The Holiness of God

David C. Mills
Born2Serve Ministries
November 2005

This page intentionally left blank.

As I look back, I believe that one of the greatest changes came into my life, at such a point when God saw it fit to allow me to comprehend just a shadow of His holiness. It was at that time, when much of what I had been taught about God and His nature, seemed to all solidify. It also opened my eye gates wide in respect to things such as His preservation of His Holy Words, our command to live holy, be patience, meek, etc., as well as His command for such things as modesty. When I think of this time in my life, I often remember Isaiah's similar experience when he beheld the holiness of Jehovah and cried out "Woe is me! for I am undone". This is what the correct view of God's holiness should produce in our life. The holiness of God is noted, as it was viewed among the host in heaven, as recorded in Isaiah and witness by John, as they worshiped God with those resounding words, "Holy, Holy, Holy", thrice repeated, assuring all the host in heaven, as well as those on earth to come, that God is indeed holy.

The Bible not only speaks of His exalted status, but also God's sinless perfection.[i] Charles Ryrie has stated that "holiness is the absents of evil and the presents of positive right". However, holiness is not only the absence of sin and evil, corruption and perversion, but also the infusion of all the other attributes of God, collectively and separately. It is a "characteristic or quality of each and all"[ii] of God's attributes. Dr. Harry Carr has declared that "holiness describes the absolute purity of the entire character of God."[iii] "He is the One in whom these eternal sanctities reside, who is himself the root and ground of them all, as stated by David Cloud."[iv] The very nature of God Himself is holiness, and thus His acts and will in them are utmost holy.

Many speak of God's goodness; however this should not be confused with His holiness. God's goodness is holy, but His holiness is much more than good. His holiness is not only trumpeted from the heavens, but also echoed on earth by the saints, wherever God has revealed Himself to men.[v] God's goodness to man, reveals His holiness.

The Word of God speaks much on the holiness of God. In the Old Testament, it often times applied to His absoluteness and majesty of being the Godhead, supremely Divine. There are also times in the Old Testament where it is speaking of an ethical and moral holiness as well. God commanded man to "Be ye holy; for I am holy", this communicates a tangible likeness, conveyed by actions. Although the ceremonial facets of holiness in the Old Testament are not carried over, those of moral holiness are passed over into, and many times expanded on, in the New Testament. As reiterated by Charles Finney, the Bible term for holiness, is synonymous with moral purity.[vi] Thus the two cannot be separated. This is the case with many of God's attributes, as they coexist with His holiness.

As I try to grasp the holiness of God, I have been reminded that His holiness is not just my best conception of holiness, multiplied infinitely. God is much more than we could even imagine, and that would still be underestimating the holiness of God. Holiness is what God is, the way He is. It is not a standard that He conforms to, but that He Himself is the standard.[vii] As an illustration, although not perfect, a yardstick is a yard; it is not measured but is the rule of measurement. The holiness of God cannot be measured, and

is more extensive then we can imagine.[viii] The holiness of God however, is and should become the standard for which every believer's life and conduct is governed by.

In relation to God's holiness, there are in turn consequences of that which is not holy. The holiness of God may very well be the one perfection that sinful humanity dislikes the most, and mans sinful nature most strives to feed. In contrast, sin collides with the holiness of God,[ix] and thus sin must be removed before fellowship can begin. Sinners must be separated from God[x], which in turn requires Jesus Christ, the all sufficient Saviour and His holiness, to redeem them. It is only the holiness of God that can bridge the gap between sinful men and an all holy, holy, holy God.

This being a foundational perfection of God, the holiness of God, should be forefront in all things "Christian". Our lives and decisions must be based on God's holiness. It should also be a road map for praise and worship, as they too should be based upon God's holiness. Dr. W. M. Temple, a British preacher, defines worship like this: "For to worship is to quicken the conscience by the Holiness of God;". The holiness of God not only underlines, but also strengthens all other scriptural truths. Even as we view the law, it too reveals the holiness of God. Only a holy and righteous God could have written such a law. Such a law that would reveal mans wicked sin, so that a holy God could save a wretch like me.

So many are calling for revival, however true revival comes when men see their true condition before an all holy God. That is why we have been commanded to be ye Holy, for I am Holy!

[i] The Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible & Christianity, David Cloud, God's Holiness
[ii] Charles Finney's Systematic Theology, Lecture XII, Attributes of Love
[iii] This I Believe, Harry E. Carr
[iv] The Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible & Christianity, David Cloud, God's Holiness
[v] Knowledge of the Holy, A.W. Tozer, The Goodness of God
[vi] Charles Finney's Systematic Theology, Lecture XII, Attributes of Love
[vii] Knowledge of the Holy A.W. Tozer, , The Holiness of God
[viii] A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections, Part III , Jonathan Edwards
[ix] This I Believe, Harry E. Carr
[x] Basic Theology, Charles C. Ryrie