

The Holiness of God – Part II

Last time, you recall we reviewed how to escape the mind using Pascal's wager. Pascal used this, remember, to witness to atheistic friends to teach them that using only human logic independent of Scripture, that there's nothing more pointless than to believe that life is pointless. The only option in Pascal's wager that offers any hope, is to take number two; life has a point, believe it has a point, and begin to seek everything about life, the point of life, so that you don't just through neglect miss the point of life.

Then we started talking about how to witness to people who are locked into their minds and even independent of Scripture and so as to avoid chest to chest argumentation, 'cause we're supposed to do everything with gentleness and reverence, you simply use what I call the Pratney questions. By asking them questions, seeking to understand them rather than just proclaiming your understanding of your faith, you gently take them to the depths of their faith until they ultimately must come to the unavoidable conclusion that every man walks by faith. And that while they have spent their lives pooh-poohing people of faith, they, in fact walk by faith because every man does. Man is created to walk by faith because he is not an omniscient creature and anything that is not omniscient will come to the limits of his knowledge and be required to walk by faith, in faith as if something is true even though it can't be proven that it is true.

We started where God told us to start...In the beginning, God...and we look at the explosive revelations that come out of only that one verse of Scripture. We looked at how that proclaims God as the only uncreated thing in all of existence. Everything else in existence flowed out of the creative power of God and God is the only self-determined thing in all of existence. That is to say His meaning and value are intrinsic within Himself and that meaning and value of everything else in existence is set by this Holy God of Genesis 1:1. And then we ended last time speaking in Romans 1:19-20 how God is evident through what has been made. So if you know nothing more than Genesis 1:1, if you operate in that revelation, you already have accountability before a Holy God. That is to say every man is without excuse for not seeking God just based on the fact of looking at creation. So looking at creation and not seeing the handiwork and the fingerprints of God is an act of rebellion for which he is held accountable on the part of man. Because any man who claims to be ignorant of God is, in fact, engaging in willful ignorance. So as to continue in self worship and avoid accountability before his Holy God Who created him. God has made it evident to everyone. Because ignorance of God is not really ignorance, it's really willful ignorance and the word for that is neglect. Another word could be denial. They have suppressed the truth that is evident to them in unrighteousness using their self-determined status to proclaim that they can say there is no God. Because we do understand, but I say it to remind you that ignorance is more than just a condition. Ignorance is a choice, because we are ignorant of that which we ignore. And we ignore what we give a low priority. And we give a low priority to anything that would interfere with our self-determined status of being independent and would thus interfere with our self worship. So when a person is ignorant of God, it is in itself an act of rebellion, because they ignore the God that has made Himself evident to them.

There are other beings of note just to mention in the created order. Non-human beings created by God who can know God to a degree. Fallen angels, we know of...Lucifer, later Satan and those angels who followed him in his rebellion; the un-fallen angels such as Michael and Gabriel and then the rest of the Heavenly hosts, the cherubim and seraphim. But out of all the created order, man is absolutely unique by two criteria, out of every single thing created by God, if these two criteria are taken in combination. He needs salvation from something; and God has provided a plan for salvation for him. And that plan is

the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In I Peter 1:12 says, the Gospel, preached by the Holy Spirit sent from Heaven, things into which angels long to look. Now, it's worth noting that verse to make a couple of points. Angels are not omniscient. Satan is a fallen angel; thus Satan is not omniscient. Many of us tend to fall into the trap of viewing the battle between God and Satan as a battle between God and like the opposite of God; like two equals. But, of course, Satan is inferior to God, not omniscient. The Heavenly host is not omniscient, man is not omniscient. Only God is omniscient. Now, angels long to look into that part of the omniscience of God that they do not know; and that's what we are to do likewise. We're to hunger and thirst after that part of God that we do not yet know. But we'll learn as we go along that no created thing including the human mind can ever figure God out, can never encapsulate God by knowing all about God. So we are forever left in the state of knowing God through faith, not through human intellect.

And just again, to project about the Gospel preached by the Holy Spirit, things into which angels long to look. You remember in Ephesians 2, the first seven verses or so where it speaks to the human condition; children of wrath, hostile to God, enemies of God, separated from God; but God, out of his love, through His mercy, reached down and saved some men, you see. Why? To display the grace of God for the ages to come. So the angels, though they have been with God, in Heaven, cannot understand the grace of God except they see this fallen wretched creature called man in his hostility and enmity to God, children of wrath. But God...and they see this God, Whose presence they have been in; but they cannot see the grace of God, except they see what man was and yet what God did.

And then they see His love manifested as grace and that's when the angels break into Holy, Holy, Holy, because they've gotten a deeper revelation of the grace of God than they ever had just by being in His presence. They had to see God and his salvation plan. That's the Gospel preached by the Holy Spirit, things to which angels even long to look.

So, let's review a few fundamental things about God in order to begin to understand His relationship to man. Now each thing that I mentioned, we're, of course, going to explore in greater detail later. We'll keep reaching back and reaching back and connect with the foundation that's been laid. But we need to begin to understand them here early in the series.

Now this poster looks simple. But I believe that if there were one poster to depict God, to depict a truth about God; this is the one poster that I would pick, because every error in the mind of man relates to misinterpretation of this poster. That is to say, the atheist would say, well there is no such poster because there is no God. The Christians tend to make their misinterpretation because they will look at this and exaggerate one of these three critical essences of God to exaggerate the one and diminish the other in comparison to it. So that for instance, a person who has a great revelation of the fierce, but righteous Judge, but no meaningful revelation of God as the passionate lover, will live in self-condemnation before his God. And that's where I lived in my childhood experience. Learning of the wrath of God, the eternal Hell, thinking I would burn in Hell for eternity if I had one bad thought. I learned of the fierce, but righteous Judge, but had no revelation of the passionate love of God. Others who relate to the passionate love of God, but not to the fierce, but righteous Judge, will be those who march along with no concern about the residual unrighteousness in their lives. Because they'll take the fact that God is love and then excuse everything about themselves that still needs cleaning up in order to be an appropriate testimony of the character of God to other creatures. Those who have an incomplete revelation of just how sovereign God is will think when they face circumstances, "well, God must not be powerful enough to take care of this situation in what I find myself." - A limited revelation of the sovereignty of God.

So we will begin as we go through this to understand how these three critical essences of God work together in perfect harmony and we must understand all three in order to understand God. You've heard it stated "why does any creature do what he does?" Well, it's in his nature, so the common example, is why do dogs bark? Well, it's in his nature. So man always asks questions but sometimes, we can go to only a certain point in revelation and we are called to rest there in faith beyond that point. So why did God create man? Well, I believe it's in His nature. That is to say His sovereign majestic creator kingship yearns to create; and He is love. So, He loves to create and He creates to love. In the very nature of God, these two essences alone bring God to be a creative being and then to love that which He has created. So why did my God create me? Oh, He loved to create me and He creates to love. So the nature of God explains how we came to be here. Well then, we need, in comparison to God to look at how fallen is the nature of man. And we'll look at this in great detail later, but just to begin, you'll remember in Genesis, chapter 2, as soon as man was given a choice other than God, he quickly chose that other choice. Adam and Eve had only one prohibition in Scripture and that was not to eat from a certain tree. But in Genesis 2:17, but from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat. Adam was told that directly and Eve clearly had been told it because she roughly recited it when she explained to Satan what God had said.

So what did they do? Well, they immediately broke it; they immediately tried to hide, and when confronted, they immediately tried to blame someone other than themselves. Now as you know, because you're experienced in Scripture, Genesis 3:13...and the woman said, "The serpent deceived me and I ate." And Genesis 3:12, the man said, "the woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree and I ate." In other words, Eve blamed the serpent and then Adam blamed Eve and the God Who gave him Eve. That's how fallen the nature of man is. Now, why did Eve eat that apple? Was it hunger? Well, no because she had been told she could eat from every other tree. Was it to be sociable? Well, no. As far as we know, the serpent couldn't eat apples, wouldn't have preferentially eaten an apple, he didn't ask for an apple and she didn't offer him an apple. So, we wouldn't think it to be sociable. The solution is Genesis 3:4-5. When Satan tempted Eve, he simply said, "For God knows from the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." And that temptation has been the same temptation for man ever since. The temptation to be like God, that is to be his own god, independent of God; so to become God, by disobeying God. In other words, self-determination. And we'll explore it when we get to sin at a later teaching that drive to self-determination is the sin nature, it is the first act of rebellion on the part of man, and it continues to be the act of rebellion in the heart of every man - that drive to be his own god. To independently decide, what he is to be and how he is to become it. Ultimately that is to declare ourselves as the judge of God rather than bowing in worship to God as the Judge of all. That's to pronounce ourselves as autonomous, as independent of God.

But recall from the earlier poster. There is only one self-determined thing in all of creation and that is God and everything else has its meaning and value determined by God. So that behavior by Adam and Eve, as we'll explore later, in its core, is the drive in man to be his own god to the point of judging God. Because remember, they disobeyed and we focused on the disobedience. But that's not the major issue. The major issue is they had to proclaim themselves as able to determine that God had lied to them, that they would not die. He said they would, but they had to proclaim "no, I won't". They had to proclaim that God didn't love them because He was withholding something of great value from them, namely the knowledge of good and evil, and so on. In other words, they had to judge God as evil, as deceptive, as unloving, withholding something of great value, and not operating in their best interest. They had to come to all those conclusions in order to reach over here to do something in direct disobedience to God. So when the serpent deceived Eve, the serpent did not actually deceive. God had made a statement, the

serpent made a statement, and Eve chose the one that seemed to offer the better deal based on her own self-determination of what would be best for her. Rather than believing that God was operating in her best interest, she believed that she could operate in her best interest better than God, you see. Judging God to be an inferior creature to herself. So that drive to judge God is the root of all sin in our self determination.

So, why is there evil in the world? That's another question you'll hear answered. And I believe God gave us the freedom to sin, to do ungodly things for the following reason. When we look at even why human beings are given any choice in our time here on planet Earth. Well, "In the beginning, God." God is. God is love. Love is relational, relational is choice, and if one choice is God, then any choice that God offers must be something other than Himself. It must be ungodly. Because to have two choices, if one is God, everything else must be ungodly. In other words, if we have no choice and we're simply mechanical robots in the power of a sovereign God. So I tell the story, it seems simplistic and silly, but it makes the point that I'm trying to make. I've been married to Susan for 39 years. If I invited you to my home, and you hadn't met her before and I said, "Let me introduce you to my wife, I've got her chained in the basement." And you go down with me and I say, "I've had her chained the whole 39 years; she loves me so." And you would say, "Well how do you know she loves you." And I replied, "She never left me." Then you would immediately recognize that I was presuming love when it could not be love except there be the choice to reject. So, it's either mechanical robotic slavery or it's love, and if it's love, it requires the ability to reject and the ability to reject is simply any other choice other than God, that is to say, ungod or ungodly.

Well, can God overlook sin? No. Well, why not? Because of that third essential characteristic: Sovereign king, passionate lover, and fierce but righteous Judge. Sin is contrary to His nature and He cannot approve evil. Habakkuk 1:13, speaking through the prophet, describing God. "Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil and Thou cannot look on wickedness with favor." You see, not only does He not approve evil, He cannot approve evil or He would not be righteous; hence, He would not be God. To be evil, or to approve evil, to approve anything apart from His character and will and purposes, would be to deny Himself to become less than the Deity that He is. Now our pride and insisting like Adam and Eve that we can determine what's best for us better than God can, is rebellion and will eventually have a consequence. Proverbs 16:18 says, pride goeth before a fall. Well Adam and Eve certainly had a fall. Some falls can have great redeeming value. Mine did. You see, before my fall, I did not realize that I was in rebellion against God and had been so overtly for 30 years of my life. So I needed to receive the revelation of my helplessness and hopelessness before a sovereign God. Because that's the condition of all human beings apart from God as helpless and hopeless; they just don't know it. So I wrote this simple little ditty just to remind myself of that truth. "I had always been helpless; I just did not know it. Along came the struggles just to show it. Helpless I am, now helpless I know. Before in pride, now in humility I go." Isaiah 53:10 speaking prophetically of the Messiah says, "But the Lord was pleased to crush Him." Well, speaking of the Messiah, God, the Father was pleased to crush Him to bring about the redemption of man by paying the price for sin. But part of my prayer now in my testimony is thank you Lord that you were pleased to crush me because my redemption required the crushing. So long as I was functioning with what I viewed as success in my fleshly abilities, gifts, and talents, I was independent of God, or so I thought.

So when the Lord was pleased to crush me, to allow circumstances to unfold until I could cry out in the helplessness and hopelessness to God that I didn't even know; but He heard the cry of the lad as it speaks of Ishmael. You remember, Ishmael was crying in the wilderness and the Lord heard the cry of the lad and the Lord was pleased to crush me until I cried and once that outer shell was broken, then the

spirit man could begin to commune with his God to bring about my salvation. So I had been trapped in the mind and my self-determination up to that point. So I wrote another little rhyme. "The mind is a trap to the spiritual fool; but to the man of God, the mind is a tool." So Christians are not mindless as we're often accused of being, we simply regard our minds as a tool to worship God rather than regarding our mind as an object to be worshipped in self-determination. So when people say that Christians are out of their minds, well, they're right. Thank God, because we must go out of our finite minds to approach this infinite God. So praise God that He is bigger than my mind and I have to go out of my mind to come to Him.

So, where are we now? Well, we looked at the beginning where God told us to begin...In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth. We learned that God is the only uncreated thing in all of existence, that God is the only self-determined thing in all of existence. We learned the three critical essences of God, essential characteristics, the sovereign king, the passionate lover, and the fierce but righteous Judge. We learned that creation itself flowed out of His essences. He loved to create and created to love. He allows sin because He gave us choice that our relationship with Him may be out of love and not mechanical robotic slavery. We learned that we chose wrongly because we pronounce ourselves as self-determined, able even to judge what is in our best interest better than God can. We desire to be like God apart from God. That is to be our own gods. We correlated what Pascal's wager to see even apart from Scripture, the only logical mind that a reasonable mind can come to conclusion is that life has a point and to seek that point. We learned that it's pointless to believe that life is pointless. We began to correlate that with Scripture, "the fool has said in his heart, there is no God." And "without faith, it's impossible to please God." For those who come to God must only believe two things. That He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. So we learned we don't come to God by logic, but it is logical to come to God. So we use reason to come to the end of reason to go out of our minds to come to this infinite God. And we learned not to do so is rebellion, because simply looking at what has been created, is testimony of God that renders us without excuse before God. Psalms 19:1 – We learned that because the Heavens declare His glory and the Earth testifies of His handiwork. We've learned that every man walks by faith, not by sight. We learned that his faith is either in himself as self-determined or his faith is in a self-determined God, Who determines man's meaning and value.

So press on. Adam and Eve were then banished from the garden. Now obviously, if God were not merciful, that would have been the end of the human race. But our creator God is also a passionate lover. His mercy flows out of His love - we left Him, He did not leave us. Hebrews 13:8 – "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, yes and forever." So God is love and He has never, not been love and He doesn't quit loving us because we left Him. Thank the Lord! In Hebrews 13:5 – "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you." In John 14:18 – "I will not leave you as orphans." So sin began in Adam and Eve; but it didn't stop there, because we learned that we have the imputed sin from them, but we also have every man with the sin nature who continues to sin. Romans 3:23 – "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." And Romans 3:10 – "There is none righteous, not even one." You see, as you know, man cannot achieve righteousness on his own, but the fundamental flaw in man is to believe that he can. All religions, other than Christianity, represent man's attempt to achieve a holy state. That simply can't be done. But that drive to be righteous enough before a Holy God to merit salvation drives the Muslims to blow up buildings; believing, of course, as you know that they have eternity then with 70 virgins for their sexual bliss throughout eternity based on their own righteous acts before their god. But man cannot do that. The simple phrase I used to say is that man cannot high jump to Heaven. You know when this Holy God tells us that His ways are above our ways as high as the Heavens are above the Earth? That includes His righteousness. The highest that a human being has ever jumped is roughly 8-feet, ½ inch. And think about that...that's the highest any man has ever

jumped and yet using the physical world as a model, if you think about the Heavens and the highest a man has ever jumped (8-feet, ½ inch), we would laugh at thinking a man could jump to Heaven. But that's the model of the spirit realm. For His ways are so much higher than our ways, that all our righteousness, not our unrighteousness, all our attempts at righteousness are as filthy rags before this Holy God, His ways are that much higher than our ways.

So it's roughly like an 8-foot high jump compared to infinity, when you compare our righteousness before a Holy God. Now some men pronounce that there is no higher level to be reached. Other men pronounce that if a higher level is required, that they will jump there. But only Christians acknowledge through the revelation from their God that a higher level is required, namely perfection, and we cannot jump there. Why? Because God cannot excuse sin. Remember? Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil and Thou cannot look on wickedness with favor. Now the word favor in that context means approval. So here are the three fallacies of man, no higher level of righteousness is required, if a higher level of righteousness is required, I will achieve it, if a higher level of righteousness is required and I do not achieve it, then my shortfall will be excused.

But Christianity doesn't teach those. Christianity teaches us that a higher level is required, we cannot reach it and the shortfall cannot be excused, because a Holy God cannot excuse sin. That brings us to grace, of course. With Christianity as the only religion that gives that true revelation of the heart of God, manifested through the grace of God. So man has a problem. God doesn't have a problem. God is still God. But all men have the same problem. We're all separated from a perfectly righteous Holy God by our unrighteousness and that unrighteousness will be judged because God cannot excuse it and we are helpless and hopeless to do anything about it.

Now in Christianity, we can distinguish certain things about spiritual issues, but can't separate them. So we're talking here about the beginning, I want to keep reaching forward as you probably would know where it leads, but to make sure that we all know. Ephesians 1:5 – He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself according to the kind intention of His will. See, God knew that man would choose wrongly. So God already had it covered. God did not need a second plan; God had one plan which gave man a second chance, because He knew that we would choose wrongly. He did not make us choose wrongly, but He gave us choice that it may be of love and given the choice of being God-determined or self-determined, man self-determined to be self-determined; which is the root of sin, which includes judging God. John 3:16 – For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. That was motivated by love. So let's take our first look at love to begin to understand the love of God.

And I'll end after doing this brief introduction. I've had to go through progressive revelation about love. I began equating it with caring, and then caring that took some effort on the part of myself. And then, service. Well, then sacrificial service, not just service that required nothing of me. But now I operate in the last one that you see, "understanding the love of God as a passion for oneness". John 17:21 – Jesus says to the Father, that they (that's us) may all be one, even as Thou Father are in me and I in Thee that they may also be in Us. So the heart of God - His love, is a passion to be one with us. John 17:22 – "That they may be one just as We are one." John 17:23 – "I in them and Thou in Me that they may be perfected in unity." Colossians 3:14 – "Beyond all these things, put on love which is the perfect bond of unity." So God does love us, He has a passion to be one with us, that includes not just our salvation, but a passion that no part of ourselves remain outside of Himself, including any thought, word, or deed that is separate from His will, His purposes, and His character. That's the passion that God has to be one with us.