

## The Holiness of God – Part VI

I do not think that prayer has to be necessarily with eyes closed and so on. I think anytime that we come together, it's worth reminding ourselves to get our hearts set right to seek the face of God; to acknowledge the various aspects of the presence of God. We know the omnipresence that He is everywhere. We know the individual presence; "do you not know that the spirit of God dwells within you"; and then a communal specific presence of "wherever two or three are gathered together in My name there am I in the midst of them." So by faith, we don't have to pull God down from Heaven, or pull Him up from the Abyss. He is omnipresent; He is specifically present; and He is communally present—all as we come together to meet in His name. We started with Genesis 1:1—that is to say, in the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth. Out of that flowed two specific, unavoidable revelations that are critical to spiritual growth, because everything in all of Scripture is rooted right here. God is the only uncreated thing in all of existence; and the only self determined thing in all of existence. We'll take that self determined theme and follow it through as we go on the journey to the cross and today mention two or three examples of how man operated in self determination.

Holy - We must come to grips with the Holiness of God. Holy, holy, holy is God Almighty. He is other than; "with whom would you compare Me?" There is no frame of reference, there's no brain that can capture the other thanness of God. He is simply other than anything else that has ever existed. He's perfectly pure and also anything is holy which is called holy by the Holy One. Because (next poster) truth is what God is and how God views everything else. There can be no other definition of truth that does not begin at that point. That's why in the New Testament, Jesus could say, I am the truth. I am God and I am here to model and tell you how God views reality. We looked at the origin of choice. God is. That's Genesis 1:1.

He is love. I John 4:8 – Love is relational; relational requires choice. If there is no choice engaged in the process, then it's mechanical, robotic slavery. And insofar as it depends on us, here's where we function. Every choice that we face throughout our lives on planet Earth is the same choice. If one choice is God and God gives us any other choice, any other choice is ungodly. So throughout life, that choice is the same choice. Every choice we make, when it says "capture every thought to the obedience of Christ." That's what it's talking about because we're choosing either Christ or antichrist with every thought—God or ungod.

Love - God is love. What does that mean? He is caring, effortful caring to the point of sacrificial service on God's part manifest particularly at the cross; but love being a passion for oneness. God is delighted that we are saved; all Heaven rejoices. But God is not satisfied until we are transformed by the renewing of our minds into His very likeness, to display not just doctrine, but to display His character. The world will know Who He is by how we love one another.

Then the three essential characteristics of God that must be held in perfect harmony to understand various Scriptures. Because most of the poor choices made by human beings as Christians relates to over-emphasizing one to the point of minimization of another. He is a lover, but if we accentuate that to the exclusion of His role as the fierce but righteous judge, then we will fall into the pattern of excusing sin. And if we accentuate the fierce but righteous judge, and minimize the lover, we will live in condemnation and flee from the face of God in horror rather than seeking the face of God to receive a steadily increasing revelation of His love.

Now today, we're going to pick it up as we march on through the Holiness of God and we're going to do this by looking at a few scriptures with which I struggled and with which I used to argue against my wife and other Christian witnesses saying, "No God of love could do that." We're going to start with some Old Testament expressions of the wrath of God and come to grips with them to see them as God sees them. Susan is going to read for us Leviticus 10:1-3. "Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. And the fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said to Aaron, 'It is what the Lord spoke, saying, 'By those who come near Me, I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored.' So Aaron therefore kept silent."

So, obviously I would struggle with that as a non-Christian, because how could a God, Who is love, take what would seem to be a minor indiscretion by two young men and then consume them with fire from Heaven? That was not a God that I was attracted to and not a God that I thought existed. But when we look at it from scripture, the Word of God, He tells us how he views that incident. Aaron was of the tribe of Levi; the Levites were the priests. Aaron's sons were Nadab and Abihu. Exodus 29:29 – "And the holy garments of Aaron shall be for his sons after him including Nadab and Abihu, that in them they may be anointed and ordained." Nadab and Abihu were anointed and ordained; set apart for the purposes of God. They violated the Lord's specific instructions. Exodus 30:9 – "You shall not offer any strange incense on this altar." The Holy God of Genesis 1:1 consecrated them to His purposes and specifically said, "You shall not offer any strange incense." He had told them what to do; He had told them how to do it. He had told them that He would be regarded as Holy by those who come near to Him.

So, over to the New Testament - what possible correlation could there be? It says draw near to God and God will draw near to you. But He tells us another aspect of near even embedded in the Old Testament, "by those who come near to Me, I will be regarded as Holy." So you cannot truly come into communion with God in full until you begin to regard Him as Holy. They did not regard Him as Holy, they violated His commandments, and God brought judgment on them. They operated in self determination. They took the God of Genesis 1:1 Who is the only self determined thing in all of creation, and they declared that they would be self determined and they would determine what incense should be offered on the altar; and with what sacrifice God should be pleased. Self determination, as opposed to God determination. And that is the root of all sin as you will see as we go forward through the series.

So I pointed out here, just to begin to take note of that process. Furthermore, if the priests are cavalier toward God and His commandments, the people will be even more cavalier toward God and His commandments; because the holy priests set aside for His purposes are supposed to know. Thus, what we first viewed as distasteful, we now can begin to see as God sees, because that's completion of the three-stage process. We seek God, we see God, and then we begin to see as God sees. So now, we'll begin to take this, what would appear to be a horrendous act of judgment by a wrathful God, that's totally out of proportion to what is called for. But when we see as God sees, we go to the following scriptures. Exodus 24:1-2 – "Then He said to Moses, 'come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and 70 of the elders of Israel.'" Nadab and Abihu were specifically invited up the mountain. "And you shall worship at a distance. Moses alone, however, shall come near to the Lord; but they shall not come near, nor shall the people come up with them." Well, how near were they allowed to come? A few verses later, Exodus 24:9-10 – "Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and 70 of the elders of Israel and they saw the God of Israel." Nadab and Abihu, by special invitation, saw the God of Israel. Now they couldn't have seen Him in full because no man can see His face and live. But just

like Moses that He put in the cleft of the rock, and gave a protected glimpse; so they could see sufficiently enough to awaken the fear of the Lord, but not enough to consume them with the Holy fire of His judgment, because we're all unclean before a Holy God. They were brought that close. So how can two human beings ever determine that they will decide what this Holy God should be satisfied with rather than simply receiving the God determination of letting that Holy God declare what kind of sacrifice with which He would be pleased, you see.

We'll go to another one. I Chronicles 13:9-11 – “And when they came unto the threshingfloor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark; and there he died before God. And David was displeased, because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzza; wherefore that place is called Perezuzza to this day.”

We all know the Ark of the Covenant, if not through the Bible, at least through the movie, Raiders of the Lost Ark. Hebrews 9:4 reminds us that the Ark contained the Ten Commandments, the manna from Heaven and Aaron's rod which budded. Again, I would use this episode, as a non-Christian to say “the man was trying to help; what kind of God would possibly do such a thing?” But, let's look at the sequence. Levi had a son named Kohath; Uzza was a descendant of Kohath; so Uzza was schooled in the law; responsible for keeping the law, and had specific responsibilities that we'll explain. Numbers 4:4 – “This is the work of the descendants of Kohath in the tent of meeting concerning the most holy things.” That is holy which is called holy by the Holy One. Numbers 4:15 – “And when Aaron and his sons had finished covering the holy objects, and all of the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp has set out, after that, the sons of Kohath,” which would include Uzza, “shall come to carry them so that they may not touch the holy objects and live.” So in the priesthood, given a specific task by the Holy One, taught how to carry out the specific tasks, and told that if you violate the commandment not to touch them, you will die.

No different from Adam and Eve. You eat from this fruit, you will die. You touch this Holy Ark, you will die. He had been trained to carry the Ark without touching it. The Ark was not to be touched by human hands. It was the seat of God and could only be contaminated by unclean hands of any man. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. There was no one clean enough to presume to touch this thing called holy by the Holy One. Uzza was to regard it as holy; Uzza was not to touch it, ever, for any reason and he had been specifically schooled in that. He reacted in the flesh; he treated it like any other object to keep it from falling, he behaved as if a man of limited ability and power could save an Ark that the Holy One Who created the Heavens and the Earth would have been impotent to save. He presumed that if he didn't do it, it wouldn't occur or couldn't occur. He presumed, not knowing that the ground was morally neutral. But his hands were unclean because of sin. But his presumptive sin was to think that he was cleaner than the dirt that the ark might make contact with. That was in violation of all of his training, all of his consecration, and violation of his specific role that the Holy One had set apart for him. So God judged Uzza; because Uzza judged God. He judged that he could process and self determine what human interaction would be required for under this specific circumstance, in violation of being God determined, because God had said don't ever touch it basically for any reason or you will die.

That shows God's passion for His Holiness. He will be regarded as Holy by those who come close to Him. So anyone who professes to serve God must regard Him as Holy. Because what will happen if you don't approach Him in the awe and reverence of His Holiness, you will be apathetic and lukewarm toward excusing sin. So we talk of wanting the fullness of the abundant life. (Say that again.) If we do

not approach God in the awe and reverence, the fear of the Lord with a proper attitude in response to His Holiness, we will be nonchalant about sin.

God is a fierce, but righteous judge. He is also love. Now, love is a passion for oneness. He does love you and He has a passion to be one with you. Well, if your unrenewed mind is having unrighteous thoughts, how can He fulfill his love to become fully one with you, except you be rid of unrighteous thoughts. He loves you; but He doesn't love only you. He loves righteousness. He has a burning passion to remain one with all things consistent with His will, His purposes, and His character. How can that God be lukewarm about anything which is contrary to His will, His purposes, and His character? So being one with righteousness means being totally separate from all unrighteousness. Loving righteousness means hating unrighteousness. So to the same infinite degree that God loves righteousness, He hates unrighteousness. That's true and required to be true. Revelation 19:11 – speaking of Jesus, says, “He (Jesus) is called faithful and true and in righteousness, He judges and wages war.” Well, if He is in righteousness waging war, what can He be waging war against, except unrighteousness? If God did not mind unrighteousness; if He were apathetic toward unrighteousness, if He excused unrighteousness, He would not be faithful and true. Because a God Who is lukewarm about remaining totally righteousness, cannot be counted on to be faithful and true. So we can't call Him faithful and true, except we acknowledge that it arises out of His absolute passion to remain one with His will, His purposes, and His character. We're taught that by even our Savior. If He had sinned once, He could not have been our Savior. That's the absolute passion of God to remain one with righteousness.

That same principle applies to us. In Proverbs 8:13 – “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil.” So, are we growing in hatred of evil? Are we growing in hatred of residual sin in our own hearts? If we are not, then we are lukewarm and we are not in the fear of the Lord; because if you're in awe and reverence of the Holiness of God, you have to become progressively growing in the hatred of all things contrary to God. You can't hold God in awe and reverence while clinging to that which is ungodly.

Let's look at an Old Testament example of man responding to the revelation of the Holiness of God. 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. 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. And one called out to another and said, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.’ And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. 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.’”

So Isaiah, a great prophet, one of those called a major prophet, but how did he know his lips were unclean? Was it by prayer and revelation? Was it by seeing the King? First John speaks of Him – when we see Him as He is, we shall become like Him. So, we try to do it through the will power of man. But, no, the pathway to purity is to see Him as he is. As Isaiah did in the Heavenly vision, it's recorded for us to be our teacher. The key to purification, the key to understanding the uncleanliness of yourself, is to see the King and see Him clearly. And you notice, he didn't just say “I'm having a bad hair day”; he didn't just say, “I'm having a bad day”; he said, “I am a man of unclean lips. There is nothing in me that I can defend before this Holy God, this King of kings that I'm seeing.” And from that encounter on, Isaiah did not lose the revelation. How do we know? Because in Isaiah 64:6 – toward the end of the book – “all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment. All our righteous deeds, not all our unrighteous deeds.” All of the best of human effort contains impurity in motivation to some

degree with self mixed in, as opposed to the glorification of God. Not some...all of our best deeds are as filthy garments before the Holy God.

But we have to see a clear revelation of this other thanness of God, and his absolute hatred of all things contrary to Himself or we'll remain in a position — “oh, God knows your heart, oh, we'll excuse sin,” if a brother or sister came up to us and said “I am a person of unclean lips,” we'll say, “oh no, you're really a good person, God knows your heart”; and we'll go to great extreme to excuse the very thing that God is trying to purify by giving them a revelation of coming before Him, hanging onto their uncleanness. It's well intentioned, but it isn't love; because love is a passion for oneness and you don't love your brother or sister until you have a passion for them to become one with God. And they can't become one with God while clinging to residual sin, you see. We want the abundant life; we want the gifts of the spirit, the fruits of the spirit in full manifestation to the glory of God, while clinging to residual sin. So we rush to console and abort the purification process that God is trying to complete.

Was Isaiah the only one to get that revelation? No, I think Job did. Remember toward the end of Job when God asked Job over 40 rhetorical questions, basically centered around, “where were you when I created the Heavens and the Earth?” That's why Genesis 1:1 is so critical to go back and root at because the antidote to all self determination is to simply ask yourself, “where was I, when in the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth?” It is His universe. You are His by virtue of creation. How could you ever, for one moment, declare what God must be, or declare what God must think? No, you have to come to this Holy God and let Him declare what He is and let Him declare what He thinks. So, Job's response when confronted that way, in finally receiving the revelation, Job 40:4-5 – “I am vile.” The most holy man on earth at the time, as God had pronounced him basically at the beginning of the book, now says, “I am vile.” He's received the revelation that there was a part of himself that still thought, since he was so righteous, he should have been spared all the suffering. And he kept saying, if I can gain an audience before this God, I will argue my case before Him. He did say good things; he did say that “from dust I came, to dust I shall return.” “The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the Name of the Lord.” But he also said, “if I can get an audience, I'll argue my case before Him.” And God's response is “where were you?” You see, and that revelation alone, will shatter any tendency in your heart to try to be self determined.

And God summarized that position. People say He didn't answer Job...but oh, He did. An omniscient God always answers man by asking a question. And you've heard it said, as I will say, when an omniscient Being asks man a question, it is not so the omniscient Being can gain further data with which to upgrade the quality of His decision making. The question is always for the benefit of the person to whom He is addressing the question. (Run that by us again.) But an omniscient God asks a created being, including any man a question, it is never so that the omniscient Being can gather more data with which to upgrade the quality of His interpretation and decision making—always for the benefit of the person being asked the question. So what question did God ask Job? Will you really annul my judgment? Will you really condemn Me that you may be justified? Will you, a created being, declare that your judgment is superior to My judgment? Will you really argue your case before Me? The possessor of all knowledge, the creator of all things, the only self determined thing in all of existence; will you, one of My created beings, really annul My judgment? Will you really condemn Me, the Holy God, so you may declare yourself to be righteous? More righteous than Me? If we just asked ourselves that question, anytime we are questioning God. Well, I know God did that; but I don't really agree with it. Can you see how filthy that attitude is? The audacity to say that before the Holy God of Genesis 1:1. When we do that, what we do is this. We pronounce ourselves as the judge of God, rather than simply acknowledging that it is His universe. And He is the judge of all things. That's the root of self worship.

It's to be self determined, to declare by yourself that I will declare that I can determine what God should have done.

And we'll get to that as the root of all sin when we get a little further in the series. Some New Testament reactions to the Holiness of God which I'll run through: John the Baptist in Luke 3:16 – “I am not worthy to untie your shoes.” John the Apostle in Revelation 1:17 with his Heavenly vision – “I collapsed as a dead man.” See, man is disarmed when he sees the King. No man will argue his case before Him when he sees the King. The only thing that a man can do when he sees the King is say “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.” And that's why that's the chorus in Heaven. No person in Heaven is declaring how it should have been done. No person is arguing his case before this God, because they see Him as he is. Peter in Luke 5:4-9 – after he caught the two boatloads of fish, when Jesus said cast your nets on this side; he said “depart from me for I am a sinful man.” Paraphrased, I am not worthy to be in Your presence, but I am too disarmed to depart from You; You have to depart from me. The disciples in Mark 4:35-41 – when they were caught in the storm—they were afraid of the storm; then Jesus simply said, “peace, be still and the storm was calmed.” Then they became very much afraid because they could see the power of a natural event; they could in some ways deal with that and even be frightened by that, horrified by that; but now they were very much afraid. They were even more horrified by the power of the Being that could simply say, “Peace, be still” and the storm obeyed. They feared being blown away by the storm; then they were blown away by the revelation of the Holy, who could blow away the storm with the simple expression. The soldiers in John 18:3-6 – when they came looking for Jesus after Judas betrayed Him – “when therefore, Jesus said to them, I am He, they drew back and fell to the ground.” There was no revelation of Who He was, as the Son of God; but they drew back—heavily armed soldiers, a whole contingent of them and they drew back and fell to the ground when He simply said, “I am He.” It's apparent that at that moment, a brief, limited, even a miniscule revelation of the Holiness of God was released. And in limited form, Jesus was saying and communicating to the human race, nonverbally, that which He later said, “no man takes My life, I lay it down.” So we have this contingent of heavily armed soldiers against an unarmed, defenseless man, but He simply says, “I am He” and they back off and fall to the ground. When you get even a drop of a revelation of the Holiness of God, that will be the response. That's why every knee shall bow, you see. Because when a person sees Him as He is, he will hit the ground.