

Articles and Sermons :: The Holiness Of God by A. W. Pink

The Holiness Of God by A. W. Pink, on: 2008/1/5 13:53

The Holiness Of God

by A. W. Pink

"Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou only art holy..." (Rev. 15:4). God only is independent, infinitely, unchangeably 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, untarnished even by the shadow of sin. "...God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). Holiness is the very excellency of the divine nature: the great God is "glorious in holiness" (Ex. 15:11). Therefore do we read, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity..." (Hab. 1:13).

As God's power is the opposite of the native weakness of the creature, as His wisdom is in complete contrast from the least defect of understanding or folly, so His holiness is the very opposite of all moral blemish or defilement. Of old God appointed singers in Israel that they "should praise the beauty of holiness" (2 Chron. 20:21).

"Power is God's hand or arm, omniscience His eye, mercy His bowels, eternity His duration, but holiness is His beauty" (S. Charnock, a Puritan author). It is this, supremely, which renders Him lovely to those who are delivered from sin's dominion.

A chief emphasis is placed upon this perfection of God: "God is oftener styled Holy than Almighty, and set forth by this part of His dignity more than by any other. 'Holy' is more often attached to His name as appropriate to express its quality, than any other word. You never find it expressed 'His mighty name' or 'His wise name,' but His great name, and most of all, His holy name. This is the greatest title of honour; in 'holy' the majesty and worthiness of His name appear" (S. Charnock).

This perfection, as none other, is solemnly celebrated before the Throne of Heaven, the seraphim crying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts" (Isa. 6:3). God Himself singles out this perfection: "Once have I sworn by My holiness" (Psa. 89:35). God swears by His holiness because that is a fuller expression of Himself than anything else. Therefore we are exhorted, "Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness" (Psa. 30:4). "This may be said to be a transcendental attribute that, as it were, runs through the rest, and casts luster upon them. It is an attribute of attributes" (J. Howe, 1670).

Thus we read of "the beauty of the Lord" (Psa. 27:4), which is none other than "the beauty of holiness" (Psa. 29:2).

"As it seems to challenge an excellency above all His other perfections, so it is the glory of all the rest: as it is the glory of the Godhead, so it is the glory of every perfection in the Godhead; as His power is the strength of them, so His holiness is the beauty of them; as all would be weak without almightiness to back them, so all would be unlovely without holiness to adorn them. Should this be sullied, all the rest would lose their honour; as at the same instant the sun should lose its light, it would lose its heat, its strength, its generative and quickening virtue. As sincerity is the luster of every grace in a Christian, so is purity the splendour of every attribute in the Godhead. His justice is a holy justice, His wisdom a holy wisdom, His power a 'holy arm' (Psa. 98:1). His truth or promise a 'holy promise' (Psa. 105:42). His name, which signifies all His attributes in conjunction, is 'holy' (Psa. 103:1)" (S. Charnock).

God's Holiness Is Manifested in His Works

"The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works" (Psa. 145:17). Nothing but that which is excellent can proceed from Him. Holiness is the rule of all His actions. At the beginning He pronounced all that He made "very good" (Gen. 1:31), which He could not have done had there been anything imperfect or unholy in them. Man was made "upright" (Ecc. 7:29), in the image and likeness of his Creator. The angels that fell were created holy, for we are told that they "kept not their first estate" (Jude 6). Of Satan it is written, "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created"

ed, till iniquity was found in thee" (Ezek. 28:15).

God's Holiness Is Manifested in His Law

That law forbids sin in all of its modifications: in its most refined as well as its grossest forms, the intent of the mind as well as the pollution of the body, the secret desire as well as the overt act. Therefore do we read, "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12). Yes, "the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether" (Psa. 19:8-9).

God's Holiness Is Manifest at the Cross

Wondrously and yet most solemnly does the Atonement display God's infinite holiness and abhorrence of sin. How hateful sin must be to God for Him to punish it to its utmost deserts when it was imputed to His Son!

"Not all the vials of judgment that have or shall be poured out upon the wicked world, nor the flaming furnace of a sinner's conscience, nor the irreversible sentence pronounced against the rebellious demons, nor the groans of the damned creatures, give such a demonstration of God's hatred of sin, as the wrath of God let loose upon His Son. Never did divine holiness appear more beautiful and lovely than at the time our Saviour's countenance was most marred in the midst of His dying groans. This He Himself acknowledges in Psalm 22. When God had turned His smiling face from Him, and thrust His sharp knife into His heart, which forced that terrible cry from Him, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' He adores this perfection—'Thou art holy' (v.3)" (S. Charnock).

Because God is holy, He hates all sin. He loves everything which is in conformity to His laws, and loathes everything which is contrary to it. His Word plainly declares, "The froward is abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 3:32). And again, "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 15:26). It follows, therefore, that He must necessarily punish sin. Sin can no more exist without demanding His punishment than without requiring His hatred of it. God has often forgiven sinners...and the sinner is only forgiven on the ground of Another having borne his punishment: for "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9:22).

Therefore we are told, "The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for His enemies" (Nah. 1:2). For one sin God banished our first parents from Eden. For one sin Moses was excluded from Canaan, Elisha's servant smitten with leprosy, Ananias and Sapphira cut off out of the land of the living.

Herein we find proof for the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. The unregenerate do not really believe in the holiness of God. Their conception of His character is altogether one-sided. They fondly hope that His mercy will override everything else. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether...as thyself" (Psa. 50:21) is God's charge against them. They think only of a "god" patterned after their own evil hearts. Hence their continuance in a course of mad folly. Such is the holiness ascribed to the divine nature and character in Scripture that it clearly demonstrates their superhuman origin.

The character attributed to the "gods" of the ancients and of modern heathendom is the very reverse of that immaculate purity which pertains to the true God. An awesome, sacred, holy God, who has the utmost abhorrence of all sin, was never invented by any of Adam's fallen descendants! The fact is that nothing makes more manifest the terrible depravity of man's heart and his enmity against the living God than to have set before him One who is infinitely and immutably holy. The depraved heart's own idea of sin is practically limited to what the world calls crime. Anything short of that, man puts in less serious terms, like defects, mistakes, infirmities, etc. And even where sin is owned at all, excuses are made for it.

The "god" which the vast majority of professing Christians "love" is looked upon very much like an indulgent old man, who himself has no relish for folly, but leniently winks at the "indiscretions" of youth. But the Word says, "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity" (Psa. 5:5). And again, "God is angry with the wicked every day" (Psa. 7:11). But men refuse to believe in this God, and gnash their teeth when His hatred of sin is faithfully pressed upon their attention. Sinful man was no more likely to devise a holy God than to create the place of everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:46).

Because God is holy, acceptance with Him on the ground of creature doings is utterly impossible. A fallen creature could more easily create a world than produce that which would meet the approval of infinite Purity. Can darkness dwell with Light? Can the Immaculate One take pleasure in "filthy rags"? (Isa. 64:6). The best that sinful man brings forth is defilement. A corrupt tree cannot bear good fruit. God would deny Himself, and disgrace His perfections, were He to account as righteous

ghteous and holy that which is not so in itself; and nothing is so which has the least stain upon it contrary to the nature of God.

But blessed be His name that which His holiness demanded, His grace has provided in Christ Jesus our Lord! Every poor sinner who has fled to Him for refuge stands "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6). Hallelujah!

Utmost Reverence for God

Because God is holy, the utmost reverence is most suitable to our approaches unto Him. "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him" (Psa. 89:7). Then "Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at His footstool; for He is holy" (Psa. 99:5). Yes, "at His footstool," in the lowest posture of humility, prostrate before Him. When Moses would approach the burning bush, God said, "Å...put off thy shoes from off thy feet" (Ex. 3:5). He is to be served "with fear" (Psa. 2:11). Of Israel His demand was, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me, and before all the people I will be glorified" (Lev. 10:3). The more our hearts are awed by His inexpressible holiness, the more acceptable will be our approaches to Him.

Conformed to God

Because God is holy we should desire to be conformed to Him. His commandment is "Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:16). We are not bidden to be omnipotent or omniscient as God is, but we are to be holy, and that "in all manner of conversation" (1 Pet. 1:15). "This is the prime way of honouring God. We do not so glorify God by elevated admirations, or eloquent expressions, or pompous services for Him as when we aspire to a conversing with Him with unstained spirits, and live to Him in living like Him" (S. Charnock).

Then as God alone is the source and fount of holiness, let us earnestly seek holiness from Him; let our daily prayer be that He may "sanctify wholly" and our "whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thes. 5:23).