

# The Holiness of God

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Pastor and author A.W. Tozer

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I am to speak tonight on the holiness of God and I want to read some passages. Exodus 15, and who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness? Job 15, Behold, He puteth no trust in His saints, yea the heavens are not clean in His sight. Job 25, behold, even to the moon and it shineth not, yea the stars are not pure in His sight. How much less man that is a worm and the son of man which is a worm. Psalm 22, Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Proverbs 9:10, The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding. Isaiah 6:3, One cried unto another and said, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory.

They say that when Leonardo da Vinci painted his famous Last Supper, that he had little difficulty with any of it except the faces. Then he painted the faces in without too much trouble, except one. He did not feel himself worthy to paint the face of Jesus. He held off and kept holding off. Unwilling to approach it, but knowing he must. And then in the impulsive carelessness of despair. He just painted it quickly and let it go. There's no use he said, I can't paint Him. In speaking on the holiness of God, I feel very much the same way.

This last week, I rather suffered through this and wondered why today and tonight I was able to get around at all. But I think that same sense of despair is on my heart. There isn't any use for anybody to try. If it's an orator, he can play his oratorical harp, but it sounds tinny and unreal. And when he's through, you've listened to music, but you haven't seen God. I suppose that the hardest thing about God to comprehend is His infinitude. I know that intellectually; that's the hardest thing to grasp. But you can't talk about the infinitude of God and not feel yourself a worm. But when you talk about the holiness of God, you have not only the problem of an intellectual grasp, but you have a sense of personal vileness which is almost too much to bear.

Now, the reason for this is that we are fallen beings. We are fallen spiritually, morally, mentally, and physically. We are fallen in all the ways that men can fall, being what they are. And we are all, and each of us, born into a tainted world. We're born into a tainted world and we learn impurity from our cradles. We nursed it in with our mother's milk. We breathe it in, the very air. Our education deepens it and our experience confirms it, evil impurities everywhere, and everything is dirty. Even our whitest white is dingy gray and our noblest heroes are soiled heroes, all of them.

So, we learned to excuse and overlook, and not to expect too much. We don't expect all truth from our teachers. And we don't expect all faithfulness from our politicians. And we quickly forgive

them when they lie to us and vote for them again. And we don't expect honesty from the merchants. And we don't expect complete trustworthiness from anybody. And we managed to get along in the world only by passing laws to protect ourselves; from not only the criminal element, but from the best people there are who might in the moment of temptation take advantage of us.

So, fallen man, being born in this kind of world, living here, breathing it in; and gets into his pores, gets into his lungs, into his nerves, into his cells, until he has lost the ability to conceive of the Holy. But I would speak of the holiness of God, or of the Holy, or of the Holy One. We cannot comprehend this; and we certainly cannot define it, because holiness means purity. But that isn't enough. Purity merely means that it's unmixed. There's nothing else in it, but that isn't enough. We talk of moral excellency, but that is inadequate. For we say to be morally excellent is to excel somebody else in moral character. But, about whom are we speaking when we say that God is morally excellent? He excelled somebody. Who is it that He excels? The angels, the seraphim I suppose?

But that isn't still enough. We mean rectitude. We mean honor. We mean truth and righteousness. And we mean all of these--uncreated and eternal. God is not now any holier than He ever was, or He, being unchanging and unchangeable, can never become holier than He is and He never was holier than He is and He'll never be any holier than now. And it means self-existence, for He did not get His holiness from anyone, nor from anywhere. He did not go off into some vast, infinitely distant realm and there absorb His Holiness, but He is Himself the Holiness. He is the Holy. He is the All Holy. He is the Holy One. He is holiness itself, beyond the power of thought to grasp, or of word to express, beyond the power of all praise.

Now, language can't express the holy, so God resorts to association and suggestion. He cannot say it outright, because He would have to use words that we don't know the meaning of. And we would then, of course, take the words He used and translate them downward into our terms. If He were to use a word describing His own holiness, we could not understand that word as He uttered it. He would have to translate it down into our unholiness. If He were to tell us how white He is, we would translate it into terms of dingy gray.

So, God cannot tell us by language, so I say He uses association and suggestion by showing how it affects the unholy. Moses at the burning bush, there before the holy, fiery Presence, knelt down, took his shoes from off his feet, hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God. Then, here is this 19th chapter of Exodus, later, where Moses, the Lord said unto him, lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud that the people may hear when I speak with thee and believe thee, forever. And the Lord said to Moses, go unto the people and sanctify them today and tomorrow. Let them wash their clothes and be ready against the third day, for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of the people. And thou shall set bounds unto the people round about saying, take heed to yourselves that ye go not up into the Mount or touch the border of it. Whosoever toucheth the

Mount shall be surely put to death. There shall not a hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned or shot through, whether it be a beast or man, it shall not live. When the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the Mount. Moses went down and sanctified the people.

You see, he did the best he could. He went down and tried to whiten up a little their dingy gray. And it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud so that all the people trembled. Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God and they stood at another part of the mount. Mount Sinai was all together under smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire. And the smoke thereof ascended as of the smoke of a furnace and the whole mount quaked greatly. When the voice of the trumpet sounded long and waxed louder and louder, Moses answered God, spake and God answered him by a voice and the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai on the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mountain. Moses went up, and the Lord said unto Moses, go down, charge the people lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze and many of them perish.

Now there was an effort on the part of God, all this trumpet, the sound of the trumpet and the voice of words, and the fire and the smoke and the shaking of the mount. It was an effort for God to say, by suggestion and association what He couldn't say in words.

Now, there are two words for holy. There are more than two, but there are particularly two words for holy in the old Bible, in the Hebrew Bible. And one word is used almost exclusively of God, the Holy One. It's rarely used ever of anything or person except God, the Holy One.

In that passage in Proverbs 9:10, the knowledge of the Holy that I read in your hearing, where it says, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding. This intrigued me. In fact, the book that I'm going to write on the attributes of God, devotionally considered, is to be called The Knowledge of the Holy.

Well, I have been greatly fascinated by this, that it should occur in our Bible, that this word, that we should have it in the abstract, the Holy, rather than the Holy One. And yet, the Jewish Bible says, the knowledge of the Holy One. And in thirty-three of Proverbs, that is the thirtieth chapter, the third verse where he uses also the knowledge of the Holy; it says, the knowledge of the Holy One, or the All Holy. And though the King James translators called this the knowledge of the Holy, they used exactly the same word more than forty times and translated it the Holy One, the Holy One of Israel. So obviously, this is God. And yet, there is a vagueness enough about it that the translators felt free to put this into an abstraction, to make it abstract and call it, the Holy.

Now, there's another word; and that's not used of God very often. I think it is not as high a word. It is used of creative things often. It is something that, so to speak, is holy by context or association

with this other holy. That is, we hear of holy ground. And when it says, this is holy ground, or holy Sabbath or a holy city or holy habitation or holy people or holy works or holy arm, it's not the same awesome, awful word that he uses when he says the Holy or the Holy One.

Now, in the New Testament, and I have not read from the New Testament tonight. But in the New Testament, we have a word of course, it's a Greek word. And we have talked, he talks there about God being holy; be ye holy, for I am holy. And I noticed one thing about that Greek word; it is that a definition of it is, awful thing. Now think of that. Take and set that word "thing" in capital letters, the awful THING. That's one meaning of the word holy, the Holy One.

Now, let's talk a little about the Holy One and His creatures. For you see, the presence of this Holy One allows only holy beings. In our humanistic day, our day of watered-down Christianity, our day of sentimental Christianity, that blows its nose loudly and makes God into a poor, weak, weeping old man. In this awful day, that sense of the holy isn't upon the church. I was just talking with Brother McAfee and talking about Brother Matier being interested in European missions. Somebody else comes interested in the Hebrew who was working with the Jews. Somebody else working with the mountaineers. Somebody else is concerned with memorizing Scripture. Somebody else with foreign missions.

And I said, well, everybody seems to have something that he feels is tremendously important. And maybe it could be that the constant preaching that I do on the person of God, that I too, should be seeing only a part of the great truth, that there's more. But I said this, if you're going to be narrow, then I think we ought to be narrow on the right thing. And therefore, if I'm going to emphasize God and the holiness of God, and the awful, unapproachable quality that can be called that awful Thing. That One, that Holy, I say that I am on the right track. It isn't all, but it's something we've almost lost in our day. The thing is important, depending upon how much we have lost and how much of it we need. And we have lost the sense of the Holy One, almost all together.

Take over in the book of Revelation, that seventh chapter. Look, it says that, the seventh chapter, yes, the angels stood around about the Throne, and about the elders and the four beasts and they fell before the throne on their faces and worshipped God saying: Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and power and might be unto our God forever and ever. And one of the elders answered saying, what are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? And I said unto him, sir, thou knowest. He said to me, these are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, are they before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

Now, there is God. There are people in the presence of God, but they're there in the presence of God by a technical redemption. You see, what I worry about in this hour, is that we're technically

Christians and we can prove it. We can prove that we are Christians. We are Christians technically. And anybody can flip open a Greek lexicon and show you that you're a saint. But I'm afraid of that kind of Christianity, because if I haven't felt the sense of vileness by contrast with that sense of unapproachable and indescribable holiness, I wonder if I have ever been hit hard enough to really repent. And if I don't repent, I wonder if I can believe.

Now, we're told, just believe it brother, just believe it. Now, come on, let me take your name and address here. What's your name? Yes. What church would you like to go to? We have it all fixed up my brethren. But I'm afraid our fathers knew God in a different manner than that. Bishop Ussher used to go out by the river bank and kneel down by a log and repent his sins all Saturday afternoon, though there probably wasn't a holier man in the region around about. He felt how unutterably vile he was. He couldn't stand the dingy gray which was the whitest thing he had, set over against the unapproachable, shining whiteness that was God.

Go to the book of Isaiah and you'll see the fiery burners there. With twain he covered his feet. There in these creatures before the throne, there wasn't any of the flippancy that we see now. There wasn't any of the tendency to try to out-hope hope and be funnier than a clown. There was a sense of Presence and these holy creatures, for they were holy creatures, they covered their feet. Why? They covered their feet in modesty, and they covered their face in worship, and they used their other wings to fly. These were the seraphim. They're called fiery burners.

Then there's Ezekiel 1 and 10. And we see there creatures coming out of a fire. Now, God speaks of Himself often as fire. Our God is a consuming fire, it says in Hebrews and in Isaiah 33 these words: Who among us shall dwell with the Devouring Fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings. And this is sometimes used as a text, who of you is going to go to hell? But my brethren, if you will read it in its context, this does not describe the hell. This is not hell at all. And if you will go to almost any of the commentators, they will say this is not hell, because the next passage says that he that hath clean hands and a pure heart and doesn't lift up his soul unto vanity and answers the question, what is this devouring fire?

What is this everlasting burning? It is not hell, but the Presence of God. Who among us shall dwell in the fiery burning? Do you not know that if you were enabled to do it, fire can dwell with fire. And you can put the iron into the fire and the iron can learn to live with the fire by absorbing the fire and beginning to glow in incandescent brightness in the fire. So, we dwell in the fire. These creatures in Ezekiel came out of the fire having four faces. And they went straight ahead and they let down their wings to worship, and at the word of God's command, they leaped to do His will; these awesome, holy creatures, about which we know so little and about which we ought to know more.

Then there was God when He spoke to Moses out of the bush. There was the God when He went with them in the pillar of fire. What was God saying? For it says in the 13<sup>th</sup>, I believe, of Exodus where it says that the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light by day and by night. And He took not away the cloud, the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, that He might lead them in all their journeys.

My friends, this was God dwelling there in that awesome fire. It was God dwelling there. And then when the tabernacle was made and the cherubim of gold overshadowed the mercy seat, what was it that came down between the cherubim wings. What was it that only one man could see and he, once a year with blood, did not dare go in? I wonder how many high priests ever looked at the Shekinah? I wonder, that high priest with all the protection of the atoning blood and the commandment of God; when the priest pulled away the veil, the great, heavy veil it took four men to part the great tapestry they pulled apart.

And this man went in trembling, into the Presence. I wonder if he ever dared to look at the fire. I wonder if being a Jew as he was, and worshipping the great God Almighty, the Holy One of Israel, I wonder if there was a high priest, one in twenty, that ever-dared gaze on that Fire. He was not told he couldn't, but I wonder if anybody ever dared do it. I noticed that the very seraphim covered their faces. Moses hid his face for he was afraid to look upon God. And John fell down when he saw the Savior and had to be raised up again almost from the dead. And every encounter with God has been such that men went flat down and went blind. Paul went blind on Damascus Road. What was the light that blinded them? Was it the cosmic ray coming down from some exploding body or from two colliding galaxies they tell us about? No, no. It was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The God that dwells in the bush. The God that dwelt in the Shekinah between the Presence, between the wings of the seraphim.

And what was it that when they were all together in one place, and suddenly there came a sound from heaven as the rushing of a mighty wind, and a fire appeared and sat as a tongue of flame upon each one of them? What did that mean and what could it mean but that God was branding them in their foreheads with His fiery holiness to say, your Mine now. The church was born out of fire, my brethren. She was born out of fire as the creatures in Ezekiel 1 came out of fire. The church was born out of fire, but we have gray ashes today. But we are to be men and women of fire, for that is our origin.

And hear these last words, these words that tell us how God shall someday untune the sky, the heavens and the earth are reserved unto fire. The heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; and the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved. What fire is that? Is that to be the atomic fire, the fire of a hydrogen bomb? Don't allow yourself to be fooled by the scientists. Don't allow your spiritual perceptions and concepts to be dragged down to Oak Ridge. Don't think in terms of the scientist. That awesome fire out of which the seraphim

moved, and that fire that dwelt between cherubim and that blazing Light that knocked Paul flat. That's the same fire that shall dissolve the heaven and the earth. The awful presence of that Holy Thing, that awful Thing! Don't accuse me because I say "Thing," because I know it's a Person. He is God, the Holy One of Israel, but there's something about Him that is awesome and awful, so that one of the definitions, I repeat, of the word that we have in the New Testament is the Awful Thing.

Now, the Holy One and the sinner, the Holy One and the sinner, oh, man, oh, man, sinner man, you're going to decide when you'll serve Christ? You're going to make the decision? You're going to push God around? You're going to accept Jesus or not accept Jesus, receive him, or not receiving, obey him or not obey Him? You're going to go proudly down the aisle, with your chest out? You're going to lay your head on the pillow tonight with a heartbeat between you and eternity? And you're telling yourself, I'll decide this question. I am a man of free will. God isn't coercing my will. No, no, but I have words for you. Listen, art Thou not from everlasting, O Jehovah, my God, mine Holy One. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look on iniquity, Habakkuk 1:12,13, art Thou not from everlasting, O Jehovah my God.

But they say now, are your problems too much for you? Jesus will handle your problems. Are you trouble mentally? Jesus will give you mental peace. And do you have trouble getting on in the office? Jesus will help you to get on in the office. All of this is true, but O friends, how far it is from biblical religion. There was God in the midst. And what was it that gathered the people together in the book of Acts? They ministered unto the Lord and fasted and prayed. And there in the awesome Presence they heard the voice of the Holy Ghost say, separate me Barnabas and Saul.

Now, we're thrown back on our planning and our reasoning and our thinking when the Great and Holy God is in our midst. So, I would recommend that you remember these words: Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil. If you have evil in your life, evil in your heart, evil in your home, evil in your business, evil in your memory unconfessed and unforgiven and uncleansed, remember that it is only by the infinite patience of God that you are not consumed. For our God is a consuming Fire. And it's written here, holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Now, look at them come. See them. As they come from everywhere, these teachers with their dingy gray interpretations; pulling this down and explaining it away and saying, see note on such and such, pulling it down and destroying it. But it stands my brother, holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

Now, if you can interpret that neatly and go home without being bothered, I wonder if your eyes have ever gazed upon that Awful Thing. I wonder if you know, have, or do have the knowledge of the Holy. I wonder if that sense of the overwhelming, crushing holiness of God has ever come upon your heart. It was a common thing in other days when God was the center of human worship. When we came to Him and worshiped God, it was common for men to kneel at an altar and shake and tremble and weep and perspire in an agony of conviction, and they expected it in that day. We

don't see it now, because the God we preach is not the everlasting, awful God, mine Holy One, who is of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look upon iniquity. And we use the technical interpretation of justification by faith, and the imputed righteousness of Christ to water our spirit, the wine of our spirituality down until we're what we are. God help us in this evil hour.

And so, we take into the presence of God this tainted soul. We come into the presence of God with our concept of morality, having learned it from the books, and gotten it from the newspapers, and gotten in school. We come dirty with everything that we have dirty, and our whitest white, dirty, and our churches dirty, and our thoughts dirty. We come to God dirty and do nothing about it. If we came to God dirty, but trembling and shocked and awestruck, and would kneel in His presence and at His feet, and cry like Isaiah, I am undone. I'm a man of unclean lips. Then I'd say, all right, I can understand. But, we skip into His awful Presence. And somebody who is dirty comes with a book "Seven Steps to Salvation" and gives seven verses underlined and gets a fellow out of his problem and out of his trouble.

Dear God, that's why we're going down each year. Each year, more Christians, more people going to church, more Christians, more people going to church, more church buildings, more money and less spirituality and less holiness. And we're forgetting that without holiness, no man shall see God. I tell you this standing here tonight, that I want God to be what God is. And I want God to remain what God is, the impeccably holy, unapproachable, Holy Thing, Holy One, all Holy One. I want him to be and remain the Holy in capital letters. I want Him to be that and I want His heaven to be holy and I want His throne to be holy. And I don't want Him to change or modify His requirements. Even if it shuts me out, I want something holy left in the universe.

You can join almost any church now. I've heard recently of a certain church, well, it's a Baptist church. They're not all true Baptist churches. I have preached to some pretty strict Baptist churches, and I am more or less of a Baptist myself, and that, the baptistry back there. But I'll say this to you brother, that this particular Baptist church and they tell me there are many of them. They say now at the closing hymn, we open the doors of the church; and they can come and anybody can join. A gangster can join. I say never, never, never, never, never! For if they can't get into heaven, they oughten to get into our churches.

And the problem with us is that we let our churches stay dingy gray instead of pleading for holy whiteness. And as soon as anybody begins to plead, we Christians ought to be holy, somebody comes along and says, now my brother, don't get excited about this, and don't become a fanatic. For don't you understand that God understands our flesh and He knows we're but dust. Oh, He knows where but dust, but he says, Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look upon iniquity. And without holiness, it's impossible to please God.



Thomas Binney wrote this, I think it's one of the most awesome, wondrous things ever written. "Eternal Light, Eternal Light, how pure the soul must be. When placed within thy searching sight, it shrinks not but with calm delight, can live and look on Thee, the spirits that surround thy throne can bear the burning bliss. But that is surely theirs alone for they have never, never known a fallen world like this. But how shall I, whose native sphere is dark, whose mind is dim, before the Ineffable appear and on my naked spirit bear the uncreated Being? How shall I, whose native sphere is dark, whose mind is dim, before the Ineffable appear? And on my naked spirit bear the uncreated Being. That fiery Being out of which come the holy burners who sing Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty.

How can I bear it? And you don't know when all your religious helps, all your marked Bibles, all your jolly Christian friends, all your ham eating, sweet potato eating, joke telling banquet, cheery Christians. I eat ham too incidentally. I'm not against ham, but we make banquets and tell jokes and have one-man bands, but one of these times each one of us will be called before the Ineffable to appear, and on our naked spirits bear the uncreated Being. How are we going to do it? There is a way for man to rise to that sublime abode, an offering and a sacrifice, a Holy Spirit's energies, an Advocate with God. These, these prepare us for the sight of Holiness above. The sons of ignorance and night can dwell with the Eternal Light through the Eternal Love.

I think that's one of the greatest things ever written by a mortal man. We don't sing it much. It's too awful. We're afraid of it. Spirits that surround thy throne, seraphim, cherubim, angels, archangels, principalities, power, unfallen creatures. They can bear the burning bliss. But that's because they never, never have known the fallen world like this. But how can I? It isn't enough for somebody to mark a New Testament and rub my nose in it and try to comfort me. No, I don't want to be comforted! I don't want to be comforted. I want to know what it will be like in that hour when I leave my wife and my children and my grandchildren and my good friends and my fifteen-year, warm friend, McAfee and all who'd give blood for me. I've got them here in this city that would give blood for me. I can go to cities all over the United States and up in to Canada and they would give blood for me. But there is not a one of them that can help me in that awful hour when I appear before the Ineffable, and the uncreated Being impinges on my naked spirit. Then, I want to know.

Well, we can. There is a way. It's through the offering and the sacrifice of the Advocate with God. But, don't take that lightly. Don't take that lightly, my brother. Conversion used to be a revolutionary, radical, wondrous, terrible, glorious thing. But there's not much of it left. It's because we've forgotten that God is the Holy One of Israel.

Let's pray. O God, time is running, flying like a frightened bird. The bird of time is on the wing and has a little way to flutter. The wine of life is oozing, drop by drop, and the leaves of life are falling one by one. And soon before the Ineffable every man must appear to give an account of the deeds

done in the body. Let's pause now for pleas in our prayer and remain in an attitude of prayer. And I'll finish praying by praying for somebody if they want me to. Who would say Mr. Tozer, I'm troubled to about this and I may have made some sort of religious profession, but oh I want to know that I'm shielded by the Advocate, by the blood. I want to know that by the grace of God and the indwelling Spirit, I can bear the burning bliss. I want God to do something new for me to revive my spirit, to change my dingy gray to white, to make me sick of compromise, weary of this checkered living. Pray for me, Brother Tozer that I might become a holy man, a holy woman indeed, by the blood of the Lamb and the fiery purgation of the Holy Ghost. Pray for me. Who will say, pray for me. When we pray, we're going to have this understanding with you, that you're going to do something about this. But you're not going to say, well, the pastor prayed for me. You're going to thank God and you don't expect Him to answer, but you're going to work with Him in cooperation, surrender, confession, if necessary, restitution, straightening out of your life, determination that you're going to cooperate with God in all this.

Let's pray. Father, we pray for these friends who asked us to pray. Dear Father, we pray that Thou through thy Son, Jesus Christ, will help every one of these, that they might drive a stake down and say as Israel said when she crossed the river, this is a marker I crossed here, something really happened. Oh, we pray that this decision made tonight may not be a careless decision, but that it may be a determination that's as big as life and as strong and deep as all their faith, that they will, they will seek to meet all requirements that they may in that day, rise to that sublime abode that the sons of ignorant in light and night may dwell with the Eternal Light because of Thine eternal love. Grant this. Then for those who didn't, some who didn't but should have, O Father, keep upon us a sense of holiness, that we can't sin and excuse it, but that repentance will be as deep as our lives. This we ask in Christ's name. Amen.