied to the Holy

Spirit – thus showing an irreverent disregard for the holiness of God, himself.

- (2) In other words, by lying about what they were bringing into God's storehouse for the purpose of caring for God's people, they showed disrespect for the holiness of God and for the church – where God's holiness is to be hallowed (*honored as holy*) by all who belong to it.
 - (3) You see, both God is holy and those things that God declares are holy – such as the Ark and the church. And when we treat with irreverence what God declares as holy, we offend the holiness of God just as much as when we directly treat Him with irreverence.
- d. Now you might think that God was a bit harsh in His response to Ananias and Sapphira. But such a view would be based on a low view of God's holiness and a shallow concern for the holiness of His church. When you see God's holiness more nearly for what it is, and when you care for the holiness of the church more nearly as you ought, you will agree that God's response was the right response, for it defended His honor and the church's honor.
- (1) It defended the honor of the church by producing a great fear in all who were part of the church – a fear which discouraged irreverence and encouraged humble respect for God and His church.
 - (2) And it defended the honor of the church by prompting unbelievers to keep their distance for fear of what might happen to them. Therefore, unbelievers were not likely to masquerade as Christians – thus further protecting the purity of the church and the honor of God's name in the world.

D. What can we learn from these three stories.

1. First, God's holiness is far greater than we can imagine – which means He is far more sensitive to evil than most of us believe Him to be.
 - a. For example, what we tend to think is a minor sin or a small offense is – to our holy God – a heinous evil deserving the penalty of death. Why? Let me give you three reasons.
 - (1) First, holiness is the one quality that preserves the moral health of the universe, and unholiness is what destroys the moral health of the universe – even when expressed in what seems to us to be a minor or insignificant way. Therefore,

holiness is offended by unholiness just like our eyes are offended by a strong light after they have grown accustomed to the dark. As the scripture says, God's eyes are too pure to approve evil, and He cannot look on wickedness with favor.

(2) Second, evil follows the same path as all living things in God's universe – it starts small and grows big. It starts weak and grows strong. It starts out under your control and ends up controlling you.

(3) Third, to preserve His creation, God must destroy whatever would destroy it.

- b. Therefore, the first lesson to learn from the three stories from scripture is that it is wise to study and ponder the holiness of God, and it is wise to treat God as holy in the same way Isaiah did – with upmost reverence and a humble admission of our unworthiness (Isaiah 6:5).
2. The second thing we can learn from the three stories is this: In each story, those who showed irreverence were primarily good people, and their failure to show reverence was a one time failure, yet the consequences were severe.
 - a. Moses and Aaron were not allowed to enter the Promised Land.
 - b. Uzzah died on the spot.
 - c. And Ananias and Sapphira died immediately – with no chance to repent of having shown such disregard for the holiness of God.
 - d. In today's church life, we are dealing with the same holy God, and we are wise to carefully heed those scripture portions that exhort us to show reverence to our Holy God. For example, one such portion is found in 1 Corinthians 11:27-32, where Paul talks about taking communion in a worthy manner, and the dire consequences if we don't.
3. The third thing we can learn from the three stories is that given the fact that momentary circumstances can unexpectedly arise and push us toward anger, arrogance, or deception – among other possible evils – it is imperative that we remain vigilantly guarded against speaking irreverently of God, or speaking disparaging about the ways of God, or lying about the condition of our spirituality, or making jokes about God, or knowingly disobeying God – especially when our disobedience influences others in the church to do the same.
 - a. And given the devil's determination to lead us into sin, we should expect him to take advantage of the unexpected, momentary

- circumstances – and in those moments urge us toward irreverence and the kind of sinful behavior that robs the church of its purity.
- b. Of course, the best defense against these kinds of unexpected moments and devil's temptations is prayer, a working knowledge of scripture, ongoing growth in godliness, and the daily nurturing of an awe and reverence for God's holiness.
 - c. However, if your view of God's holiness is not rich enough or extensive enough to keep you from irreverence, then let the fear of the consequences of irreverence keep you from such things as pride, arrogance, disobedience, and an irreverent mouth.

III. Conclusion

- A. God is holy – which means He is perfectly righteous and blameless in all His thoughts, words, and deeds. It means His holiness is of such a nature that He has no equal. And it means that God's holiness permeates His whole being so that there is no part of His nature, character, thoughts, intentions, choices or actions which depart from holiness in any way.
- B. Now if you are going to see God's holiness in a way that effects how you think, speak, and live, then you must see yourself as God sees you and hate the part of yourself that He hates.
 1. In other words, the more you see and hate the weakness of your humanity, the extent of your selfishness, the magnitude of your pride, the short-sightedness of your choices, and the foolishness of your behavior in the way God sees those things about you, the more clearly and meaningfully you will see the holiness of God.
 2. Why? Because you can only grasp the extent of God's holiness to the degree you humbly and broken-heartedly grasp the extent of your sinfulness.
 3. It works like this: willful darkness does not comprehend light, defended selfishness does not comprehend love, pride does not comprehend humility, deliberate self-rule does not comprehend submission, open rebellion does not comprehend loyalty, careless irreverence does not comprehend the proper mixture of fear and awe, and intentional sin does not comprehend holiness.
- C. God is holy, and His holiness is part of what makes Him glorious. May we treat Him as holy, and in so doing, make Him look glorious to the world around us.