



FBCD Women's Theology Study

Do You Believe? by Paul Tripp - Chapters 5 & 6 (Holiness)

November 12, 2023

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLINESS OF GOD

Definition: holiness (Hebrew *qadowsh* = "to cut")

1. To be cut off, or separate, from everything else; to be in a class of your own, distinct from anything else that has ever existed or will ever exist
2. To be completely pure, all the time and in every way possible

"God is in fact Totally Other. ... Since God is Totally Other from creation, our understanding of him and our communication and communion with him can take place only by his initiative" (Oliphint, *Covenantal Apologetics*, 41).

"Everything God thinks, desires, speaks, and does is utterly holy in every way. He is holy in every attribute and every action. He is holy in justice. He is holy in love. He is holy in mercy. He is holy in power. He is holy in sovereignty. He is holy in wisdom. He is holy in patience. He is holy in anger. He is holy in grace. He is holy in faithfulness. He is holy in compassion. He is even holy in his holiness; it is what he is" (Tripp, 100).

Holy, holy, holy. Scripture is full of God's attributes, but holiness is the only attribute of God that is mentioned to the third degree, which was a common Jewish literary technique of expressing something with force and passion.

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!" (Isaiah 6:3).

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!" (Revelation 4:8).

"The Bible doesn't say God is 'love, love, love,' or 'grace, grace, grace.' The Bible says God is 'holy, holy, holy'" (Sproul, *The Holiness of God*, 25).

Why does this distinction matter? It matters because it emphasizes the perfection of his other attributes and reveals how set apart his other attributes are.

Verses that show the distinctive holiness of God's other attributes:

"Oh, the depth of the **riches** and **wisdom** and **knowledge** of God! How unsearchable are his **judgments** and how inscrutable his **ways**!" (Romans 11:33).

"Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his **greatness** is unsearchable" (Psalm 145:3).

"[that you] may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the **love** of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:18-19).

"For my **thoughts** are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my **ways**, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

GOD'S HOLINESS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

How do people in the Bible respond to the holiness of God?

- Isaiah 6:1-7
- Mark 4:35-41
- Luke 5:1-11

How should the holiness of God affect us practically?

1. The holiness of God is to be at the center of how we make sense of life.

- Theology matters because everything we do flows out of the beliefs we hold. Theology affects how we think, feel, and act. We must have a right understanding of God's holiness so that it affects us rightly.
- "You carry around theological assumptions and conclusions that, whether you are aware of them or not, become the basis of decisions you make and actions you take. All the time everyone everywhere lives theologically" (Tripp, 108).
- "Theology is simply words about God. ... Everyone has words about God; therefore everyone is a theologian. ... The question is not whether we are theologians but whether we are good ones or bad ones. ... We can grow in our ability to make those words accurate and good, edifying for others, glorifying to the One they describe" (Wilkin and English, *You Are a Theologian*, 8-11).

2. The holiness of God provides the only reliable means of knowing ourselves.

- “Only when you stand before the majestic grandeur of the holiness of God will you ever know who you are. Divine holiness and human identity are inextricably tied together. If you do not place yourself before the glorious glory of God’s holiness, you will see yourself as more righteous, wiser, and stronger than you are, ever were, or ever will be” (Tripp, 112).
- “You will never stand in front of the expansive glory of the holiness of God and walk away with an assessment of ‘okayness’ in any area of your life” (Tripp, 113).

3. The holiness of God confronts us with the sinfulness of sin.

- We can look around and see the horizontal destruction caused by sin, but whether there is noticeable horizontal destruction or not, the main destruction caused by our sin is vertical.
- Every single time we sin, we are sinning against God. Every single sin is a rejection of God’s authority and his holiness.
- First John 1:6 tells us that we are lying to ourselves and not practicing the truth if we say we have fellowship with God while we walk in darkness. A couple of verses later, we read, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). As if it’s not enough to deceive ourselves and walk in darkness, the passage goes on to say, “If we say we have not sinned, we make him [God] a liar, and his word is not in us” (1 John 1:10). Not taking our sin seriously is lying to ourselves and calling God a liar.
- Left to ourselves, sin does not seem sinful to us, but before the holiness of God, sin is seen as nothing but sinful.
- Only in the light of his holiness can we clearly see what we hide in the dark. When we see it, we should be grieved to the core. But this is not a hopeless grief because the God who opens our eyes to see our depravity with the light of his holiness tells us that “[i]f we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

4. The holiness of God is meant to be the ultimate quest of our lives.

- “Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to

the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:13-16).

- "[W]hen you quest to be holy as God is holy, you are committing yourself to make *God's* purpose for you *your* purpose" (Tripp, 117).

5. The glory of God's holiness propels us to give ourselves to his mission of redeeming grace.

- We need grace in this pursuit. We can't do it on our own. "Till our final day we will be reaching out for holiness and crying out for the grace that alone has the power to produce holiness in us" (Tripp, 118).
- "[T]he closer you get to your Lord, the more you are aware of how unholy you are. ... If we are called to be holy as God is holy, our need for grace will never end" (Tripp, 120).

6. The holiness of God is the reason we'll never outgrow God's grace.

7. Everyone longs for a world ruled by a holy God.

8. True meaning and purpose are found in the holiness of God.

- "No situation is meaningless, no circumstance is without purpose, and no trial is useless. Now, at street level, life won't always seem that way, and God's divine purpose doesn't mean that my life will be free of pain and suffering. But I can be assured that I am being prepared, and at the heart of that preparation is this purpose: that I would progressively become holy as he is holy" (Tripp, 124).

9. Holiness is the purpose of all biblical and theological study.

- "The purpose of the word of God is something deeper than the dissemination of biblical and theological information. The goal is radical heart and life transformation. God intends the information to be transformative. Biblical literacy and theological knowledge were never meant to be ends in themselves, but rather means to an end. The end is personal holiness" (Tripp, 126).

"How unshakable is your joy, when you wake up each day knowing that your world is under the rule of one who is perfectly holy in every way, all of the time, and that this Holy One is your Father by grace?" (Tripp, 126).