

The holiness of God and the depravity of man

I like to start by making a statement, it is this: that if a person doesn't know the Lord, two things are probable.

1. That God is holier than they think
2. That they are worse than they think

So today let us consider these 2 things, God's holiness and man's depravity.

God's holiness.

Holiness is the most sparkling jewel in God's crown. It is the name by which God is known.

Psalm 111:9 *Holy and reverent is his name.*

Job 16:10 *The holy one*

In Isaiah seraphim cry *Holy holy holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory.*

His power makes him mighty, his holiness makes him glorious. But what is God's holiness? God's holiness consists in his perfect work of righteousness and abhorrence of evil.

Habakkuk 1:13 *of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity.*

God's very being is made up of holiness. Just like sun is the essence of the sun. All he does is holy, he cannot act but like himself. God is holy in all his actions. He can no more do an unrighteous action than the sun can darken.

Psalm 145:17 *The Lord is holy in all his works.*

People are fond of blaming God for things but they obviously don't believe this word. Regardless it is God who gives us the moral sense of right and wrong anyway. He says, *Are not your ways unfair?* See Ezekiel 18:25. All holiness flows from God. He gives it to others. He made the angels holy. If there have been holy men they borrow it from God. As the lights of the sanctuary were lighted from the middle lamp so the holiness of others is a lamp lighted from heaven.

God is transcendently holy *There is none as holy as the Lord* 1 Sam 2:2 No priest, apostle or angel can reach God's holiness. Let me give you a material illustration.

The goodness purity and holiness of even the best men are but sparks from God's holy fire. How big is a spark? We could compare this to a man. How big is a candle flame? We could compare this to an angel. But how is the earth, how big is the sun? How big are the stars? This doesn't even begin to describe how much more holy God is in comparison to even the best of his creatures.

Can you see the foolishness of trying to think you are OK before the burning holiness of God? It is like standing before the sun with a paper umbrella for protection. The Christian is made holy, it is true, but even they are subject to waxing and waning. However, God's holiness is unchangeable. He cannot have more because he is perfectly holy. He cannot have less because he is unchangeably holy. God is infinitely holy; therefore, see that sin is the worst of all evils. As God has no bad in him, so sin has no good in it. Other 'evils' may have some good in them. In sickness we may learn, in trouble God may speak. But sin is contrary to God. No wonder he hates it, being so unlike him. It strikes at his holiness. It does all it can to spite God. If it could it would make God no god. Holiness is the great end of God's plan to make people like himself in holiness. What is the point of Christ dying but that his blood might wash away all our unholiness. He gave himself for us to purify unto himself a particular people. Consider how amazing, he was made sin for us. He took the fire for us like the burning bush but not consumed. Wasn't Moses told, this is holy ground?

So you see true holiness gives peace. Sin raises a storm in the conscience. There is no peace to the wicked. But holiness is the root of peace. If holiness is the root, peace is the fruit.

Man's depravity

Let's now consider that men are worse than they think. We often talk of the depravity of man, the corruption of his whole nature. It is total. It is inward (deep in the nature). It is great (in God's eyes's) It is continual (the heart of man is wicked, not sometimes but all times). It is universal (not one thought is not tainted).

But we must understand what total means. We are totally depraved in extent (found in every part) but not degree (as bad as bad can be). Visual from Catechism book.

A man's ways seems right to him but the Lord weighs the heart. Proverbs

So now let us consider what sinful man cannot do. Man cannot do anything that God considers good, or holy or righteous without first having a clean heart created within. This happens at conversion. The Bible says *The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth and the intent of the heart is only evil continually. And there is none that doeth good, no not one.* God looks not like men on outward appearances but on the heart.

Is this shocking to you? Did you think that if you cleaned up your act or adopted some earthly religion God would be pleased with you and somehow you would get to heaven without punishment for your sins? The Bible flatly says no. This is the foolishness of religions like Islam. They have no Saviour, no substitute, no sin bearer. They in effect say, you're not so bad, and God is not so good. Their god is less than perfectly holy. For he allows sin without any payment, only a slight reform. But the One, true and living God, is perfectly holy and this is a flaming sword barring the impure and corrupt from his throne.

We must not work to be justified but be justified so we can work. Many people who seem good to the eye of men are not really in the estimate of God. Like the Pharisees of old, 'Woe unto you', said Jesus, '*for ye make clean the outside... but within are full of extortion and excess... ye also appear outwardly righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*' Matt 23:25, 28.

But some say, if this is true, man has no real freedom. The great mistake they make is not to make a proper distinction between freedom and ability. Freedom is simply the absence of outward force. Man is not always able to do what he is free to do. Man has always been free to fly, but has not always been able to fly. God is able to do all he wishes, but he is not free to lie. This is why man cannot do anything good before the regeneration of the Spirit of God. He is free to do good, no one is forcing him to do evil, but he is not able to do good. His own inner nature, being evil, inclines him to do evil. *Can... the leopard change his spots?* Jeremiah 13:23

So long as a human being is left to his own nature, he will always incline to evil more and more. This is not because he is forced that way. It is because he freely prefers it. No truth is more often taught in the Bible. Think about how the whole human race, except Noah and his family, filled the earth with violence before the flood. God called Abraham and created the nation of Israel to whom he revealed himself, but how often they too departed from God.

Proverbs 1:24 I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded.

But God is not a severe God, a distant God. He prefers mercy to death. Ez 18:23 *Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?*

Micah 7:18 He retaineth not his anger forever because he delighteth in mercy.

The Lord takes the first step in your heart just like he has done in history on Calvary. We have access to holiness by faith in Christ whose blood washes clean. The wound flowed with water and blood as the spear pierced. It is a picture of the washing of the soul. The Old Testament priests washed in the bronze laver and we must wash in Christ.

Pray for a holy heart.

Psalm 51: Create in me a clean heart.

Take your heart to the Lord and say, 'My heart is full of leprosy, it defiles all it touches. I am not fit to live with such a heart, for I cannot honour Thee. I cannot die with such a heart as it condemns me. O create in me a clean heart. Send thy Spirit into me to refine and purify me that I may be a temple fit for Thee, the Holy God to inhabit. '

Think of how holy men in the past have reacted to a sight of God's holiness. Job claps his hands over his mouth; Isaiah said 'I am undone'. Habbakuk 3:16

If you know this conversion of which I speak of then 'Be holy for I am holy says the Lord' Walk with them that are holy. Nothing has greater power and energy to affect holiness than being amongst God's people. Delight to be in God's house. Some say that you can have too much of a good thing but not when it comes to holiness. Old Mr Spurgeon used to say, 'No one upon reaching heaven will bemoan themselves and say I wish that I had not been so holy, but will bemoan themselves for not being more holy' find proper quote