

## THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY (A. W. TOZER)

### PART 4 – GOD IS A HOLY GOD

#### 1. *The Definition of God's Holiness*

- Holy is the way God is. To be holy, He does not conform to a standard. He is that standard. His holiness characterizes each one of His attributes; He displays each to a perfect, unparalleled degree, and He exercises each fully without relinquishing another.
- We cannot grasp the true meaning of the divine holiness by thinking of someone or something very pure and then raising the concept to the highest degree we are capable of. God's holiness is not simply the best we know infinitely bettered.
- We know nothing like the divine holiness. It stands apart, unique, unapproachable, incomprehensible, and unattainable (Exodus 15:11; Isaiah 6:3; 57:15; I Timothy 6:16).

#### 2. *The Revelation of God's Holiness*

- Rudolf Otto (b. 1869) makes a strong case for the presence in the world of a vague, incomprehensible Something. It remains as a permanent religious instinct, a feeling for that unnamed, undiscoverable Presence that "runs through creation's veins."
- This nonrational dread, continues Tozer, this feeling for the uncreated Mystery in the world, is back of all religion (cf. Ecclesiastes 3:11; Romans 1:19-20; Acts 17:23, 27-29)—behind the pure religion of the Bible and the basest animism of a tribesman.

- The difference is that the latter "feels after" an unknown God, while Isaiah and Paul have found the true God through His self-disclosure in the Scriptures.
- In the Bible, this awful Presence is shown to be, not a Thing, but a moral Being with all the warm qualities of genuine personality. More than this, He is the absolute quintessence of moral excellence, infinitely perfect in righteousness, purity, rectitude, and incomprehensible holiness. To the innate idea of God there are added the twin concepts of personality and moral character, but there remains the original sense of wonder and fear in the presence of the world-filling Mystery.

#### 3. *The Ramifications of God's Holiness*

- God is holy, and He has made holiness the moral condition necessary to the health of His universe. Sin's temporary presence in the world only accents this. Whatever is holy is healthy; evil is a moral sickness that must end ultimately in death (cf. Genesis 2:17).
- Since God's first concern for His universe is its moral health—that is, its holiness—whatever is contrary to that is necessarily under His eternal displeasure.
  - God's righteousness/justice
    - Justice embodies the idea of moral equity, and iniquity is the exact opposite; it is *in*-equity, the absence of equality from human thoughts and acts.
    - Justice, when used of God, is a name we give to the way God is, and when God acts justly He is not doing so to conform to an independent criterion, but is simply acting like Himself in a given situation.
    - Everything in the universe is good to the degree it conforms to the nature of God and evil as it fails to do so.

- God's wrath
  - To preserve His creation, God must destroy whatever would destroy it.
  - When He arises to put down iniquity and save the world from irreparable moral collapse, He is said to be angry.
  - Every wrathful judgment in the history of the world has been a holy act of preservation.
  - The holiness of God, the wrath of God, and the health of creation are inseparably united.
  - God's wrath is His utter intolerance of whatever degrades and destroys. He hates iniquity as a mother hates the polio that takes the life of her child.

#### 4. *The Impartation of God's Holiness*

- A question should be brought to our mind at this point, and we'll state it in two ways:
  - *Practically stated* – How can we stand, seeing that we are contributing to the moral decay of this universe through the principle and practice of sin within us? How can we escape God's wrath?
  - *Theologically stated* – How can God spare the wicked and still be just/righteous?
- The answer is the Doctrine of Redemption which has two facets:
  - *Christ is our Substitute* – The just penalty for sin was exacted when Christ our Substitute died for us on the cross. Through the work of Christ in atonement, justice is not violated but satisfied when God spares a sinner.

*Because of our sin, we are all under sentence of death, a judgment which resulted when justice confronted our moral situation. When infinite equity encountered our chronic and willful in-equity, there was violent war between the two, a war which God won and must always win. But when the penitent*

*sinner casts himself upon Christ for salvation, the moral situation is reversed. Justice confronts the changed situation and pronounces the believing man just. Thus, justice actually goes over to the side of God's trusting children.*

- *Christ is our Righteousness* – While there is an absolute holiness that knows no degrees and is shared by none but God, there is a relative and contingent holiness which He shares and must with those who hope to relate to Him. This, He shares through the imputation and impartation of Jesus' righteousness to those of faith, and because He has made it available to us through the blood of the Lamb, He requires it of us. We must hide our unholiness in the wounds of Christ; we must take refuge from God in God. Then, we must believe that God sees us perfect in His Son while He disciplines and chastens and purges us that we may be partakers of His holiness.

#### **Conclusion**

- Wrong question = How can you believe in a God who would condemn people to suffer the torments of hell eternally? ("The vague and tenuous hope that God is too kind to punish the ungodly has become a deadly opiate for the consciences of millions.")
- Right question = How can you believe in a God who would not?

*Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head.*

*Bold shall I stand in Thy great day;  
For who aught to my charge shall lay?  
Fully absolved through these I am  
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.*