

The Holiness of God, The Depravity of Man and Warriors for Christ

Holiness in angels and saints is but a quality, but in God it is His essence. —Thomas Brooks

We cannot grasp the true meaning of the divine holiness by thinking of someone or something very pure and then raising the concept to the highest degree we are capable of. God's holiness is not simply the best we know, infinitely better. We know nothing like the divine holiness. It stands apart, unique, unapproachable, incomprehensible and unattainable. Only the Spirit of the Holy One can impart to the human spirit the knowledge of the holy. —A.W. Tozer

Isaiah 6:1-4 ^{NAU} **Isaiah 6:1** ¶ 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.

Revelation 4:1-11 ^{NAU} **Revelation 4:1** ¶ After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like *the sound* of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things." ² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. ³ And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and *there was* a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. ⁴ Around the throne *were* twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones *I saw* twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads. ⁵ Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; ⁶ ¶ and before the throne *there was something* like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. ⁷ The first creature *was* like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature *was* like a flying eagle. ⁸ And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY *is* THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME." ⁹ And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹ "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."

Holiness: Its Meaning

In both the Old Testament and the New, the idea of Holiness is a description and also visualization. The Hebrew word for "set apart" conveys the notion of "separated" or "cut off," and is applied to things as well as persons. The two ideas, "set apart" and "brightness," belong together, for it is the otherness of God that is His ultimate glory. He is "holy other". This is evidenced in the burning bush, it is not just hot it is light; it is evidenced in the pillar of fire that led the Israelites in the wilderness. Moses is basically "sun-burned" from the Holiness of God. It is evidenced in the bright star that the Magi followed. This is particularly evidenced in our Lord's transfiguration (Mat 17:1ff). We get glimmers of our own holiness that is to come in its fullness. It is this which our Lord speaks of in Matthew 13 when He says, "Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (v. 43). (In Daniel 12:3, we are told that the saints will shine "like the stars in heaven forever and ever.")

These two, "set apart" and "brightness" correspond with the main ideas in Salvation, namely, Justification and Sanctification-what God has done **for** us, and what God does **in** us. And it is the recognition of God's holiness found in the Scriptures and written on our hearts and our un-holiness found in the Scriptures and

our hearts that forms the contrast that informs us of our gulf between our maker and ourselves.

WCF 2.2-3 There is but one only, living, and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions; immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute; working all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will, for His own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him; and withal, most just, and terrible in His judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.

God has all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of Himself; and is alone in and unto Himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which He has made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting His own glory in, by, unto, and upon them. He is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things; and has most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them whatsoever Himself pleases. In His sight all things are open and manifest, His knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to Him contingent, or uncertain. He is most holy in all His counsels, in all His works, and in all His commands. To Him is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience He is pleased to require of them.

We cannot truly begin to understand the Holiness of God apart from seeking to understand our un-holiness.

I am convinced that the first step toward attaining a higher standard of holiness is to realize more fully the amazing sinfulness of sin. —J.C. Ryle

Our depravity does not mean we are as bad as we could be. It means the fall of man was complete, body, mind and soul. Sin permeates everything. It is like yeast.

WCF 6. 2-3 By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion, with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body. They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed; and the same death in sin, and corrupted nature, conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation.

From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.

How dead are we? Romans 8 ⁷For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

This is how we can understand Paul when he cites the Old Testament and says earlier in Romans 3 ¹⁰“None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹no one understands; no one seeks for God.

¹²All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

¹³“Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.” ¹⁴“Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.” ¹⁵“Their feet are swift to shed blood;

¹⁶in their paths are ruin and misery, ¹⁷and the way of peace they have not known.” ¹⁸“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

“The phrase no one is seeking God is from Ps 14:2. Seeking is a way of expressing what is most important to us. This kind of seeking means training ourselves to turn to God first for help, to fill our thoughts with his desires, to take his character for our pattern, and to serve and obey him in everything. The phrase all have turned away from God; all have gone wrong is from Ps 14:3. The failure to seek God does not leave a person immobilized; rather, it sets him or her on a course of destruction. Whatever does not include the seeking of God ends up leading people in the wrong direction.” (From SOTR Study Bible).

While we are not depraved in the sense of going out and raping and pillaging, from God’s perspective, our ignoring Him and pursuing all manner of other things, sports, TV, jobs, material things, or worse, pornography, chemical addictions, etc. are also not seeking Him and while some are not evil in and of themselves they may develop such a place in our lives that they may actually be a part of our avoidance of God and our Godly responsibilities.

We have learned to live with unholiness and have come to look upon it as the natural and expected thing. —A.W. Tozer

Our challenge as men, as leaders in our homes, church and community is to make war against unholiness in ourselves. To be humbled in the face of the evidence of our depravity and to become redeemed warriors for Christ, our Warrior King. We don’t capitulate to the enemy of our flesh, the world and the devil, but we make war on them. Holy War; our weapons are not of this world and must be picked up and utilized both in training our minds and hearts

*There is nothing which my heart desires more than to see you, the members of this church, distinguished for holiness. It is the Christian's crown and glory. An unholy church! It is of no use to the world and of no esteem among men. Oh, it is an abomination, hell's laughter, heaven's abhorrence. And the larger the church, the more influential, the worse nuisance does it become when it becomes unholy. The worst evils which have ever come upon the world have been brought upon her by an unholy church.
-----C. H. Spurgeon*

God does not save us to make us happy but to make us holy. -----Vance Havner

Compare the two visions found in Isaiah 6:1–4 and Revelation 4:1–11

1. Isaiah said that the train of God’s robe filled the temple. By this statement he was portraying the majesty of God. What is an appropriate heart response to this image of the supreme majesty of God?
2. Each of us faces the certainty of entering into the presence of God at death. As you contemplate this prospect, do you do so with a sense of fear or anticipation? Why?
3. Read Exodus 3:13–15, where God first reveals His name Yahweh. The text indicates that this means “I AM WHO I AM.” Read John 8:56–58, where Jesus uses this name for Himself. What do you think this name indicates about the nature of God?
4. In Hebrews 10:19–22, believers are invited to come with confidence into the Holy Place.

How can we come confidently into the presence of God without falling into the sin of irreverence?

5. 1 Peter 1:16 tells us to "Be holy, because I am holy.". But read 1 Samuel 2:2 and Revelation 15:4. In light of these verses, how is it possible for us to be holy?ⁱ

Catching a glimpse of our unholiness and God's pure Holiness what is our reaction?

How the prophets reacted:

Isaiah 6:5-7 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!" ⁶ 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.

Revelation 1:17 ¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last,

In both cases, Isaiah and John recognized the gulf and were humbled.

The great test of whether the holiness we profess to seek or to attain is truth and life will be whether it be manifest in the increasing humility it produces. In the creature, humility is the one thing needed to allow God's holiness to dwell in him and shine through him. In Jesus, the Holy One of God who makes us holy, a divine humility was the secret of His life and His death and His exaltation; the one infallible test of our holiness will be the humility before God and men which marks us. Humility is the bloom and the beauty of holiness. ---Andrew Murray

Read Luke 18:10-17

1. What is the attitude displayed and contrasted between these two men?
2. When Jesus says to "humble ourselves" how does that work? What does that look like? How do we accomplish this humbling?

Read these scriptures:

Luk 1:52 14:11 Job 40:9-13 Psa 138:6 Pro 3:34 15:33 Pro 16:18,19 18:12 29:23 Isa 2:11-17 57:15 Dan 4:37 Hab 2:4 Mat 5:3 23:12 Jam 4:6,10 1Pe 5:5,6

1. How would you summarize God's view towards men in the context of humility?

"Our definition of humility must be biblical and not simply pragmatic, and in order to be biblical it must begin with God. As John Calvin wrote, "It is evident that man never attains to a true self-knowledge until he has previously contemplated the face of God, and come down after such contemplation to look into himself."

That's where the following definition can help us: *Humility is honestly assessing ourselves in light of God's holiness and our sinfulness.*

That's the twin reality that all genuine humility is rooted in: God's holiness and our sinfulness. Without an honest awareness of both of these realities, all self-evaluation will be skewed and we'll fail to either understand or practice true humility. --- [C. J. Mahaney, *Humility*]

Pride is the anti-Christ, it is the anti-God. It seeks to glorify self. Humility seeks to glorify God. Humility is not something we seek, holiness is something we seek and in that pursuit, we are made more and more humble.

...we have as much of holiness as we have of God. And according to what we have of God will be our real humility, because humility is nothing but the disappearance of self in the vision that God is all. The holiest will be the humblest. ----Andrew Murray

ⁱ R.C Sproul, The Holiness of God Study Guide