

Raising our Reverence Pt 1: The Holiness of God 2020

March 1, 2020

Theme for the February: Hebrews 12:28-29

Today's Texts: Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:13-16

Leviticus 19:2 (KJV) *Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.*

1 Peter 1:13-16 (KJV) *Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; **14** As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: **15** But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; **16** Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.*

Five years ago, we were coming out of a tumultuous year (2014). We were struggling with, essentially, the Sufficiency of Scripture and the Regulative Principle of Worship. "Do we really have to worship God the way He has prescribed?"

"It is a dangerous thing, in the service of God, to decline from his institutions; we have to do with a God, who is wise to prescribe his own worship - just to require what he has prescribed - and powerful to avenge what he has not prescribed." - Bp. Hall

The Regulative Principle – We will attempt to regulate church life by Scripture alone recognizing that God has instituted in the Scriptures everything He requires for worship in the Church and that everything else is prohibited. Therefore, the only permissible elements of worship are those that are instituted by command, precept, or example or by good and necessary consequence and that whatever is not warranted by scripture is forbidden. This is another way of saying that Christ has authority over His church through the Word of God (Matt 16:18; Romans 1:16; 10:17.) – Hope Baptist Church (my friend Scott Brown is one of the elders there)

We felt at the time that one of the best ways to become healthier, more reverent worshippers was to focus on those parts of God's character that move us "up and away" from ourselves. Why? Because worship, by definition, is about God and not us.

Today, by His grace, we return to many of those thoughts, continuing our pursuit of biblically healthy worship that honors our King. I can think of no better way to encourage this kind of corporate heart than to explore this character trait His holiness. We know that "God is a Spirit, whose being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, wisdom, and truth are infinite, eternal, and unchangeable." Oh may the LORD raise our reverence and awe of Him, and may that change impact our lives, our worship, and our homes!

What is Holiness?

In Hebrew, a common Bible word for *holy* is *qâdôsh*. It means "sacred" or "set apart."

In Greek, common word is *hagios*. It means "*sacred—physically pure, morally blameless or religious, ceremonially consecrated.*"

The Webster 1828 Dictionary - "Properly, whole, entire or perfect, in a moral sense. Hence, pure

in heart, temper or dispositions; free from sin and sinful affections. Applied to the Supreme Being, holy signifies perfectly pure, immaculate and complete in moral character.” Holiness is that part of God’s character that distinguishes Him from any created thing in purity and absolute righteousness. As the “first cause” and creator of all things, He is totally “other.” John MacArthur said, “...nothing in the creation, no one in the creation, even man created in the image of God, compares to God in essential nature. He is incomparable. He is infinite perfection. That is why His name is separate, distinct, or holy.” There is no “right” apart from God; no “pure” unless it’s in comparison to Him. He is the standard of “good” and “perfect.” Even those in heaven proclaim the God’s ultimate righteousness:

Revelation 4:8-11 (KJV) *And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. 9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, 10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*

As it relates to *Raising our Reverence*, these truths are healthy for us. Why? Again, because: His holiness focuses us on His majesty of God and not ourselves. His holiness makes us aware of our deep need for practical cleansing. His holiness helps us understand our own unworthiness. Worship is connected to worthiness. His holiness produces fear and trembling, carefulness and propriety in worship—a good and healthy thing! His holiness, rightly understood, changes the way we see things. In worship, it lifts us to heaven and into His throne room; it encourages us to leave the worldly or carnal behind... another healthy thing! :)

Our Text:

The verses we chose today declare our God as holy. Because of His holiness, we too are commanded to be holy in all we do. Thankfully, the ultimate standard of holiness that God’s requires has been met for us through the person and work of Christ! Nevertheless, our sense of reverence must still rise because the command is still there. In the Old Testament, God demonstrates His own holiness by commanding His people to be holy...to live a certain way. Over and over again, God desired that those who belonged to Him would demonstrate a distinction between clean and unclean, pure and pagan, honorable and dishonorable.

Leviticus 10:10 (KJV) *And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean;*

In thunderings and lightnings, God gave the Law and instruction for His for this purpose:

Exodus 19:5-6 (KJV) *Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: 6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.*

Exodus 19:16-18 (KJV) *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 that was in the camp trembled. 17 And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. 18 And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.*

Exodus 25:8-9 (KJV) *And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. 9 According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.*

You might recall not only the 10 Commandments and other general laws, but also the creation of the priesthood and the original “Tent of Meeting” or tabernacle, consisting of an outer and inner court. The outer court contained an altar for animal sacrifice and a brass or bronze laver for cleansing.

The inner court was made up of the Holy Place and Most Holy Place. The Holy Place contained 3 items: the table of shewbread, the golden lampstand, and the altar of incense. The Most Holy Place contained one item: the ark of the testimony with two cherubim covering the mercy seat where God would meet with His people. Inside the ark was to reside the two tablets of stone that contained the Law of God, given to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Every part of the tabernacle spoke of two things: the holiness of God and the need for atonement...the need for Christ.

Leviticus builds on Exodus; it is an exacting book that called Israel to high and holy standards because God was in their midst! Indeed, the word holy is used more times in Leviticus (94) than any other book of the Bible! (Next is Isaiah, 56 and Acts, 51)

In our Text, God commands that the congregation be aware of His holiness!

In the New Testament, we “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” (Eph 4:24) This newness of life is in Christ Jesus alone!

Romans 6:4 (KJV) *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

2 Timothy 1:8-9 (KJV) *Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; 9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,*

Part of this new, Holy Spirit-filled life is reflecting the holiness of God! In our Text, Peter commanded that the believer:

Prepare his/her mind for action (v13)
Be self-controlled (v13)
Put their hope in Jesus (v13)
Remember that Jesus is coming (v13)
Be obedient children (v14)
Refuse to slip back into old ways (v14)
No longer walk in ignorance (v14)
Remember the call of God (v15)
Be holy in all of life (v15)
Let His example be our motive! (v16)

All these things constitute a life of reverent worship...a loving response to the person and work of Jesus!

So what is the point?

Simply this: our great salvation should cause us to tremble and passionately desire the courts of the LORD. Everything about our living should reflect appreciation for the goodness of God and the kindness of Jesus in saving us! We who were sinners have been “made righteous” by Jesus Christ. (Rom 5:19) How then can we not revere and honor Him in life and worship?

Back in 2015, I said:

In our day, we are in danger of losing the reverence, the wonder, the amazement, and the respect for God in worship. Much like our disdain for the Law of God (because we don't like being told what to do), we disdain all manner of honor and esteem (our constant struggle with any authority)! And much like our cultural misrepresentation of the Gospel, we think worship is about us! How WE feel. What WE want. What makes US comfortable? **Worship is about Him!**

Friends, in the light of God's holiness, we should be undone. Totally prostrate. When in the Presence of the Holy, our personal concerns, while important to Him, aren't the main priorities. His honor and reverence take priority.

How many times have we said that if we could get a glimpse of the throne room, get a vision of the King high and lifted up, everything would change...

Isaiah 6:1-5 (KJV) *In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. 2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. 4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.*

Reverence carries the idea of “downcast eyes, bashfulness, modesty, or shamefacedness.” It is a response to something far greater. This is why reverence is key to healthier worship. To grow in reverence (aidōs in Greek) is to grow in our sense of the holiness and majesty of God and our own unworthiness. Without it, prayers, praise, and worship can become self-serving.

May our church “serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” and remember that “our God is a consuming fire.” (Heb 12:28-29)

Considerations?

What do you think about when you consider the holiness of God?

Christ has kept the Law for us, dying in our place as our perfect and complete sacrifice. What does this say about the love of God?

Does your life reflect someone who understands that God is both holy and loving?

What adjustments can you make starting today to “be ye holy?”