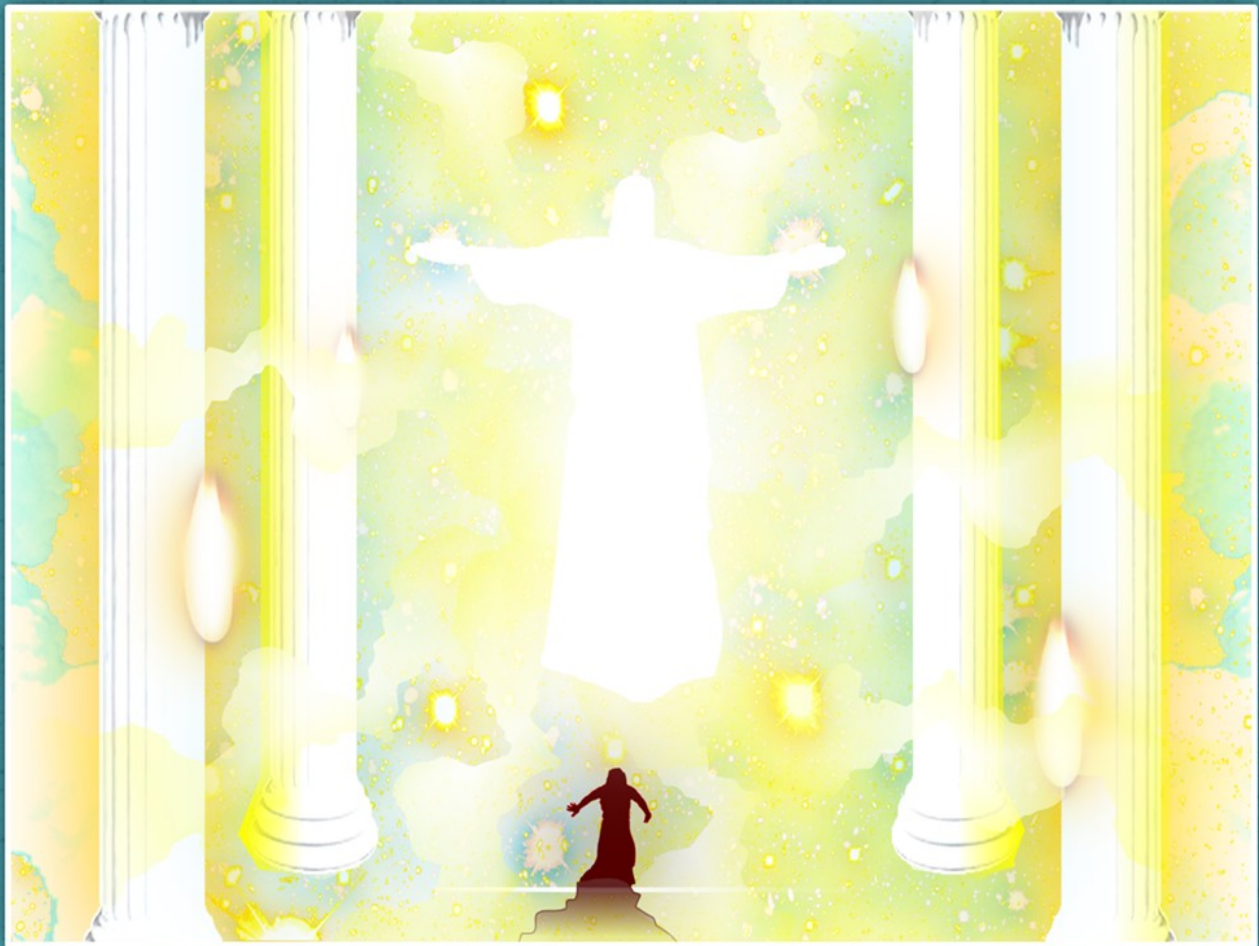


- Holiness -

*"Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory."
(Isaiah 6:3b)*



Berean Lamp Ministries
For the Body of Christ

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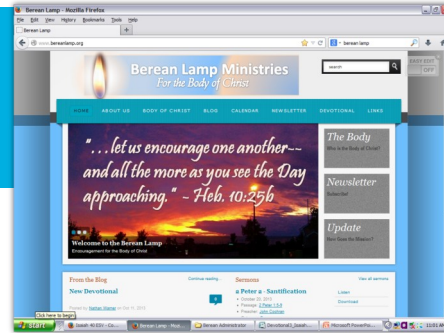


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Living in the Knowledge of Holiness
by Scott Moller - Page 3

Set Apart for God
by Nathan Warner - Page 4

The Holiness of Love
by Ginny Larsen - Page 8

Holy, Holy, Holy
by Betty Harstad - Page 12

Holiness and the Law
by Jane Titrud - Page 14

The Holy God of Love
by Dana Dexter - Page 16

Habitation of God
by Lynn Warner - Page 19

Higher Ground
by Maggie Moller - Page 21

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The Berean Lamp Ministry seeks to:

1. Encourage and strengthen the Body of Christ by providing the means for each of its members to share their spiritual gifts with one another, rooted in the Word of God, thereby growing into deeper union with one another and with Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).
2. Minister to non-believers; be a witness for Christ and a testimony to His Body in the world.

We would appreciate your help in contributing to the content and in spreading the work of this ministry. Thank you, and God bless.

- Pastor Scott Moller

Administrator: Nathan Warner
Oversight Committee: Pastor Scott Moller, Deacon Bob Larsen, Nathan Warner
Editors: Natalie Warner, Lynn Warner, Julie Moller





Berean Lamp Ministries

For the Body of Christ

01-26-14

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“Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? **Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.** Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is not coming for a long time,’ and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; **the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know,** and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 24:45-51 NASB)

“But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that **the day would overtake you like a thief**; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then **let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.**” (1 Thessalonians 5:4-6)

“**But the day of the Lord will come like a thief**, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise **we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.** Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, **be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless.**” (2 Peter 3:10-14)

“Now, little children, abide in Him, so that **when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.** If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him. See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. **We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.** And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” (1 John 2:28-3:3)

Jesus, Paul, Peter, and John warned of the “Coming of the Lord” and the “coming judgment.” Each of them called us to live our lives in light of this knowledge—a knowledge that would spur us forward in serving our Master, that we would be found faithful, alert, self-controlled, spotless, blameless, confident, unashamed, and pure at His coming. Let us encourage one another, all the more as we see the day approaching! (Hebrews 10:25b)

By Scott Moller

Set Apart for God

By Nathan Warner

*“But know that the LORD has **set apart** the godly for Himself; the LORD hears when I call to Him.” (Psalm 4:3 ESV)*

*“Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, **set apart** for the gospel of God.” (Romans 1:1)*

*“And [the devil] led [Jesus] up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, ‘I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whom-ever I wish. Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.’”
(Luke 4:5-7 NASB)*

The world feeds us with visions of our “potential” in it. After all, how much we miss out on when we are set apart from its promise! How we suffer needlessly for “rules” that keep us from having fun and “outdated beliefs” of self-denial. Why do we deny ourselves the pleasures that are available to us? Why do we suffer “needlessly” when the world is at our fingertips?

As Believers, the bounds of our faith can and often do cause us to suffer loss in the world, whether financial, relational, or experiential. Perhaps our honesty causes us to lose out on a promotion. Perhaps you had an opportunity to take advantage of someone for your profit or pleasure but didn’t. Perhaps you stayed in your marriage because of your vow and pledge of faithfulness. Many people claiming to be Christians have commented that there is no point to living in an unhappy marriage. After all, how is it God’s plan if you’re both unhappy? Faithfulness is nothing but a life-sentence to misery! We’ve heard talk about swapping in the “old model” for the new one when seeking a divorce. “Why limit yourself to one man or one woman for the rest of your life?” they ask. For that matter, why limit

yourself to the opposite sex? Why have limits at all? Get out there and experience “life”! Live life to the full! They mean, of course, to encourage you to do everything that your flesh desires. And why not? Everyone does it. In college, I was told that life is about “experiences” and “self-development” – it’s about trying new things and letting yourself go. College is about having fun! You can decide what you want to do with your life later – there’s no rush – enjoy it while you can!

We look around us and we see people excelling in self-pleasure and money and means, while we turn down opportunities to do the same. They say Believers live “unfulfilling” lives because we don’t live up to our “potential” in the world. They tell us we are denying ourselves the joys of life, because we haven’t fully tasted all life has to offer us. Everyone else out there is getting a piece of the action, why not us? How can we be satisfied with our lives without fulfilling the world’s promise?

Some Christians struggle with the bounds of the Faith as if it is a straitjacket they’d rather not have to wear. “How unfair God can be,” they think, “to deny me what I want, while letting sinners have their way.” Why do Believers have such joy at missing out on all the world’s fun? Moses would be a great one to ask this question, for “*when he was grown up, [he] refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt,*” (Hebrews 11:24-26a).

Moses chose to be mistreated for the sake of Christ rather than continue as royalty, living out his “potential” in life, fulfilling all his earthly desires! What “promise” there was for Moses! While we’re at it, we might also ask Abraham, because he went out of the world to live as an “alien” in the wilderness rather than enjoy a portion in the world’s domain and glory. What about Noah, Enoch, and Rahab? What about Paul? He gave up his reputation, his education, and his future to become one of the very Believers he made suffer? When he

came into contact with the Holiness of Jesus on the road to Damascus, he was made Holy unto God. And it was this setting apart of his life to God that made him eager to be mistreated for Christ rather than enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. By this we see that true Believers consider the reproach of Christ greater than their “promise” in the world. Truly, they have no choice if they believe in truth, for they have been set apart for God and He demands it.

Why does God “*set apart the godly for Himself*” (Psalm 4:3a) rather than let them “live their lives to the fullest” as the world advises? Why does He demand Believers be Holy by the sanctification of Faith in Jesus? The answer is quite simple. The difference between God’s definition of a fulfilling life and the world’s is the difference between life and death, between the Eternal and the temporal. From God’s perspective, all that is tied up in time is already dead. Therefore, anything that has not been sanctified and set apart spiritually to live where He lives in the eternal heavens is instead set apart for destruction. Anything and anyone **set apart from** God must come to an end because “*their inward part is destruction itself. Their throat is an open grave*” (Psalm 5:9). To them belongs a “*day of destruction,*” (Zephaniah 1:15) which is the Day of the Lord. “*For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ*” (Philippians 3:18-20).

God is holy. He is set apart from His creation, from time, from destruction, and from death. He is set apart from the common and the profane. His “*holy dwelling place*” (2 Chronicles 30:27b) is an abode that is set apart, for Heaven is God’s “*holy and glorious habitation*” (Isaiah 63:15b). God told the Israelites, “*You are to be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine*” (Leviticus 20:26). God

does this “setting apart,” not us, for He tells the Israelites that “*I am the Lord who sanctifies you*” (Leviticus 22:32).

To better understand this, let’s look at the Old Covenant God made with Israel. Everything to do with God was Holy. The Priests were “set apart” from the rest of Israel for service in God’s temple. Aaron was “*set apart to sanctify him as most holy...to minister to [God] and to bless in His name forever*” (1 Chronicles 23:13). Everything to do with the temple was considered holy. The utensils, pots, pans, and all implements were “*holy,*” consecrated, and set apart for service to God (Ezra 8:28; Leviticus 8:11). This meant that they could only be used for service to God. If they were used for anything else, they were considered unclean and defiled.

These implements had a pretty specific purpose and couldn’t leave the temple where they were to be used before God’s presence. They couldn’t be used for tea trays, graduation parties, dinner gatherings, or special guests, no matter how important. They couldn’t even be brought out for the King or visiting dignitaries. They were reserved solely for service to God. Paul uses this as an example of what a Believer’s life should look like: “*Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work*” (2 Timothy 2:21). The world’s confusion over us is as if a common table fork that serves fancy dinner parties to dignitaries and heads of state, should say to the temple implement, “You need to get out more! Why do you deny yourself your potential and your promise?”

We deny ourselves the pleasures of our “promise” in the world because we have been given the promise of God. He has given us promises by His Holy Calling though faith in His Son. “*Did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?*” (James 2:5b) “*He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption*

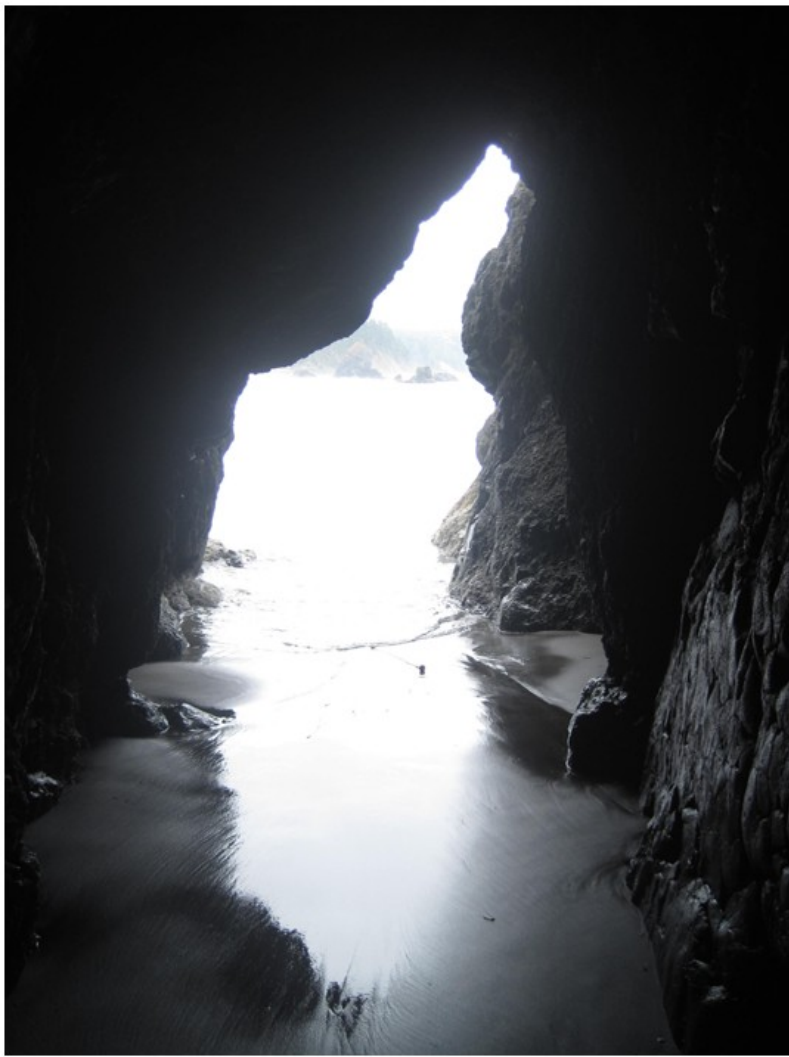
that is in the world by lust" (2 Peter 1:4).

Indeed, Moses turned down the pleasures of a sinful life because "**he was looking to the reward**" (Hebrews 11:26b), knowing that "*through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God*" (Acts 14:22b). "But now

having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life" (Romans 6:22).

"Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "**YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY**" (1 Peter 1:13-16). Beware of the promise of the world, for it is as "*those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature*" (Luke 8:14); therefore, "*flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart*" (2 Timo-

*"By THOSE who come
NEAR Me I will be
treated as HOLY,
And before all the
PEOPLE I will be
HONORED."
(Leviticus 10:3b)*



thy 2:22) and know that *“in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power”* (2 Timothy 3:1-5a). These are the cares and riches and pleasures of life that choke the seed of eternal life.

We were once *“foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy,*

hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:3-7), for *“He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen”* (Revelation 1:6).



“Paul, a SERVANT of Christ JESUS, called to be an apostle, SET APART for the GOSPEL of God.”
(Romans 1:1)

By Nathan Warner

The Holiness of Love

By Ginny Larsen

Holiness - 1. Applied to human beings, holiness is purity of heart or dispositions; sanctified affections; piety; moral goodness, but not perfect. (Webster's 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language)

*"Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with **love incorruptible.**"*
(Ephesians 6:24 ESV)

*"And it is my prayer that **your love may abound more and more**, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and **so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.**"*
(Philippians 1:9-11)

*"So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; **but the greatest of these is love.**"*
(1 Corinthians 13:13)

Sanctified Flesh?

What is it that makes us "holy"? I used to think holiness was following a list of very strict rules that denied anything of pleasure and that was very strict in self-discipline, in order to be more "god-like." Along with that, there was an expected code other Christians followed and things you just did if you were to be "holy." As Believers, we can do many "good" things and appear "consecrated to the Lord," but what is true holiness? What does it mean to be holy? The Lord showed me I wasn't holy at all in this but that I was actually walking in a form of self-righteousness that was as filthy rags in His sight. *"These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh"* (Colossians 2:23). Anybody else would have said, "What a good

Christian!" But why was I practicing all this? It was to *make myself* holy – or so I thought. After all, everyone's eyes were always on me and how I was doing, and my eyes were on this and that "law," instead of on God.

When we live by the principle of law, we are still living in the flesh, trying in the flesh to be approved by God. But the flesh can never please God, regardless of whether we are living in sins of the flesh or in *"righteousness of the flesh."*

"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:5-8).

Even as I was trying to be holy, my mind was not filled with love for God but rather a sense that I must live according to His Law. My mind was set on *myself* and what *I* was doing, how *well* I was doing, *my* failures to measure up, always looking inward. All that this worked in me, however, was a spiritual distance from God - a sense of condemnation because I knew I could never measure up. I was unable to love others, and I could only judge others. The cycle of sin and death was ever present in me, just as Paul described in Romans 7. If we try to be holy by living according to the law, our minds are set on the flesh and how it's doing, always trying to improve itself. This can NEVER please God. A *sanctified* flesh is NOT acceptable to God. Only a **crucified** flesh (flesh put to death) is acceptable to God. Only His righteousness in us through His indwelling Spirit is acceptable to Him, and only that brings life.

"You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the

dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Romans 8:9-13).

What Is Holiness?

So often when holiness is preached, you hear the preacher trying to bring guilt and condemnation onto Believers to condemn them into living better lives and giving up sin, trying, in a sense, to do the work of the Holy Spirit. Acts of sin are preached against, but too often the **principle** of sin itself and our victory in Christ is not understood. In my own

life, I was under this for years, and it never once enabled me to live a holier life, though, with tears, I would "surrender" again and again to the Lord. What it did was crush me under a heavy yolk of law and condemnation that I could never ever live up to until I felt completely defeated and hopeless. It was not until I was free from condemnation, understanding the finished work of Christ, that I was able to learn to truly know my Savior and His love and what truly pleased Him. I was able to finally trust in the righteousness He gave me and learn to walk by faith, receiving His righteousness as my own. It was only then that my love for Him grew and abounded. It is through **grace** that our **hearts are to be "established"** in the Lord, not through condemnation or law (Hebrews 13:9).

What really is Holiness? How can we truly



*"But know that the LORD
has SET APART
the godly for Himself; the
LORD hears when I call
to Him."
(Psalm 4:3)*



be holy? Only as the Spirit of God gives us life to live unto Him, raising us up from the dead, even while in these mortal bodies. How do we live unto Him? *"So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him"* (1 John 4:16). *"And He said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself'"* (Matthew 22:37-39). *"For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law"* (Romans 13:9-10).

If holiness is to be "God-like" than there is no greater God-likeness than loving as God loves and walking in that love. There is no greater evidence of a life that is completely His than the love of God filling that person and flowing through them as His representative in this world. There is no power greater to conquer the flesh than the love of His Spirit in us, filling us and motivating us in our walk with Him day by day. It is not the condemnation of the law that should be the motivation of the Christian, or fear of condemnation or judgment. Rather, it is the love of Christ that should compel us and cause us to actually cringe at the thought of not pleasing Him, just as Jesus Himself always pleased the Father when He walked in the flesh on this earth. Think of someone that you love and who trusts you and that you trust. You would not want anything to come between you, and you would in no way want to dishonor that person's trust. You would suffer to keep from hurting that person or grieving them in any way. How much more the love of God keeps our hearts and minds in that which pleases Him and compels us to live accordingly!

"So, since Christ suffered in the flesh for us, for you, arm yourselves with the same thought and purpose [patiently to suffer rather than

fail to please God]. *For whoever has suffered in the flesh [having the mind of Christ] is done with [intentional] sin [has stopped pleasing himself and the world, and pleases God], So that he can no longer spend the rest of his natural life living by [his] human appetites and desires, but [he lives] for what God wills"* (1 Peter 4:1-2 Amplified Bible). Only this love and holiness will keep us from sin and keep us when we are under severe testing of our faith and persecution!

The only kind of holiness that could please God is born of love. It is love that gives oneself up to God truly. It is love that drove Christ to the cross. It is His love in us that causes us to love Him (1 John 4:19). And it is that love that grows more and more abundantly in our hearts as we learn to know Him and walk with Him. It is that love that causes us to desire to please Him more and more and to love one another. It is that love that causes us to not just yield to but **desire** His will in our lives even to the point of suffering. It is that love that would drive us to suffer for the sake of another.

When His love grows and abounds in our hearts, there is no place for anything in our lives that would be displeasing to God. It is His love in us that produces His righteousness through us as we "mortify" those **deeds** of our flesh by yielding to Him alone. The flesh is always there until our body is redeemed, but as we become more and more acquainted with Him in His love and knowing Him more and more in His Word, we see what we are to yield to the Spirit and are enabled by the power of His Spirit to mortify the "deeds" of that flesh and let His love act in and through us. It is because we **have been** "crucified with Christ" and are "dead to the law," as we are "in Christ," that the flesh no longer has dominion over us. It is because we are no longer under condemnation of the law that we are able to live according to the Spirit in love. Holiness is only possible through His Spirit. We are now living under "the law of life in the Spirit" rather than the "law of sin and death" (See Romans 8:1-4). We are made holy in Him as soon as we are born of His Spirit; yet, we are

learning *now* to walk according to that holiness that was worked for us and in us through the work of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:10-14).

Love is Holiness

The closer, then, we are to the love of Christ (knowing that love, abiding in that love, loving others) the more holy we are in His sight. Being "wholly His" in our affections, we are more holy *as* His children in our walk. No introspection (which is flesh trying to improve flesh), no fleshly acts that we do, can cause us to be one iota holier than we ever were. It is only accomplished as we trust in the holiness He has given to us by Jesus Christ's death and resurrection and our union with Him in faith. Just as we received His salvation, so we receive His righteousness - by faith - and are enabled by His Spirit not to live by the law but to live by His love. This is why John tells us the mark of a true Believer is love. There is no way a non-believer can walk in the pure, undefiled love of Christ. It is all by grace, as it is given of Him because it is only HIS. We only receive and know and walk in that love by faith.

*"So we have come to **know** and to **believe** the love **that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love***

perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as He is so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because He first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him: whoever loves God must also love his brother" (1 John 4:16-21).

We have no confidence, nor do we have love for God or others, when we are under fear of judgment. It is only as we are perfected in the love of Christ, knowing and trusting completely in His justification and His perfect love for us through the cross, that we are ourselves made complete in that same love and enabled to walk in it. In this we're enabled to love our brethren in Christ as well, as our eyes are on Him in faith and no longer on ourselves. Love is holiness. Love is **freedom from self** to live **unto God**. Love bears all things and overcomes all things. Lord Jesus, cause us to grow and abound in Your love that is incorruptible!



By Natalie Warner

Holy, Holy, Holy

By Betty Harstad

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts: The whole world is full of His glory.”
(Isaiah 6:3 ESV)

“Holy, holy, holy to the Lord God almighty, Who was and is and is to come!”
(Revelation 4:8b)

Holiness is the only attribute of God that is repeated **three** times, and all are of utmost importance. In the Hebrew language, intensity is communicated by repetition, so this indicates that the holiness of God should be held in awe by us. When God chose to show His holiness to Isaiah by way of a vision (Isaiah 6:1-4), the searing light of God on His throne, above the heavens and earth, brought him to reverence and repentance.

“And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of Him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts! Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said, ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.’” (Isaiah 6:4-7).

In the eyes of man, Isaiah was considered righteous by all outward appearances, but when he caught a glimpse of God’s glory, the comparison revealed him as a woeful sinner. Isaiah was deeply changed by God, as he became willing to write and speak as God’s Prophet to a largely disobedient people. He was not highly esteemed by most of Israel even though his writings bring out exhortation and comfort in-between the warnings of doom and destruction because of the judgment against sin. Even so, his prophecies concerning the Messiah caused many to look forward to the promise of His Coming, though much of

it may have been misunderstood during that time until the salvation plan and purpose unfolded on earth.

Consider Simeon and Anna to whom God revealed that the Baby Jesus was the Christ. Simeon declared, *“Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation that You prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Your people Israel”* (Luke 2:29-32). As for Anna, *“she did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of Him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem”* (Luke 2:37b-38).

Simeon and Anna were wise to be often in the temple listening to the reading of the Word that often expounded upon the holiness of God, which in turn revealed their own sinfulness and need of a Messiah. Surely they did not know exactly how God would prepare the needed righteousness for them through the Messiah, but they probably had heard the words from Isaiah 53:11-12: *“Out of the anguish of His soul He shall see and be satisfied, by His knowledge shall the righteous one, My servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and He shall bear their iniquities, Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the many, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.”* How awesome it was that this ordinary man and ordinary woman recognized the Messiah even as a baby. It was because of their genuine faith in the promises and prophecies concerning salvation that God chose to reveal the Christ to these Believers.

On this side of the Cross, Paul writes, *“For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin as it is written: ‘None is righteous, no, not one, no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have sinned and have become worthless; no one does good, not even one’”* (Romans 3:9b-10). We can be offended by these words, which were also

written in Psalms 14:1-3, or we can think reverently upon them and so rightly compare ourselves to God Who is holy, holy, holy! Could we ever boast that we have been obeying the whole law and so think that we have no need of a Savior? *“For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it”* (James 2:10).

Paul declares in Romans: *“Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins”* (Romans 3:19-25), *“for if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness’”* (Romans 4:2-3). We need perfect righteousness imputed to us *“in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit”* (Romans 8:4). God prepared men to write several other epistles to further explain the scope of God’s perfect eternal plan for all humanity. The Book of Romans is very important as it is foundational and so explanatory concerning the Gospel, but we have need of every chapter and book that God inspired men to write to help us maneuver our path on earth and beyond. We, who have been brought near by the blood of Christ, have the Holy Spirit to bring the Word to life for us. Ephesians 2:18-22 says, *“For through Him we both have access*

in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”

To understand God’s Holiness, we need to come to terms with our sinfulness. We need to understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ that makes us Holy because He is Holy. Let us be strengthened by God as Paul’s doxology in chapter 16 of Romans says: *“Now to Him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—to the only wise God, be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ. Amen”* (Romans 16:25-27).



By Patty Buswell

Holiness and the Law

By Jane Titrud

The Christian is called to be holy, just as God is Holy: *"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY' (1 Peter 1:14-16 NASB).*

One way or another, this would seem to involve keeping the commandments of God. Not only is obedience the objective of this verse, but the Apostle John also says that this is how to tell whether we have come to know Him and if we abide in Him: *"By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments, The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked" (1 John 2:3-6).*

At the same time, an important part of the Gospel is the fact that Believers have been released from the Law: *"Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God" (Romans 7:4), "but now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter" (Romans 7:6). "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, 'CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE'" (Galatians 3:13). "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He*

has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Colossians 2:13, 14).

If the Law is said to be a curse leading to bondage and death – a curse from which we have been freed by what Christ accomplished on the Cross – how is it then that we are still expected to keep His commandments? The commandments are an important part of the Law. So, just what exactly is the relationship of the Believer to the Law now that one is said to be "under grace?"

Since Christians can still sin, we must have some relationship to the Law: *"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).* The Law is what brings about the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20; 7:7).

Yet, fleshly efforts to keep the Law do not lead to victory over sin and increasing holiness. On the contrary, the Law tends to stimulate the sin nature when addressed to the flesh (Romans 7:8-11). The problem is not the Law: *"So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good" (Romans 7:12).* It is the condition of the flesh: *"For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin" (Romans 7:14).*

Therefore, the Christian relationship to the Law must not involve keeping it in the flesh, *"because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so" (Romans 8:7).* There must be another way to achieve God's will with respect to holiness.

In other words, approaching the Christian life by setting up a bunch of rules and regulations to follow—or even the Laws of God—and attempting to keep them by exercising personal willpower over sin is not the answer to growing in holiness. All this does is put one under the curse associated with the Law, for one is then obligated to keep the whole of it: *"For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, 'CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM'" (Galatians 3:10).*

Yet, by the same token, if we live as if the

moral Law has no more relevance to the Christian life at all, then we become vulnerable to sin. That is because without the guidance of the moral Law with respect to what constitutes sin, there would be no way of telling whether we were living according to the will of God or not.

The solution to this apparent dilemma is found in Romans 8 and Galatians 2: *“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit”* (Romans 8:2-4, bold emphasis added). *“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly”* (Galatians 2:20-21).

So the answer according to these verses is that we are to walk by faith in the power of the Spirit. Herein is victory over the desires of the flesh. Moreover, this is how we fulfill the Law without coming under the bondage of the Law. All is by faith in the provision of God. And, we are told not to nullify the grace of God by trying to perfect righteousness by keeping the Law.

Under the Gospel, the purpose of the moral Law is merely to provide guidance, not condemnation (Romans 8:1). In other words, it stands as a set of principles by which we can tell whether we are following the Spirit or the flesh. Nevertheless, we definitely have a responsibility to follow the Spirit. We are not free to do whatever we want: *“for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live”* (Romans 8:13). *“For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that*

you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law” (Galatians 5:17-18).

Hence, we must learn to walk in the Spirit. This is the essence of a process of growing in holiness called “sanctification.” Participation in this process is not an option, for we are told to *“pursue peace with all men, and **the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord**”* (Hebrews 12:14, bold emphasis added). It is just that we must pursue sanctification by faith. Walking by faith in the power of the Holy Spirit is what leads the Christian to victory over sin. We must allow our failures to drive us to the Holy Spirit rather than to fleshly efforts in trying to keep the Law.

Unfortunately, a lack of understanding in this area due to a prevailing absence of adequate teaching has led many a Christian to turn to the wisdom of the world and self-help groups instead of the Spirit. These basically try to fix up the flesh but to no avail. They might appease the conscience temporarily by achieving a certain amount of victory over a besetting sin. Yet, this is not the way to achieve righteousness before a Holy God (consider the example of Israel as described in Romans 9:30-33).

Sanctification and justification are actually both part of the same Gospel. Just as we first received justification by faith, so we are to walk in God’s provision of the Holy Spirit by faith ever after (Galatians 3:3). The former saves us from the penalty of our sins while the latter saves us from the power of sin. That way, the requirement of the Law is not only fulfilled during the process of sanctification, leading to increasing holiness in practice, but everything about the Gospel is accomplished by the power of God instead of the works of the flesh. Hence, there is no reason for anyone to boast about personal righteousness and holiness. Whatever glory there is belongs to Him. And blessed be His holy name for His marvelous provision and awesome Gospel! Amen.

The Holy God of Love

By Dana Dexter

The Holiness of God can be terrifying. Why is this? Well to start, if sinless angels who worship God in His presence must cover their eyes and feet (Isaiah 6:2), then what hope is there for the man whose feet can't leave the ground, whose heart is stained by unholy sin, and whose eyes are accustomed to gazing at a dark world? We may be tempted to look away from the reality of God's holiness or minimize it by recasting God's character to make Him a more approachable image. But we must not! We must embrace God's holiness. For the better we understand and delight in the holiness of God, the better we are able to appreciate the quality of the love God has displayed for us at the cross through Jesus Christ. Let's see what God thinks of His holiness, then look at some temptations to shy away from His holiness, and finally examine the beauties of what God has accomplished in His holy love through Jesus.

Two Old Testament stories well portray the terror of God's holiness as it collides with people who misjudge God. We thus get a window into what God thinks about His holiness. Leviticus prescribes distinct rules and regulations for how the people of Israel could live in the presence of and approach a holy God without being destroyed. In Leviticus 10, God's detailed orders are transgressed. Two of Aaron's sons are consumed by fire for offering unauthorized incense in God's presence. Their cavalier approach to God cost them their lives. God afterward declares *"Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified"* (Leviticus 10:3). What must God's holiness mean to Him to elicit such a response? We might respond, "Come on, it's just a slight deviance, is it that big of a deal?" But refusing to listen to God's means of approaching Him in His holiness is fatally serious.

Another example arises in 2 Samuel 6 when David attempts to bring the Ark of the Cove-

nant to Jerusalem. The Ark was of no small consequence in God's display of His holiness to His people and in their drawing near to Him. It was the centerpiece of the sacrificial system and resided inside the holy of holies. The high priest made atonement for the sins of Israel once a year on it and him only. It was so holy that it wasn't to be touched by unclean hands but rather transported by poles that were fed through rings attached to the Ark (Exodus 25:14). Thus, our story with David starts off with an ominous foreshadow when the Ark is said to be transported in a new cart (2 Samuel 6:3). The scene of David and his envoy dancing and singing and worshiping takes a drastic turn when the oxen powering the cart stumble, and a man, Uzzah, puts his hands onto the Ark to prevent it from crashing to the ground. God strikes Uzzah dead on the spot. David's response is anger, then fear (6:8-9). Once again, God is misjudged. The point of these stories is that God is holy, and He will be appropriately honored. We must pay close attention to His means of approaching Him, because it will never be in God's nature to disrespect His own holiness.

These are pictures of God's love for His holiness. While it can be terrifying, rightly knowing God in His holiness can be the foundation for our deep love-filled worship of God. Yet we are tempted to minimize the holiness of God, and this is often for at least two reasons. First, this kind of God is hard to share with a culture that only believes in a sentimentalized view of God. Their god is a god of love, meaning he has warm affection towards everyone and condones every lifestyle, whether that be the life of the devote saint, the party boy, the adulterer, the alcoholic, the drug addict, the atheist, the Buddhist, and so forth. This god has little to say about the daily life of any human, other than to make us nice to one another and tolerate each other's lifestyles. Beloved, this is not the God of the Bible. This is an idol. This is a god made in the image of American individualism, not the God who made us in His image for His glory. It's a god of shallow love, whose love is no bigger than we are able to imagine. But we have a God to share whose

love is far greater because it is a holy love, as we will see shortly.

Second, we can minimize God's holiness when we forget His love for it. It is easy to forget that our God cares about His holiness when we do not see daily demonstrations of that zeal. We assume that because He does not strike people dead for profaning His holiness today, His zeal must have cooled off or perhaps He doesn't take Himself as seriously as He used to. However, God acted in history to prove otherwise when Jesus offered Himself on the cross. The cross is a far more shocking scene than that of Aaron's sons or of Uzzah falling under the wrath of God's holy hand.

The cross stands forever to refute any attempt to minimize God's holiness. The terror of God's holiness is evident in the gruesome nature of the cross. At the cross, Jesus is beaten, mocked, rejected by His own people, and convicted then crucified by the Roman authorities. Yet the deepest horror comes when the holy Father turns His face away from the Son. Jesus thus absorbs the wrath of God Almighty that was reserved for our sins, for our belittling of God's holiness. Why such a horrendous penalty? Because the worth and glory of God is so great that the offense of our sin is magnified exponentially. But this very act of God displays His love for His holiness AND for us! In the cross, we see a deeper love from God than our hearts can comprehend, because we see a God who goes to infinite lengths to maintain His holiness in redeeming and forgiving unholy people. God could give no cheap grace. So the price to make us holy and fit to approach Him was the sacrifice and substitution of His holy Son. And He paid it! How He loves us! This is the highest degree love could reach.

Further, as mentioned, in this work of Jesus we are invited to come, draw near to God, and partake in His holiness! Through Christ, we have better than a burning coal placed to our lips by sinless angels – we have the very holiness and righteousness of God Himself secured by Jesus' perfect life, death and victorious resurrection applied to our hearts! Paul says *"For our sake He [the Father] made Him [the Son]*

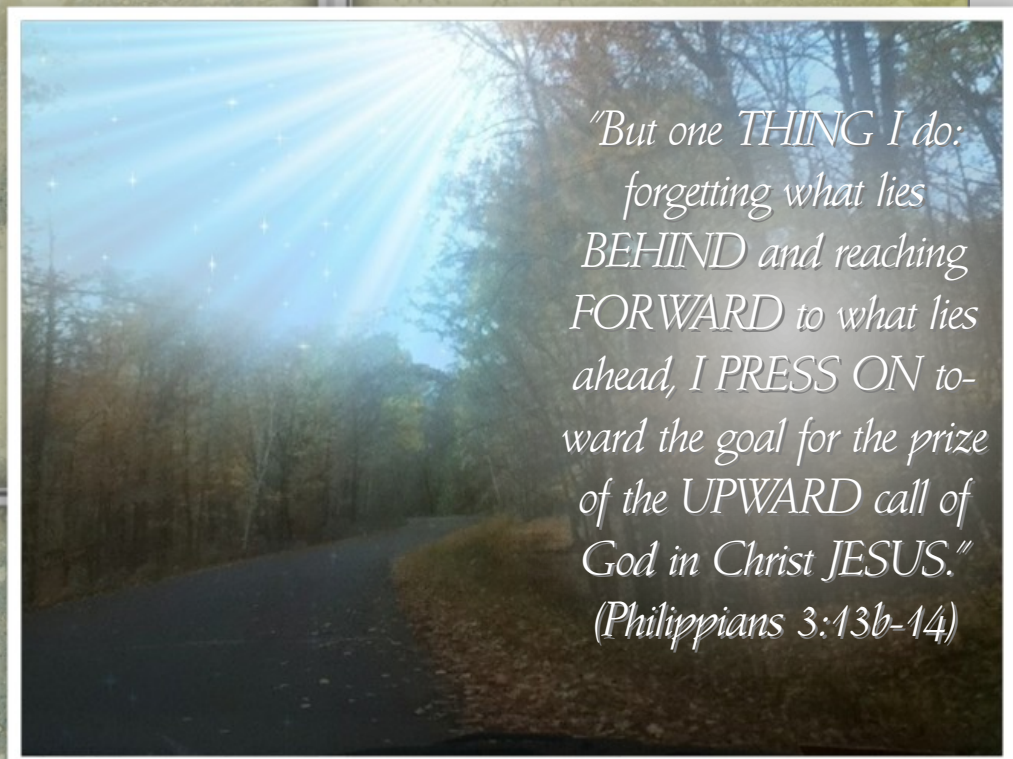
to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). He took our sin on Himself, and we receive His righteousness and holiness. Jesus is the means by which we can be fit to approach God in His holiness. If we seek to draw near to God by anything besides Jesus, we join Aaron's sons and Uzzah in their folly, and open ourselves to eternally fatal consequences. Praise God for His Son!

In sum, God is holy. He loves His holiness! We are sinful. Yet He loves us! In Christ, God secured a substitute for our sins so that we could enter into His holy presence with joy and boldness and give God the praise He deserves for all eternity. The day is coming when everything unholy, evil, sick, painful, warped, amiss and truly ugly will be banished from the presence of God and His children. We will worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness (Psalm 96:9). Because of Jesus, we can dwell forever in God's presence, basking in His love, worshipping Him in His holiness. So take hold of Jesus Christ in faith and marvel in God's love and holiness.

*"And the
FOUNDATIONS of the thresh-
olds shook at the
VOICE of Him who CALLED,
and the house was filled with
SMOKE. And I said: WOE is
me! For I am lost; for I am a
man of UNCLEAN lips,
and I dwell in the MIDST of a
people of unclean lips; for my
EYES have seen the KING, the
LORD of hosts!"
(Isaiah 6:5b)*



By Natalie Warner



By Ginny Larsen

Habitation of God

By Lynn Warner

HOLINESS is the habitation (dwelling place) of GOD. HOLINESS is the separation of the sacred from the profane, common, or worldly. A dwelling has limited access, and GOD limited access to Himself. He could only be approached in a way that He instituted by Law in the Old Testament. Through Jesus CHRIST, the door to GOD's dwelling place was revealed. All who follow JESUS may enter GOD's dwelling and be filled with His life-giving Spirit. In fact, the follower of Jesus Christ becomes indwelt by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and GOD dwells within them.

The first two disciples introduced in the Gospel of John were interested to know where *"the Lamb of GOD that takes away the sin of the world"* dwelt (John 1:29, NASB). They left John the Baptist and followed Jesus. He saw them, turned, and asked, *"What do you seek?" They said to Him, 'Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?' He said to them, 'Come, and you will see'"* (John 1:38b-39a). The disciples wanted access to JESUS, to His dwelling place. He further described His mystery, that He is the Door to Heaven, GOD's dwelling place, when He told his disciples, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man"* (John 1:51).

Jesus came so followers could have access, a relationship, and fellowship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He said, *"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him"* (John 14:23b). Paul further explains GOD's indwelling when he explained to the Christians in Corinth, *"Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are"* (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

Jesus taught that when we believe and fol-

low Him, we are born again. We have access to GOD's dwelling place; we are enabled to see the kingdom of GOD and can enter the kingdom of GOD, as Jesus described in John 3:3-6: *"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?' Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.'"*

And we are given the desire to value spiritual things (true relational intent), to pray to receive the spiritual things of GOD, and become conformed to the image of Christ Jesus through the Holy Spirit as He transforms our minds through the Word of GOD, gives us a new heart, and mortifies the flesh.

The local church, I believe, is a picture or type of heaven, our true dwelling place, where we are indwelt by GOD and dwell in Him and with each other. We value and esteem the fellowship of others who value and esteem and know GOD. But the world system, our spiritual enemy (satan), and our flesh war against the fellowship John describes in 1 John 1:3:

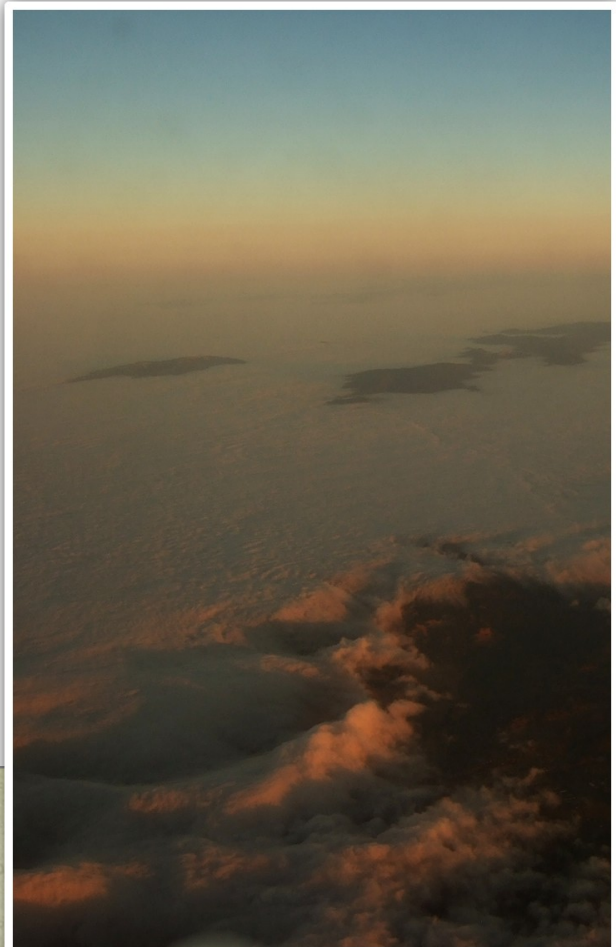
"What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." John also stated, *"If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin"* (1 John 1:6-7). JESUS said in Matthew 25:42-43 in regard to dismissing others and their needs, *"For I was hungry and you gave Me no food, I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome Me, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me."*

Hatred is really valuing and esteeming other things or other people over something or some-

one. Because Jesus often taught by parables, using physical examples for spiritual ideas, to hate our brother may have more to do with dismissing and not valuing him. The world system keeps us “busy” and “self-centered” with “our lives” and “our things.” GOD opened up access to Himself for living life with Him. How well do we open up access to others who belong to Him – His other sons and daughters, boys and girls? When someone is “hungry and thirsty” for fellowship, do we think, “I’m too busy now”, “my house or apartment is not clean enough (or nice enough)”, or some other excuse? Another example is the word “stranger” – how well do we know or even want to know our brothers and sisters?

Through Jesus Christ, the door to GOD’s dwelling place has been revealed. We ARE NOT strangers – we are adopted into His family. We can go in and out and “find pasture,” eating and drinking and fellowshiping with Him. We become GOD’s habitation, His holy temple or dwelling place, with instructions to love and esteem one another, as Jesus loves us. As He gave us access to Him and His highly valued qualities and character, we are to give others access and respond to our brothers and sisters, as they hunger and thirst

and may feel like “strangers” to us at times. We are all relational beings with relational intent. Ultimately, we desire to be with GOD in our eternal, heavenly dwellings. May the Spirit of the LORD perform a new work in us, reducing worldly desires and enlarging the habitation of GOD within us, so that we desire to grant access to others in the faith and have spiritual fellowship. Amen.



*“Truly, truly, I SAY to you, YOU will see the HEAVENS opened and the ANGELS of God ascending and DESCENDING on the SON of Man.”
(John 1:51)*

By Lynn Warner

Sing A New Song

Words by Johnson Oatman Jr.

Music by Charles Hutchinson Gabriel

"Lord, plant my feet on
higher ground."



312 **Higher Ground.** Chas. H. Gabriel.

Rev. Johnson Oatman, Jr.

1. I'm press-ing on the up-ward way, New heights I'm gaining ev-'ry day;
2. I want to live a-bove the world, Tho' Sa-tan's darts at me are hurled;
3. I want to scale the ut-most height, And catch a gleam of glo-ry bright;

Still pray-ing as I on-ward bound, "Lord, plant my feet on high-er ground."
For faith has caught the joy-ful sound, The song of saints on high-er ground.
But still I'll pray till heav'n I've found, "Lord, lead me on to high-er ground."

CHORUS.

Lord, lift me up, and I shall stand By faith on heav-en's ta-ble-land;
A high-er plane than I have found, Lord, plant my feet on high-er ground.

ist, 1898, by J. Howard Entwisle. John J. Hood, owner. Used by permission.

Higher Ground

By Maggie Moller

*"But just as He who called you is holy, so be
holy in all you do."
(1 Peter 1:15 NIV)*

*"Set your minds on things above, not on
earthly things."
(Colossians 3:2)*

*"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and
perfector of our faith, who for the joy set be-
fore Him endured the cross, scorning its
shame, and sat down at the right hand of the
throne of God."
(Hebrews 12:2)*

When Nathan announced the topic for this newsletter was going to be "Holiness," Dad leaned over to me right away and jokingly said, "I wonder what you'll write about?" He was inferring that my hymn selection seemed to be a no-brainer choice of "Holy, Holy, Holy." However, I have already written an article* themed around that beautiful hymn on the holiness of God, so I faced the task of finding another hymn focusing on the theme "Holiness." As I prepared to start the process of research, I asked my dad if he had any suggestions for me. He suggested "Higher Ground," and I think this is an excellent hymn for focusing on "Holiness."

The Lyricist – Johnson Oatman, Jr.

Johnson Oatman was born on April 21, 1856, in New Jersey. He was blessed to re-

ceive an education, and at the age of 19, he was ordained a minister within the Methodist Episcopal denomination. He served in local churches for his entire life alongside working full-time in insurance and retail fields. Throughout his life, he penned the lyrics for 5,000 Gospel songs. He passed away on September 25, 1922, at the age of 66.

The Composer – Charles Hutchinson Gabriel

Charles Gabriel was born on August 18, 1856, in Iowa. His parents were farmers by trade, so he spent his early years living a country life on an Iowan farm. While he was growing up, he taught himself to play the family's reed organ and discovered his love and talent for music. He began to thrive with his music, and by age 16, he already had a strong reputation as a teacher and composer. He eventually moved to San Francisco, where he served as a music director at Grace Methodist Episcopal Church for two years. He then moved to Chicago and in 1912 started work at Homer Rodeheaver's Publishing Company. Throughout his career, he wrote men's chorus books, anthem collections, and cantatas. He also edited 43 song books before passing away at the home of his son, Charles Jr., on September 15, 1932, at the age of 76.

As I worked on this article, I read over the words to "Higher Ground." I was struck by the wonderful message and application this hymn has for me, especially at this point in my life. I have recently been struggling with the concept of all the distractions we face in life that draw our attention and focus off of Jesus Christ. I think this is one of Satan's ways of attacking us and weakening our relationship with our Lord. When we are focused on all that is going on around us and don't turn it over to Christ, we are not growing in our relationship with Him; in fact, I would say we are actually creating a distance between us and the Lord. It also causes us unnecessary worry because we are striving to bear our burdens in our own strength. I know in my own life I

need to make a daily, conscious decision to stop myself when I start to let the distractions of life drown out my thoughts of Christ. These distractions aren't even necessarily bad thoughts or activities, but when anything other than God becomes our focus, it can become harmful to our relationship with our Savior. This hymn reminds me of this need to keep reminding myself to pray that Christ would fix my eyes on Him. It also reminds me of my daily need to be conformed more into His image and likeness. Neither of these two can be accomplished on my own but only through prayer and spending time in His Word. He will not turn us away when we make a conscious effort to put Him first in our thoughts each day!

I have experienced this first-hand this week. I was so encouraged by His love for me this week with two answers to seemingly small, insignificant prayers. He delights in providing even the smallest things for us, and it is a joy and encouragement for us to see Him do so! He is so good! We serve a wonderful, PERSONAL God who knows exactly what you need.

So, I hope this has served to encourage you to fix your focus on Christ and thrive in the goodness of His amazing love for you – His child! I want to close with one of the verses from the hymn that really impacted me. I hope it is as encouraging to you as it has been to me.

*I want to live above the world,
Though Satan's darts at me are hurled;
For faith has caught the joyful sound,
The song of saints on higher ground.*

Sources:

Cyber Hymnal Website
NIV Bible

*My article titled "Holy, Holy, Holy" can be found in the April 2013 issue of the Berean Lamp newsletter or on the website at www.bereanlamp.org

March/April Newsletter Theme—Humility

Submission Deadline: March 23

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Verses on Humility (from the NASB version)

*“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, **humility**, gentleness and patience.” (Colossians 3:12)*

*“The fear of the Lord is the instruction for wisdom, And before honor comes **humility**.” (Proverbs 15:33)*

*“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with **humility** of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.” (Philippians 2:3)*

*“You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with **humility** toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” (1 Peter 5:5)*

Ideas for Submissions

- We’ve all struggled with humility. For some, it’s humbling to receive a rebuke. For others, it may be more humbling to be laid off from a job. Write about a humbling experience that God matured you through.
- Use a household item for an object lesson on humility. For instance, you could write about contrasting utensils—such as a scrub brush and a silver spoon—and tie them into Paul’s illustration of the vessels in 2 Timothy 2:20-26.
- Study Daniel 4 and do a character study on Nebuchadnezzar. What drove him to acknowledge God? In other words, how did God use his pride to humble him?
- What part does humility play in the plan of salvation? Do a study on Philippians 2.
- How was humility a part of your coming to the Lord?
- Why is humility against our nature? Write about humility by studying arrogance.
- Passover is a Biblical feast that serves as a foreshadowing of Christ’s redemptive work. How does humility play into the account of Passover?
- Sketch a drawing representing sacrifice. Use an object as your main focus and use it to depict humility.
- Believers in the Bible often fell to their knees in humility before God. Rarely does anyone today. Why has the majority of the Church grown cavalier toward such things today?
- Write about why we cannot (and should not) approach God in pride.
- Photograph the awakening of spring. Write up a caption for your photo and find a Scripture to go with it!

Further Out—May/June 2014: CONTENTMENT