

The Holiness of God - Part 2

by Art Katz

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing God's holiness as the foundation for trust, confidence, and worship, and warns against the consequences of sin against God's holiness.

Duration: 41:13

Scripture: Leviticus 11:44, John 10:10, Acts 17:28, Romans 1:18, Romans 11:33, Hebrews 12:6, 1 Peter 4:17

Topics: "Holiness Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being still and knowing that God is in control. He encourages believers to eliminate distractions and seek the knowledge of the holy. The speaker emphasizes that holiness is our life and that we should strive to know God deeply and intimately. He challenges believers to meditate on the holiness of God and to reflect His purity in their actions. Ultimately, the speaker reminds listeners that the world needs the reality of God, and believers can mediate that reality by dwelling in it and knowing their God.

Transcript

The classic paradigm is the relationship of the Father to the Son at the cross. And once we understand and have appropriated that, we have a foundation and a place for the consideration of our own issues. Having this foundation, seeing how the Father related to the Son, for the issue of his own holiness, that jealousy for his holiness will affect all of our own personal and subsequent considerations.

So that's why I'm insistent on coming back to that, if you'll allow me, where the author speaks about that his own holiness amounted to his affection for his Son, as we've already discussed. But more than that, that Jesus himself as the Son valued that holiness above his own person, since he submitted himself to the reproaches of men, to clear this perfection of the divine nature and make it illustrious in the eyes of the world. Not only did the Father exalt the issue of his holiness over the issue of the Son, the Son himself exalted the issue of holiness over himself.

The Father and the Son were in agreement that the cost was not excessive in seeing how important it is that the holiness of God be honored by the sacrifice of the Son. Both Father and Son were in agreement. So great is the issue of holiness that neither one flinched.

So he requires mortification called crucifying, whereby a man would strike as full of deadly a blow at his lust, as was struck at Christ upon the cross, and make them as certainly die as the Redeemer did. Our

own righteousness must be condemned by us, impure and imperfect. We must disown everything that is our own as to righteousness in reverence to the holiness of God and the value of the righteousness of Christ.

He will not have men brought only to a relative state of happiness by justification, without a real state of grace by sanctification. There is no admittance into heaven but of a persevering holiness. This is the foundation for all consideration of what is holy is what the Father and Son acknowledged as needful to requite the issue of the Father's name as holy against the world that has transgressed in sin against him.

And turning now to the end of the chapter, all sin is against the attribute of God's holiness. All sin aims in general at the being of God, but in particular at the holiness of his being. All sin is a violence to this perfection.

There is not an iniquity in the world, but directs its venomous sting against the divine purity. An interesting observation, whether men of the world are conscious of it, all of their vile conduct is in the last analysis addressed at countermending and contradicting the holiness of God, as if that holiness is an ultimate offense, and if they could only assail it and bring it down, all agree together in that enmity against this, which is the peculiar glory of the deity of God. There is an assault against the holiness of God.

The world despises what would have it removed as a standard. Holiness is the life of God. It endures as long as his life.

He must be eternally averse from sin. He can no longer than he lives in the hatred and loathing of it. If he should but for one instance cease to hate it, he would cease to live.

If God is not holy, he is not God, and his holiness requires to detest what is contrary to himself, which is sin. He cannot look on sin without loathing. He cannot look on sin, but his heart rises against it.

It must needs be most odious to him, as that which is against the glory of his nature and directly opposite to that which is the lustre and varnish of all other perfections. It is the abominable thing which his soul hates. And on what basis should we hate it? Exactly the same basis.

We do not hate iniquity until we hate it as the antithesis of the holiness of God. He loathes sin. He loathes evil.

He loathes iniquity because it is contrary to and an assault upon his holiness. And we ourselves must detest it for the same reason, or else we will be inclined to submit to it, and to compromise and condescend to sin. We need to hate it because it is an affront to the holiness of God.

That is the reason he hates it. The son that was distinguished by his love of righteousness and his hatred of iniquity. This detestation of sin must be manifested.

How should we certainly know his loathing of it if he did not manifest by some act how ungrateful it is to him? As his love to righteousness would not appear without rewarding it, so his hatred of iniquity would be as little evidence without punishing it. His justice is the great witness to his purity. The punishment therefore inflicted on the wicked shall be in some respect as great as the rewards bestowed upon the righteous.

The judgments of God that are even now in the earth are the statement of his holiness. But how many are rightly interpreting those natural so-called phenomena, floods and tsunamis and earthquakes and other colossal disasters, as being the judgment already of a preliminary kind that issues out of God's love for his own righteousness and his own holiness, and is already being expressed as warning to the unwary. These are not accidents of nature.

God established the tectonic plates beneath the sea and he knows when to move them. And so we are seeing an increase of devastation and calamities in the world. And they need to be rightly interpreted as in the first instance already as preliminary judgment to bring mankind to an awareness that the holiness of God is being offended against and must require his justice.

And that he's waiting for men even now to turn and to be saved from ultimate judgment in which there's no remedy. And that it's not extravagant now to bring even disasters of this kind. But where's a church that will have the courage to acknowledge that as true and to communicate that as true to a world that only sees it as a Time Magazine Newsweek natural phenomenon and not at all the hand of God.

We have got to see that in nature and in the devastations, the judgments of God already in defense of his holiness. But I say as a rule of thumb, a first consideration for any mishap, any calamity is to ask in what way is this a judgment for something that God wants to bring to my attention. Having put that before the Lord and examined that, if God does not indicate that, then you're free to give another construction to what you're suffering as not being the statement of judgment.

But the first examination and the first interpretation will not err by asking if it is not already a judgment that God is bringing to our consideration. And we're not only talking about natural catastrophes or tsunamis in the world, but instances in our own life. A sickness that has befallen us, the marriage that has gone awry, the son who is out of the faith, the fellowship that is being shaken.

In the first analysis, we have to ask, Lord, what are you saying through this? Are you indicating that you're allowing this, that there's something that we need to recognize that we have not seen in which we have been in error or in sin or neglect and that already that this is your patient indication that something needs radical correction and we receive it as judgment. So the church itself needs to come into a fresh respect for the issue of judgment as not being contrary to God, but in the very essence of his holy nature and that it's a mercy for judgment, especially of a preliminary kind that will save us if we will be turned by it from eternal judgments in which there's no remedy. So God cannot be holy and therefore cannot be just because injustice is a part of unholiness.

God's holiness and hatred of sin necessarily infer the punishment of it. Judgment is intrinsic to the issue of the holiness of God. The author takes up a new issue at this point in his article that the issue of God's holiness is the issue of our trust.

We can trust God and believe God and honor God for his word and for his promises because he is holy. And so our reservation, our doubt, our lack of security, our unwillingness to commit is a statement that we have not really understood God as holy. If we had, if we had that his promises are airtight, if you seek me with all your heart and all your soul, you shall be found on me.

If you ask your father, natural father of bread, for bread will he give you a stone? How much more than will your heavenly father give the gift of the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? There's much reservation, particularly in the realm of trusting God for the Holy Spirit by those who do not have an absolute

confidence in his promise. They're afraid that they'll get a stone rather than bread. Even though God said he'll give a gift to them who ask him.

So the issue of holiness and the recognition of the holiness of God is the basis for trust and confidence in the God who speaks and the God who promises. So I just want to read this here. This attribute renders God a fit object for trust and dependence.

The notion of an unholy and unrighteous God is an uncomfortable idea of him and beats off our hands from laying any hold of him. It is upon this attribute the reputation and honor of God in the world is built. What encouragement can we have to believe him? What incentives could we have to serve him without the luster of this in his nature? The very thought of an unrighteous God is enough to drive men at the greatest distance from him.

As the honesty of a man gives a reputation to his word, so does the holiness of God give credit to his promises. The issue of God's holiness is the issue of his word. The confidence we can have in his promises because he who speaks is holy.

I wrote at the bottom of the page. Can it be that the frequent failure to ask and receive the gift of the Spirit is to be attributed to a lack of the knowledge of God's holiness? All those denominational people who have found a way to gainsay and put aside the issue of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as that which is perfect has already come, there's no need for it, or that we already have it in our new birth, because there's a nervousness, there's a fear, I believe, to trust God and to believe for a phenomenon that has got to come out of your own mouth. So not to be tested in an area of which they are insecure in faith, they put aside the question entirely as being a non-question.

Are you following me? In my debates over the years with mainline fundamentalists who negate the baptism of the Holy Spirit, it's always on some specious denominational doctrinal ground that it's not a valid and present experience to be obtained now. And what I suspect is that they elaborate all kinds of doctrinal reasons to save themselves from a test of faith that they do not believe they will pass. Because you could believe for many things, but to believe to receive the promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit requires an evidence that issues out of your own mouth by faith.

And so I'm saying the real problem is this. They have not believed God as holy. The lack of the acknowledgement and knowledge of God as holy and whose promise is true is reflected in the fear of believing for that promise.

Whereas if they had a full confidence that he who speaks is holy and will not contradict himself, then they will have an abandon and a yieldedness in faith by which they enter the precious dimension. And by the way, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a precious, necessary dimension. To forsake that is to live a stunted and inadequate Christian life all the days of your life.

You're shorting yourself from such an intention of benefit that God would not allow the church to proceed in its fulfillment until it had waited and tarried in Jerusalem until it would be endued with power from on high. The church is as much under obligation now for that enduement, for the fulfillment of what was begun then as it was in its inception. To live a fundamentalist, correct, technical life independent of the reality of that baptism by which when you speak with tongues, you edify yourself and you're built up in the inner man, how can you afford not to be? When Paul says I speak with tongues more than you all, he's not at all making a single reference to any public statement in tongues in church situations that needed to be

interpreted.

He's speaking exclusively of his personal, private, devotional life. And I want to say that if he had not spoken in tongues more than his soul, he would not be Paul. His power publicly and what he performs and expresses as benefits the church and the epistles he writes is the result of the luxuriating of his soul in the realm of being bathed in spirit by praying in the spirit in tongues more than us all.

To avoid that dimension is to remove from the believer the most essential gift of God for the overcoming life. And yet there are millions in that fundamentalist mentality that have put it aside, I believe, out of fear of an insecurity of an inadequate faith that can appropriate, because they do not trust God for his promise as holy that if you ask your Heavenly Father, he'll give you the gift of the Holy Spirit more than your natural Father will give you bread and not a stone. To believe God as holy is to believe God who speaks, is to believe God who promises, and to receive what he promises, because you can have an uttermost confidence because he's holy, holy, holy, and he's not a man that he should lie.

I've never before considered that the issue of the knowledge of God as holy is the issue of trust for us and confidence in his word and in his promise. And that where we are weak in that regard, we're weak in the knowledge of his holiness, so that if the promises are to be restored and act upon, it will be in proportion as we've come to a fresh acknowledgement of God as holy and that he's not a man that he should lie. For if you who are unholy, having so much corruption to render you cruel, can bestow upon your children the good things they want, how much more shall God, who is holy and hath nothing in him to check his mercifulness to his creatures, grant the petition of his supplicants? So I'm grateful that the author takes up this issue, that we should have a confidence because God's holiness is engaged in his inviolable covenant.

So the whole issue of covenant and his promise and faithfulness rest upon the holiness of God who has made it. And so in the midst of despair and in things that seem terribly out of sort, broken situations, the thing to which Zika is returning with his wife now who has flipped out our sister with her situation with her husband in Hong Kong, whatever situation we're facing, however despairing, we have an ultimate confidence in the covenant-keeping God, that as we will honor and keep covenant, he will honor that honoring and be the third fold cold cord that will not be broken and see us through what seemingly otherwise would be a hopeless situation and bring it through, not just to a resolution by which domestic harmony is obtained, but his glory forever, that in fact he's allowed the crisis for the revelation of his greater glory, that there's more at stake here than the issue of personal happiness. It's the glory of God forever who allows something to be broken in order to be restored to the everlasting praise of his glory.

Let us get and preserve right and strong apprehensions of this divine perfection. Without a due sense of it, we can never exalt God in our hearts. And the more distinct conceptions we have of this and the rest of his attributes, the more we glorify him.

So we can almost say that the want of worship, true worship, the want of real exaltation of God, the want of adoration is also the issue of holiness. That there's something wanting in the way in which we have perceived God that does not release us into an ultimate dimension of the kind of worship and praise which is his due. That adoration is an ultimate statement, but it only comes to those who know him as holy, holy, holy.

And therefore when they open and lift their voices in praise, something rings, something registers out of a depth of that knowledge that transfigures the whole act of worship and makes it more than just the issue of

music or song. So we need to strive for the greater knowledge. Our reference to God will arrive in a greater degree if every act of duty be ushered in and seasoned with the thoughts of God as sitting upon a throne of holiness.

We shall have a more becoming sense of our own vileness, a greater honor to his service, a deeper respect in his presence if our understanding be more cleared and possessed with notions of this perfection. Thus, before a view of God in this part of his glory, before you fall down before the throne and assure yourselves you will find your hearts and services quickened with a new and lively spirit. This knowledge of God as holy is not automatic.

It needs to be sought, needs to be cultivated, needs to be nurtured, needs to be increased, needs to be deepened. And with it will come a consequent benefit for every aspect of the believing life. Worship, service, prayer, devotion, it will save us from being merely mechanical in our morning devotional times.

We'll come to it with a greater eagerness and a greater delight. Everything rests on the knowledge of God as holy, and yet everything contends against that knowledge. The world wants to block that out or disparage the holiness of God.

So it needs to be contended for. To contend for the faith once and for all, given the saints, as I've said innumerable times, is much more than the issues of the sum of its doctrines. To contend for the faith is to contend for God as God.

It's to contend for God as holy, because everything seems to militate against it. To reduce him, to make him a commonplace, a Johnny-come-lately, one who's doing your errands. There's something about the nature of things that contends against the issue of the holiness of God that needs to be pursued with an intention.

And you can believe that it will be resisted. The enemy does not want us to grow in this knowledge, because this knowledge affects everything. It affects our worship, it affects our service, it affects our relationship, it affects our willingness to bear through present struggle, because what is at stake is his name, his honor, his glory.

So strive to come to an increased and deepened knowledge, because as I come to the end now of this chapter, the author says, holiness is our life. The life of the soul consists not of its being or spiritual substance, the excellency of its faculties of understanding, but in the moral and becoming operations of them. The spirit is only life because of righteousness.

I have to confess, he's over my head. I don't know what he's saying, but I like it. The spirit is life because of righteousness.

The issue of holiness is the issue of life, because the issue of holiness is the genius of what is moral. And if you take from man the moral quotient, you reduce man, you make of him an animal. The moral thing is the distinctive, and it's rooted in the issue of what is holy.

The fact that God is holy means that he's given us conscience, and that he's given us a moral root of being, that there's something more to life than just feeding your face, washing your clothes, going through motions. If you are not distinctly a moral being, you have lost the uniqueness of your identity as a human being. And the enemy is bent upon ruining and removing this moral consciousness from man, deadening the conscience.

But he is saying that this moral quotient that reflects and is given by the God who is holy is the very issue of our humanity. Jesus said I've come to bring you life and that more abundantly. Paul was a full-armed man.

He wasn't the little paper cutout walking on eggshells in a kind of pseudo-spirituality. He was a mensch. He was a man.

He knew the poetry of the Greeks, he said, as even your own poets have written. He was diverse. He was broad in his understanding.

He could relate to Jews. He could relate to pagans. He was the man of God.

He was the man of the spirit. He was a man of deep feelings who knew the sorrow and grief by which he would wish himself a curse for his brethren's sake, and then two, three chapters later, his exalting God, oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. Paul could not be that man without the moral dimension that comes in the knowledge of the holy.

That needs to come into our consciousness. So my first address to teachers in Albania, out of an 80-year history of atheism, who are now supported by a German mission, is that I speak to the faculty, these teachers, our children attending their school, and the Lord gave me a message that I'd never before spoken, moral, the word moral. What is moral? I said, what is your teaching profession if it does not have its end in your consciousness, moral intention? What is your subject matter if it is not a vehicle for the bringing up of moral consideration? What is moral but the considering of what is right or just or good or bad in the situations by which we live? How can you be a teacher and not bring these considerations before your students? And unless you yourself are considering them, how shall you bring them? And when you begin to weigh moral issues, you find a kind of exhaustion, a drain, a demand upon your inner man that was not there.

And in fact, the demand is so great that you cannot consider moral things independent of God. You need his energy even to consider the things that are ultimate, that are moral and holy. So in the last analysis, the moral concern drives you to God, because in the last analysis, the issue of what is moral is God.

P.T. Forsythe, one of my favorite authors, speaks of love as holy love. And if you omit the holy, then the love becomes something less sentimental. What distinguishes the love of God, it is a holy love.

And so even that love permits terror, permits fear, permits the knowledge of God that makes us to quake and to tremble. Paul says, knowing the terror of God, I persuade men. There's something to be said for the fear of God, as a grace to give him the proper reverence and due that he deserves.

All of these are the expressions of his holiness. So every person is morally dead while he lives an unholy life. It is only holiness that fits us for communion with God, because it brings a greater nearness and partakes more fully of the fountain of life.

Communion with God is proportionate to our ability to approach a God who is holy and to dwell in the presence and so obtain the remarkable benevolences that issue from his life as we can approach a God who is holy. With what communion can an excellent God have with deformed creatures, a living God with the dead? Without holiness, none shall see God. The creature must be stripped of his unrighteousness or God of his purity before they can come together.

Likeness is the ground of communion and of delight in it. The opposition between God and unholy souls is as great as that between light and darkness. Divine fruition is not so much by a union of presence as a union of nature.

Be holy as I am holy is not just an abstract command, it is God's inducement that we can come into his presence, that he might receive us being holy and in that receiving communicate and mediate to us those things that issue out from his own holy life. Because he cannot have communion with that which is contrary to himself. So be holy as I am holy and giving us every grace to be that and to esteem that and to seek that for that communion.

So the author writes, let us be often reviewing and ruminating on the holiness of God especially as discovered in Christ. The excellent idea of the holiness of God in Christ perfects our understanding and awakens all the powers of our soul to be formed to be actions worthy of him. How can we arise to conformity to God in Christ whose most holy nature we seldom glance upon and more rarely sink our souls into the depths of it by meditation? Be frequent in the meditation of the holiness of God.

Think upon it, contemplate it, read men who have like this gone off into deep waters to try and express and define the issues that pertain to his holiness. Sit down yourself and write. What is the holiness of God? What is righteousness? Try and define, try and articulate, make it your own.

We mustn't be lazy and slothful here because the more that we grapple with, wrestle with, love, seek to know and to appropriate, the more we attain the reality itself. How would we become holy as he is holy? By the contemplation of what is holiness, by the meditation upon it, particularly as it is revealed in his son. Be frequent in the meditation of the holiness of God.

Let us make God our end. Every man's mind forms itself to a likeness to that which makes it its chief end. What is your chief end? What is the object of your contemplation? To what do you give your thought and consideration? We have to shift from other and lesser subjects to the subject of the holiness of God, if we ourselves to come into increasingly that reality through meditation.

When God and his glory are made our end, we shall find a silent likeness passed in upon us and the beauty of God will by degrees enter upon our souls. In every deliberate action, let us reflect upon the divine purity as a pattern. Let us examine whether anything we are prompted to bear an impression of God upon it, whether it looks like a thing that God himself would do.

See whether it has the sense of God upon it, how in keeping it is with his nature, whether and in what manner the holiness of God can be glorified thereby. Be still and know that I am God. Shut off the clamor, shut off the distraction, pull the plug on the TV, the various things that drain time, attention and energy in the quest for news.

But what is the news in the last analysis? Nothing new at all. And the curiosity for the news is sometimes with believers is almost perverse. They have to have the news when nothing in fact is really new.

It's deadly. So we need to make room for, be critical of, eliminate distraction, seek the knowledge of the holy, deliberate upon it, dwell upon it and become it. Because as he says, holiness is our life.

Let us address for holiness to God the fountain of it as he is the author of bodily life, so is he the author of his own life, the life of God in the soul. By his holiness he makes men holy as the sun by his light enlightens the air. He is not only the holy one, but our holy one, the Lord that sanctifies us as he has

mercy to pardon us, so has he holiness to purify us, the excellency of being a sun to comfort us, a shield to protect us, giving grace and glory.

He only can mold us into a divine frame. The great original can only derive the excellency of his own nature to us. We are too low, too lame to lift up ourselves, too much in love with our own deformity to admit of this beauty without a heavenly power inclining our desires for it, our affections to it, our willingness to be partakers of it.

God himself in the last analysis is the author, the purveyor, the communicator, the giver of his own holy nature. And this is God's object, that we should be holy as he is holy and have eternal communion with him on that basis. And that he provides the expression of his own nature that we might obtain it.

Isn't that remarkable? We earthly things that were taken off of dump heaps are being fitted to an eternal relationship with God in holiness, in union with him, in his own nature. What greater gift than the giving of himself in his essential attribute, holiness. And that that process is now, is going on now.

And as we cannot attain to it, so we cannot maintain it without him. God gave Adam and he lost it, and God gives it us, we shall lose it without his influencing and preserving grace. The channel will be without a stream if the fountain do not bubble it forth, and the streams will vanish if the fountain does not constantly supply them.

Let us apply ourselves to him for holiness as he is a God glorious in holiness, and by this we honor God and advantage ourselves. So seek him for this expressed thing, his nature, his holiness, that we might be like him. Not to be embarrassed by it or think that somehow it's unbecoming to aspire to the holiness of God.

After all, we're only men. It's God's intention, his provisions, the whole end of our salvation, our redemption, that we should be like him, holy as he is holy. So let's make it a petition.

Let's ask and keep on asking and receive the means by which he's communicating his nature, dealing with us in the areas of struggle, disappointment, life situations, that we wonder how come that we're in such an impasse, such a struggle, because by it uniquely we're being fitted for it. It's the means by which his nature is being communicated, and he's identifying lesser things that would have been acceptable in our sight, but are contrary to his holiness, that now need to be identified and dealt with, put away, that we might come into the ultimate condition that he himself abides. And nothing less evidently would have obtained this, and that it's worth it.

We will say later it was worth it all. It was painful. It was agonizing.

What a struggle. It tore my guts out. I spit my guts out.

What poor Zika is going back to is going to be a struggle of an ultimate kind. It will be stupefying. It'll be madness.

He'll see unfaithfulness. He'll see desertion. He'll see betrayal.

He'll catch his wife in bed with another man, maybe more than once or whatever is comparable, that rips the very soul out of a man. Whatever is needful, the end there will be a holy man serving the purposes of God in his own nature. And somehow it could not have been attained without that struggle.

So when you ask, Lord, that I might be holy as you are holy, and whatever it takes to obtain it, you're asking much. And when his answer comes as trial, as suffering, don't be surprised by the unusual trial as if it's a shock, as if it were not intended, but say, this is the very answer to the prayer that I've asked. To be perfected in the holiness of God by necessity requires a trial, requires demand, requires dealings of a kind that we would otherwise have avoided if we would have been satisfied for less.

If we would have been satisfied with being nice guys who also believed, we would not have had to face it. But if we got to be holy as he is holy, there's no shortcut except through the provision of sacrifice of trial of dealings, the cross. So Lord, grant to us ultimate desire to obtain every day more the measure of your holiness.

It's simply not enough to be a nice guy who believes. The world is not going to be saved by nice guys. The world has a much deeper need than a band-aid, a little amelioration, a little pat on the back.

It needs a reality of an ultimate kind, which is God, by those who can mediate that reality because they abide and dwell in it, because they know they're God. So Lord, help us from being sissies that want to be spared. Grant us a jealousy for this knowledge of your ultimate nature, Lord, that does not come cheap, not just to meditate it, to dwell upon what it is, but to obtain it by union with you in the fellowship of your sufferings.

So we thank you, my God, that you shall have a people for your name. They shall be the very thing in themselves. Thank you, Lord.

Precious God, your intention for us is ultimate, and we bless you. Help us with a little help, we pray, to bear all that we must that we might be like you, for Jesus' sake.

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