

### The Holiness of God – Part III

We started out escaping the mind using human logic without even drawing from Scripture to see that the most pointless thing was to believe life was pointless, using Pascal's wager that he used to witness to his atheist academic friends a couple hundred years ago. Then we went into how to witness to people who are locked in their minds even independent of Scripture, usually seeking to understand before seeking to be understood by asking the questions that are outlined on the board. To require each person who has a contrary anti-Christian view to delve deeper into their belief system in order to come to two unavoidable conclusions. One is that they ultimately are walking by faith and secondly, that their walk by faith is in something that is absolutely hopeless.

Then we looked at Genesis 1:1: In the beginning, God – to begin to awaken ourselves to an understanding of this God that we claim to worship. God is the only uncreated thing in all of existence and the only self-determined thing in all of existence. Everything else, in existence has its meaning and its value set by the only self-determined thing in all of existence and the entire walk of man in relationship to God can be traced back to the root of man's self declaration that he will be self-determined rather than God determined. Then we looked at the origin of choice and we can go no deeper than the following: that God is, God is love, love is relational, not mechanical robotic slavery. Relational requires choice and if one choice is God, if God is to give us any choice other than Himself, then every other choice is by definition ungod or ungodly. So, if God is to give us choice, it must be between Himself and something contrary to Himself. And that's so the relationship can be based on love rather than simple slavery.

Then we looked at the understanding of love and this is where we left it last time. It's deeper than simply human sensitivity and human caring; different from effortful caring, different from just service, different from sacrificial service, and at its root the understanding of love is a passion for oneness. And we derive that from John 17:21-23 where Jesus is speaking of oneness of us with each other, but also of Himself with the Father and then us with Himself and with the Father. The drive into absolute oneness; and that's the love that God has for us. He has an absolute passion that no part of ourselves remain outside of Himself. Colossians 3:14 – even telling us beyond all these things put on love which is the perfect bond of unity. So God does love us. And that means more than simply coming to Jesus through salvation. That tends to satisfy the heart of man because the heart of man is more after rescue and escaping punishment than he is after change into the image of God. But don't ever, as a Christian, delude yourself that God is satisfied when you come to Him for salvation. He is entirely pleased, but not satisfied. The reason is, He wants you not only to come to Him which is union, He wants you to come into Him which is unity; which is abide in Me, not just with Me. He wants no part of yourself, not a single thought, not a single word to remain outside of Himself. And that's love and that's not something that's punishing or harsh; that's the heart of God that all of you be within Himself.

I heard the illustration once that you may have heard of two tomcats with their tails tied together. Well, they're in union, but they're not in unity. So God is not satisfied with the union, He's only satisfied when all of you is in all of Him. And that's when you have His mind, the mind of Christ flowing in to renew your mind. Because how can God ever be satisfied when you're having an un-renewed mind continuing to have thoughts that are expressed in words and deeds that are contrary to what He is? So thank God that He loves us so much that He's not content with simple salvation; He is only content when we, as David in the Psalms said, when I awaken in Your likeness will I be satisfied. And that's the reciprocation of our relationship with Him. So, it would be obvious if something is to change, if two things are not one and something is to change, which one? Us or God? Well, I trust that all of us would

answer God because God is the standard of all perfection. If He changed into something other than Himself, or contrary to Himself, He, of course would not be God.

Hebrews 13:8 – Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever. Malachi 3:6 – For I the Lord do not change...nor should He...nor should we expect Him to. So if we are not in the exact image of God in our thoughts and our words and deeds, then how can He be satisfied in His love for us if we remain in that contrary position and how can He change if He is perfectly righteous? He cannot.

Then we began to look at the three critical essences of God. I'm not insisting they're the only three, but in my understanding of Scripture, they are the critical three to come to grips with our relationship with God. We might ask, "why did God create?" And we did last time. Remember? He is a passionate lover and He is the majestic sovereign creator king. It flows out of His nature. He creates to love and He loves to create. And we can't go any further back than that kind of understanding that flows out of the very nature of God. Now here's a critical point. God is love and God does love you. But He's not only love; He is also righteousness. So God loves you, but He also loves righteousness. That's why He is unchanged because He has a passion to remain one with Himself. So God cannot think, say or do anything contrary to His own righteousness. So the only way, then, in the sanctification process for God to play out His nature in His relationship with you, since He has a passion to be one with righteousness, is for you to become righteous. Now simply stated, human pride resists that process by making excuses in their self justification. Pride then resists becoming like Christ and thus resists the fulfillment of the love of God; and thus grieves God. Because He cannot fulfill that passion to be one with you while you're walking in human pride insisting that your thoughts, words, and deeds are excusable before a Holy God.

But humility makes adjustments to come not only into cognitive agreement, but to come into behavioral agreement to be God centered—not human centered. To be God determined—not human determined. Thus humility is the key to all transformation after the salvation itself.

Well, why did God do things this way? Well, I think it's fine for us to ask such questions and certainly we could come up with at least some partial answers. It's good to ask so long as you don't have to know in order to believe. To ask without having to know is one indicator that you've entered the rest of God. You see, God will always remain part mystery to us. How could a transcendent God be fully understood by the peanut brain of a created being? It's good that He's part mystery to us. It shouldn't be a problem because it simply means that your God is bigger than you are. And how could you worship a God who is not bigger than you are? Our faith is in God, not in our understanding of God. Proverbs 3:5 tells us that in simple Scriptural terms. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. Now here's the critical element in that. Remember that the man who worships only what he understands will always have a god who is contained in his understanding. His god will always be smaller than his understanding. Well, if your god is smaller than your understanding, you're worshipping your thinking, not worshipping God, which is just one form of self worship. So the bottom line on that sort of thought process is this. You have begun to understand when you seek to understand without having to understand in order to believe.

So throughout this journey, as we head toward the cross, we can only come to God by faith; not by our understanding. We come to God to get understanding. We don't come to God because of understanding. We don't even come to understanding to then decide if we want to come to God. That's why I think Psalms 34:8 says taste and see that the Lord is good. Because until you taste of God, you can't see how good God is. You don't see how good God is and then decide to taste. So in the spirit

realm, we have to go out of our minds because if you don't go out of your mind, how can you confront a transcendent God? Thank God He's bigger than our minds. Now, thereafter, when we come by faith, not by our minds, into relationship with God, our minds are not discarded, so we have to be out of our minds operating in the spirit realm in faith in order to relate to God, but our minds are not discarded; they are renewed.

So if I've learned anything about God, it's at least these three things. Don't ever stand before a Holy God cloaked in your own righteousness. Don't ever let your faith be limited by your understanding. And God is not going to be satisfied if any part of me remains outside of Himself because His love is not fulfilled and just like we can grieve the Holy Spirit, we can grieve the passionate love of God if we don't get transformed into His very image by renewing of the mind.

Well, let's remind ourselves, just briefly, as to what life would be reduced to if there were no God. In the physical realm, we would be reduced to competing against all the natural elements...with all the floods, hurricanes, volcanoes, and so on. All the other millions of species of plant and animal life including all of our microbes and so on, that want to do us in; against at least 6 billion other human beings, and doing so for only one goal. Now that is to see how long this complex group of molecules called Buddy Nichols can successfully hang together. Our destiny in that case would be nothing more than surviving for a brief period carved out of all eternity, all the while anxiety laden while we face all the threats to our self preservation, only to have obligatory total failure in our struggle, followed by rotting of the flesh while buried in the most superficial six feet of the thin crust of a spheroid that's rotating on its axis at thousands of miles an hour, hurtling through space at thousands of miles an hour with a flaming inferno at its interior, while circling the enflamed inferno called the sun that is itself hurtling through space and all that as the most optimistic outcome. And even those things are achieved only as long as no cosmic collision occurs and only as long as the sun doesn't exhaust itself of energy and only as long as this universe doesn't collapse back upon itself. That's the endpoint of life in the physical realm if there is no God. It's not exactly reassuring.

And in the moral realm...we should know intuitively that there would be no moral law. Judges 21:25 tells us what happens when it's a man-centered morality as opposed to a God-centered morality. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes - moral relativism. And in that circumstance, it would be just as moral to eat your neighbor in cannibalism as it would be to love your neighbor, because the person who is eating in cannibalism is simply deriving nutrition to keep his complex group of molecules hanging together as long as it can in its meaningless struggle. There are people who cling to such world views; but they should receive our pity, not our anger. They do not know that there is a God because they will not know that there is a God. It's not ignorance, remember, it is rebellion. Because we're ignorant of what we ignore, and God has told us that His fingerprints are expressed very large across this created order; that no man can even look at creation without being smitten by the power and nature of God. Now the atheist says, I do not think that there is a God. Well, that is self worship though he may not acknowledge it as such because he makes his thinking the final judge of what is and is not true. That is to worship one's own thinking. In fact, he operates in a leap of faith to believe the un-provable that there is no God. The atheistic world view is in itself hopeless because its end point is annihilation. But even that's preferable to another outcome that he through his thinking excludes the possibility of. Namely that there is a God, that you are accountable to Him, that you ignore Him, and that you come under His judgment.

Annihilation is far preferable to coming under the judgment of a sovereign, majestic king Who is also a fierce, but righteous judge. So the heart of the atheist is to exercise self-determination to determine even

what is true and what isn't including determining what leap of faith to make, to deny God, continue in that self determination and escape all consequences in the mean time. Now, of course, what is inconsistent about the atheistic world view is they continue to use words such as good and evil, right and wrong, purpose and meaning. Their own world view has excluded the usage of such vocabulary, but they don't realize it because they refuse to realize it. Now an agnostic is stated to be one that says there may be a God, I simply don't think that we can know. Well, that's even more inconsistent than the atheistic viewpoint. If an agnostic really believed that there may be a God, then he would of course submit all of his life's energies into seeking to pursue that God. He'd clearly choose the hope of an existing God over the hopelessness of living his life as if there is no God. But what does he, in fact, do? Well the agnostic, in fact, behaves exactly like the atheist, neither seeks God. Matthew 7:16 says you'll know; them by their fruits. So if the fruits are the same, then they are the same. An agnostic is simply an atheist in camouflage. He's an atheist who's seeking to appear open minded. He is also actually remaining in self worship just like the atheist is because the rate-limiting step in his thinking is his thinking. He says I do not think that we can know. Thus, he's worshiping his thinking as the highest thing in all of existence. When he says there may be a God, I do not think that we can know, he is saying that if there is a God, that God is too weak and too impotent to reveal Himself to me in some way more powerful than my own thinking. That's to say, if there is a God, my thinking limits God, which is self worship.

So when relating obviously to an atheist or an agnostic, no Christian should ever feel inadequate or threatened or frustrated or belittled or inferior. We have made the wisest, most logical, rational, intelligent choice of all through the grace of God. See, whether we knew it or not, we were looking at Pascal's wager intuitively and taking a leap of faith through the grace of God under the one choice that offers hope...that there is a God and He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. God tells us the fool, remember, is "the one who says there is no God," Psalms 53:1. Then we begin to please God and Matthew 7:7 says "if you seek Me, you'll find Me," so the one who doesn't find God by Scriptural definition is not seeking God. So we seek and find. So do we seek because of our intelligence? Because we're smarter than the apes? No. It occurs because of James 4:6 – God gives his grace to the humble. We know God only by His grace through faith.

So God begins to reveal Himself by grace through faith and as we humble ourselves before this Holy God that is revealed to us, He continues to lavish his grace extravagantly upon us. But to continue the process requires humility. Out of grace, He reveals Himself; He reveals Himself then because we follow through to seek Him and we seek Him with a humble heart position. We're humble because we acknowledge that our condition is helpless and hopeless apart from this Holy God who created us. We're humble when our search is not limited by our understanding. Humility says I cannot know You, except You reveal Yourself to me because you are too big for my mind to process. But humility will say one thing. I will be God determined and base my life on that, not self determined as Adam and Eve did in the garden. In fact, I think God succinctly summarizes our condition apart from Him in Revelation 3:17 – you do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. That's what we are before a Holy God. But the one who does not know this is simply the one who will not know this. That's pride. You see pride is an anti-God state of mind because it refuses to look at one's condition apart from God and even if it acknowledges God, it states that that God must be assuredly pleased with me as I am. And that God, if He exists at all, could better invest His time in cleaning up someone else.

But when we know our true condition before a Holy God and know that all our righteousness is as filthy rags before Him, then humility is the result. And then we not only agree with God which is a pro-God state of mind, but we bring all our actions by adjustments to come into alignment with what He

describes of Himself to us and what He describes His will for us. That is humility. So in humility, we begin at the beginning and let God even tell us where to begin. And God made it so simple that He tells us where to begin because the first verse in the Bible, God's written word to man, says - "In the beginning, I created the Heavens and the Earth." We should now understand why God made that the first verse in the Bible...so there can be no misunderstanding. The beginning of all spiritual progress is there and the beginning of all progressive sanctification into the image of Jesus Christ is there. You see, the mind of man has no ability to go backward beyond that point. Man has no need to go backward beyond that point. Humility begins there and rests in that beginning; but pride in one form or another will resist beginning there or will resist being rooted in that revelation to be God determined. But Christians are to rest there, to wallow there...not to fast forward by there; because all spiritual progress is dependent on the full absorption of Genesis 1:1...not just the cognitive revelation to memorize the verse and be able to quote it. Solomon, himself, the wisest man of all - Eccl. 12:13 - the conclusion, in other words, the final assessment of all this, when all has been heard, is to fear the Lord and obey His commandments. That's the sole duty of man. You see, we're not going to come to that conclusion if we are not rooted in Genesis 1:1. That's why I focus on it. We are to be transformed into the image of Christ in order to truly fulfill the love of God to become one with God. That is by the Holy Spirit's power, but our participation in the process, our agreement, is simply reciprocation of the love relationship with God. If you love something, you will choose it above other things. If you have true faith in something, you will choose it above other things. If you love something and have faith in something, you will obey that something.

But see, here is the connection. We will only obey that which we regard as holy. What we do not regard as holy, we will not obey. So when Jesus says, if you love Me, you'll obey Me, you will only obey that which you regard as holy. He told us that in the Lord's prayer - "Hallowed be Thy name." What we don't hallow, will we follow? Because, see, hallow means to regard as holy, to regard as sacred, to hold in awe and reverence. The word for holding God in awe and reverence is the fear of the Lord. And the root of the fear of the Lord is Genesis 1:1...In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth.

Now here is the point of what I've just said. If we are not in awe and reverence of the God of Genesis 1:1, Who in the beginning created the Heavens and the Earth, and since there is no other being or anything in existence which comes close to that God, if we're not in awe of that God, we cannot be in awe and reverence of anything. And if we cannot be in awe and reverence of anything, then we are in awe and reverence of ourselves. "Say that again." If we are not in awe and reverence of the God of Genesis 1:1, Who in the beginning created the Heavens and the Earth, since nothing else in existence comes close to that Being, if we cannot be in awe and reverence of that Being, we cannot be in awe and reverence of anything. And if we cannot be in awe and reverence of anything, then we are in awe and reverence of ourselves.

So let's look at some practical, theological perspective that flows out of it when you're rooted and living in Genesis 1:1. We never worship creation; we worship the only one uncreated thing that produced creation. We never worship the creature, we worship the creator of the creature. We never worship man-made things, we worship the Thing that made man including making man's capacity to make things. We don't worship the big bang, we worship the Big Banger. Matthew 23:24 says Why do you swallow a camel and strain at a gnat? Because see if you have swallowed Genesis 1:1...In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth, you swallowed the camel and would never strain at a gnat. In the light of Genesis 1:1, when the mind of man inquires about the miracles of the Bible, God would simply say things like the following. In regard to the virgin birth...in the beginning I created the

Heavens and the Earth. I created man from dust and created woman from a rib. Could I not create a man in the womb of a woman without a sperm? In regard to parting the Red Sea...I created the land, I created the sea. I parted the land to hold the sea, could I not part the sea to behold the land? In regard to Jonah and the whale...I created the man, I created the whale. I nurtured the man, I nurtured the whale. Could I not nurture the man in the whale?

So how do we know when we're living our Christian lives rooted in the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth? Well, when was the last time you hear the verse quoted? When was the last time you referred to it? How do we know when we're ready to progress past it? When every cloud declares the glory of our creator, God. When every leaf testifies of the intelligent design of the handiwork of God. When we ask ourselves about every thought, word, and deed...can I directly trace that thought, word, and deed to the root of "In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth?" And when no other variant of an unbeliever, atheist, agnostic, nor any other form ever makes us feel angry, defensive, dumb, inadequate, insecure, or inferior. That's when you pass from the revelation of Genesis 1:1 as a thought and begin to go into the fullness of revelation of Genesis 1:1 which is not just revelation, but empowered knowledge, you see. Because the Word of God is living and active. But it is only living and active when you live in the light of the revelation. So Genesis 1:1 only explodes in you to settle every decision that you make when you choose to recognize what's embedded in it, see what God is that you are not and out of that choose to be God determined from that point on, rather than self determined ever. So that truth becomes as we'll explore later, what God is and how God views everything else. And that's what your life is based on. Your life is never to be based on, as a Christian, what you think about what God said. Your life is based on what God said and it's not complicated as we'll see as we go through the series. There are only a few simple revelations that God expounds upon, but the foundation of revelations are really simple and few in number.

So the key to the Holiness of God is Genesis 1:1 and walking in the light of it. Genesis 1:1, when you see that Holiness of God that we'll explore starting next time. Then you're going to walk in the fear of the Lord, the awe and reverence of this Holy God, Who in the beginning created the Heavens and the Earth. And the fear of the Lord, remember, is the beginning of knowledge. The beginning of understanding, the beginning of wisdom. So you cannot know truth, knowledge, wisdom and understanding in any of its forms on which to base your life, if you are not walking in the fear of the Lord and the root of that is to know the Holiness of God and the root of that is to live out of the vitality of the living Word of God of in the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth. Because in simple form, it all plays out that you're going to be either God determined or self determined. And later on when we get to explore Adam and Eve's decision making and so on, when we mention Lucifer's decision making, when we look at all the rebellion of man, it all comes down to one thing. Am I going to be self determined with truth being what I say it is, or am I going to be God determined with truth being what He is and how He views everything else? And it all begins with Genesis 1:1.