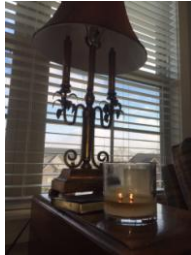


Falling Down Before the Holiness of God

I have these moments when I start to feel pretty good about my spiritual walk. (It's easy if I compare myself to the right people.) Of course, I'm way too righteous to ever be considered self-righteous, but then—BAM!—I am reminded of God's holiness and righteousness. I am brought back to reality.

On days like this when I write, I typically burn a candle. I like the smell. (Yeah, I'm a guy and I like candles, OK?) The candle also puts off light, but it sits in front of a large window that lets in the sunlight. The puny light of that candle is no match for the output of the sun!



That's what my sense of personal holiness is like compared to God's infinite holiness. No comparison. "Holy" means to be unique, separate from, and set apart, and nothing or no one is holy like God. He is the Creator; He is over and above His creation, completely set apart from everything.

God is also holy in His moral purity. No one is good or righteous like Him. He is totally set apart from us.

We readily acknowledge and give lip service to God's holiness, but when we encounter Him—when we come face to face with his holiness—we are anything but casual about it!

Edward J. Young describes God's holiness as "the entirety of the divine perfection which separates God from His creation."¹ When we encounter God in such perfect holiness, we are also overwhelmed with our own lack of holiness. We become quite conscious of our sin in the presence of such moral purity. That was what Isaiah the prophet experienced in the presence of holy God. His cry was

"Woe is me!"

I am keenly aware of my own insignificance and sinfulness. What amazes me about God is that, in His infinite holiness, He still chooses to love me!

¹ Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3 vols (Eerdmans, 1965-72), 1:242-3.

"For the High and Exalted One, who lives forever, whose name is holy, says this: 'I live in a high and holy place, and with the oppressed and lowly of spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and revive the heart of the oppressed'" (Isa. 57:15).

God has removed His wrath and justice from me—which I deserve—and placed it on His Son, Jesus. Instead of wrath, God extends to me mercy.

"Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have boldness to enter the sanctuary through the blood of Jesus ... let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water" (Heb. 10:19-22).

John Brown, a 19th-century Scottish pastor and theologian, wrote that the cross of Christ shines "spotless holiness, inflexible justice, incomprehensible wisdom, omnipotent power, holy love. None of these excellencies darken or eclipse the other, but every one of them rather gives a lustre to the rest. They mingle their beams, and shine with united eternal splendour: the just Judge, the merciful Father, the wise Governor. Nowhere does justice appear so awful, mercy so amiable, or wisdom so profound."²

I desire to be continually reminded of the holiness of God. With that mindset, I avoid self-righteousness and any attempt to live in my own power. Instead, I run into His loving arms and trust Him to work on me and through me. I seek in everything to honor Him and point to Him, the One who is holy and wholly above us. I make it by continual prayer:

"Our Father in heaven, your name be honored as holy" (Matt. 6:9).

² John Brown, *Expository Discourses on 1 Peter*, 2 vols. (Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 1:472-3.