

Wheelersburg Baptist Church

Life Application Sunday School Class

The Attributes of God Series

Session 4 – "The Holiness of God"

July 7, 2002

Review

The first week we looked at the purpose in this study; to come to know the Lord God of heaven better. Many have fashioned a god in their minds that has little resemblance to the true sovereign, omnipotent, almighty, unchanging God of Scripture. For us to know the true God as He is, it must be revealed to our hearts, and this revelation will come by His Spirit through His Word. We need a revelation of His holiness, justice and righteousness. Only then we will understand His utter hatred of sin. Only as we see the true God will we begin to see ourselves aright, and more fully appreciate His grace and mercy. Understanding God's attributes will cause us to realize that our righteous Creator has every right to demand our obedience. As we gaze upon His perfection, we will begin to recognize our desperate condition, and our utter inability to meet His high and holy demands. We must recognize the true divine character to understand our true condition, which is under His condemnation and wrath. Then we will begin to truly appreciate His mercy and grace. Such revelation will cause us to worship God for who He is and for the great love that He has expressed to us through Christ.

In our second session we examined the uniqueness of God. We saw that the Scriptures declare that God is solitary, self-existent, separate and distinct from all of His creation. He needs nothing outside of Himself, and is complete within Himself. He stands alone, is superior to all, and is in need of nothing. He creates not out of necessity, but rather for His own purpose and pleasure.

In our last session, we examined God's sovereignty. God's sovereignty is the exercise or expression of His supremacy. His sovereignty is linked to His uniqueness. He is infinitely supreme over all of His creation, and therefore subject to none, influenced by none, absolutely independent, and does exactly as He pleases, only as He pleases and always as He pleases. Because He is a sovereign God, His perfect and righteous plans cannot be frustrated and will all come to pass in accordance with His will.

Introduction

Today we are going to consider the holiness of God. To begin, listen to a couple of quotations concerning this subject. First from T.P. Simmons in his Systematic Study of Bible Doctrine: "*The holiness of God is His perfect moral and spiritual excellence. God is perfectly pure, sinless, and righteous in Himself. Holiness is the ground of all other moral attributes in God.*"

Now a second quotation, from A.W. Pink's The Attributes of God: Speaking of God "*He only is independently, infinitely, and immutably holy. In Scripture He is frequently styled "The Holy One": He is so because the sum of all moral excellency is found in Him. He is absolute Purity, unsullied even by the shadow of sin.*"

The basic meaning of the word holy is separate. God stands alone in His moral excellence. Even the holy angels that worship at His throne cover their faces in His presence. He stands above all in His utter perfection of moral character. It is not that God possesses purity, but rather, He is the standard of purity. He isn't that God is righteous, but rather, God Himself is the standard of righteousness.

The scriptures affirm that God stands superior to all in His holiness. Listen to Exodus 15:11

Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders?

And now to 1 Samuel 2:2

"No one is holy like the Lord, For there is none besides You, Nor is there any rock like our God.

Finally, to the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 57:15

For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

God's very essence is holiness and purity, and He is flawless in His perfections. He is absolutely pure and free from any imperfection or flaw. The apostle John in 1 John 1:5 states it this way:

5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

Three Encounters with God's Holiness

Whenever men encounter the presence of the Lord, holiness is at the forefront. We are now going to consider three different divine/human encounters as recorded in Holy Scripture: The call of Moses, the call of Isaiah, and the Revelation given to the Apostle John.

First, let's consider the call of Moses as recorded in Exodus 3:1-6

*Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.
2 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.*

I believe this angel of the Lord is none other than the pre-incarnate Christ.

3 So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up." 4 When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." 5 "Do not come any closer,"

God is calling Moses, and calls him by name. After calling him, the first thing God says to Moses is not to come closer. Here is an application for us. We should never approach God quickly, or rashly, or without preparation. He calls us to come, but on His terms and in a proper recognition of who He is. Remember the teaching of Jesus concerning prayer. He taught us to approach God with the following words – Our Father, who art in heaven (separate from us), holy is your name. Recognizing that God is separate from us and most

holy is a prerequisite to entering His presence and having fellowship with Him. Back to Exodus 3, verse 5:

God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

God required this act of reverence as recognition that nothing contaminated, such as soiled sandals, is permitted in His presence. The ground was holy because of the manifest presence of the Holy One.

6 Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

Once Moses understood that we are speaking to the true and living God, he hid His face. When we start to understand the holiness of God, we will fear and tremble and bow before Him in utter respect and reverence.

Now let's turn to Isaiah chapter 6. This awesome account of the call of the prophet reveals God in His holiness and glory. [Isaiah 6:1-7](#)

Isaiah 6: ¹In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.

God opened Isaiah's eyes to see the sovereign ruler over all on His throne, exalted, as the majesty on high. This is no earthly temple, but the place where God reigns over all.

2Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!"

These spiritual creatures have the sole purpose of worshipping and extolling the holiness of God. They have been perfectly created and designed by God for this purpose. Even these holy beings must cover their face in the glorious presence of the most holy Lord God.

4And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because 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."

Consider the reaction of this prophet of God before the throne of the Almighty. He calls woe upon himself, because in the presence of such purity and splendor, he stands naked and exposed, undone, unworthy, and unclean. When faced and confronted with the holy presence of God, we will see our true condition, and it brings great grief and mourning.

6Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. ⁷And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this

has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged."

God does not leave Isaiah in this state of hopeless grief. He provided cleansing from the altar. As we see God's holiness and righteousness in His Word, then we are gripped with our depravity and our spiritual poverty. In that state of shame and guilt, He offers us cleansing and the purging of our sins through the sacrifice of Christ. He removes our sins and iniquity, so that we might be fitted for His service.

Now, let's take three glances of the holiness of God in the book of Revelation. [Turn to Revelation 4:1-11](#)

Rev 4: ²Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. ³And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. ⁴Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. ⁵And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. ⁶Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. ⁷The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. ⁸The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!" ⁹Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: ¹¹ "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."

Note the centerpiece and attention in heaven. It is the glory, and honor, and thanksgiving to the One seated on the throne, the eternal One, the Creator and Sustainer of all, the One who does everything perfectly and in accordance with His pleasure and will, the Sovereign King who rules over all creation. And such worship and praise is expressed as these spiritual creatures cry holy, holy, holy, and as redeemed humanity answers such worship by casting down their crowns and extolling the worth of the Creator. And this activity continues without ceasing. Let's look at another account of the heavenly worship of God given to John, in [Revelation 15:1-4](#)

Rev 15: ¹Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete. ²And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. ³They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! ⁴ Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested."

The only proper response to God's holiness is reverential fear and worship. God's holiness is manifested in His creation and works, including the His judgment of the earth. As this age comes to a close, God will manifest His righteous judgment of mankind. At that time every knee will bow and proclaim Him Lord over all. God will receive the honor and praise due His name. And He is worthy of such worship because, according to verse 4, for He alone is holy.

And finally, in the eternal state, there will be nothing unclean or that defiles. Listen to [Revelation 21:22-27](#):

Rev 21: ²²But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of

God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. ²⁴And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. ²⁵Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). ²⁶And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. ²⁷But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Only those in Christ, under the blood of the Lamb, saved by His grace, will be in the presence of God. It is only in Christ that we can dwell in the presence of a holy God.

The Implications of God's Holiness

This leads us to our next section, the implications of God's holiness.

First, the implication of the holiness of God toward the wicked. Because God is holy, wickedness is an abomination to Him. And so are wicked people. Proverbs 15:26 states:

The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord.

A revelation of God's character should strike terror and fear in the hearts of those who have rebelled and gone their own way, which includes every one of us. Listen to Psalm 50:16-23

Psalm 50: ¹⁶ But to the wicked God says: "What right have you to declare My statutes, Or take My covenant in your mouth, ¹⁷ Seeing you hate instruction And cast My words behind you? ¹⁸ When you saw a thief, you consented with him, And have been a partaker with adulterers. ¹⁹ You give your mouth to evil, And your tongue frames deceit. ²⁰ You sit and speak against your brother; You slander your own mother's son. ²¹ These things you have done, and I kept silent; You thought that I was altogether like you; But I will rebuke you, And set them in order before your eyes.

Because God does not immediately condemn and judge all acts of wickedness and sin, many have the mistaken notion that He is letting such things slide. As sinners, we do not always seek justice, and address unfairness and unrighteousness. But this passage clearly states that it is a grave mistake to think that God is like us. Because He is holy, He must address all wickedness and sin, and will do so at the proper time. Judgment is coming. That is why the Scriptures teach that today is the day of salvation and repentance. Now is the acceptable time to flee to the refuge of Christ, and to repent and turn to the Lord for mercy and forgiveness, while there is opportunity. There is a shelter from the holy wrath of the righteous sovereign almighty God. It is the Lord Jesus Christ. Continuing in Psalm 50:

²² "Now consider this, you who forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver: ²³ Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; And to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God."

We need to realize that because God is holy, He will not tolerate wickedness nor wicked people. Again, listen to the Scriptures:

Psalm 7:11 God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day.

Psalm 5: ⁴For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, Nor shall evil dwell with You.⁵ The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity. ⁶ You shall destroy those who speak falsehood; The Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.⁷ But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple.

Where does this leave those who profess faith in Christ, but have no true change of heart or life? God's holiness demands repentance, and He is truly no respecter of persons.

Now that we have considered the implications of God's holiness toward the wicked, let's contemplate three implications of God's holiness for believers:

First, in consideration of the holiness of God, we see the absolute necessity for the cross.

Romans 5: ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

As sinners facing the wrath of God, we have only one hope, which is the righteousness of Christ. Look again at verse 9. We are saved from the wrath of God through Christ. And this was provided while we were yet in our sins and rebelling against God, and deserving of the wrath of God. What made the difference? It was the demonstration of God's love toward us in Christ. This holy, righteous God is also a God of love and mercy. Because He is just, He could not allow sin to go unpunished. Because He is holy, He will not accept sinners into His presence. So God sent His Son, who came from heaven into this world through a virgin, uncontaminated by original sin, and lived a perfect life, being tempted at all points, yet without sin, and then on the cross offered His sinless life to bear the wrath of God toward our sin, that we might stand before Him absolved of our crimes, our guilt and punishment being carried away. The cross stands as the premier expression of God's holiness. Only through the cross could God love and accept sinners and still maintain His purity and holiness.

A second implication of God's holiness for us is that we need to worship Him in reverential fear.

[Listen to Psalm 89:6-7:](#)

Psalm 89: ⁶ For who in the heavens can be compared to the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the Lord? ⁷ God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, And to be held in reverence by all those around Him.

Why has God accepted us? He has accepted us in Christ for the praise of His glory! God has chosen a people for all of the earth that He has redeemed for His namesake, for the worship and praise of His glory. And though we are invited to come boldly to the throne of grace, we should never come flippantly or without a sense of awe. We should never forget who we are approaching, and the great price that was paid to make entrance into the divine presence possible. And even as we enter into God's presence through Christ, we should do so with great reverence, realizing that God is holy. Listen to [Hebrews 12:28-29](#) and [Psalms 99:1-3](#)

Heb 12: ²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our "God is a consuming fire."

Psalm 99: ¹ The LORD reigns, let the nations tremble; he sits enthroned between the cherubim, let the earth shake. ² Great is the LORD in Zion; he is exalted over all the nations. ³ Let them praise your great and awesome name— he is holy.

Finally, a third implication of the holiness of God for believers is this: As God's chosen people, we are called to a separated life of consecrated service. This was the calling of God's people in the Old Testament:

Lev 11:44 'For I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy.

And the same calling is applicable under the new covenant as written in I Peter 1:13-19:

I Peter 1: ¹³ Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. ¹⁵ But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶ for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."¹⁷ Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. ¹⁸ For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

As God's people, we have been called from the world unto God. We have been separated, called out, consecrated, and dedicated to God's service. This is why it is an utter contradiction for a professing believer to continue in sin. We are sanctified unto a holy God through a holy calling for a holy service. We have been selected and purchased by God to be vessels to display His mercy and grace to all creation. This is why we are to be holy, because God wants to fill us with His holy presence. I Corinthians 6:19-20 states it this way:

¹⁹ Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Because we belong to God, and God is holy, we are not to be joined with unbelievers. Listen to II Corinthians 6:14-7:1

*II Cor 6: ¹⁴ Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? ¹⁵ What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." ¹⁷ "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." ¹⁸ "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." **7** Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*

Why do we study the attributes of God, such as His holiness? It is so that we will reverence God, and that holy fear will motivate us to serve and worship Him acceptably. As we contemplate God's sterling character

and absolute purity, we gain a greater appreciation of our salvation, and of Christ our Savior. By meditating His holiness, we will also recognize our own sins and shortcomings. For us to be set free from our sin, we must first see our sin. Our God desires to be a Father to us, and He says that He will dwell among those who are broken and have a humble and contrite heart. He calls us to purify ourselves from all that contaminates, that we might be a holy people that reflect His glory.