

# DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS

by

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Thirtieth Week - Sunday

## THE HOLINESS OF GOD

*"And the men of Beth Shemesh said,  
'Who is able to stand before this holy Yahweh God?'"  
1 Samuel 6:20*

We find that this judgment against the men of Beth Shemesh was not without its good fruit. They were now impressed with a more lively conviction of the holiness of God than they had up till now been accustomed to entertain. But it may be asked, What is this holiness? Generally, it is God's moral perfection; that attribute by which all moral imperfection is removed from his nature. The holiness of the will of God is therefore that by which he invariably and necessarily chooses that which is morally good and refuses that which is morally evil. This attribute implies that no sinful or wicked inclination can be found in God; it is abhorrent to his very nature. Hence he is said to be incapable of being tempted to evil. He is light with no darkness; that is, holy and without sin.

The surrounding heathen nations had very different and inferior notions of the gods they served. Holiness was not their attribute. They were very capable of sin, and the choice of good in preference to evil was not essential to their nature. Their nature was above man in its essence and sovereign powers, but in character they were men--and not always good men. The popular mythologies of every nation ascribed to the gods acts which would have been vile even in men.

God's holiness was one attribute by which he was pointedly distinguished from the gods of the nations. Its constant assertion and maintenance was therefore of the utmost importance among a people whose tendencies so often were to merge the worship of Jehovah in that of the neighboring idols. This attribute set a great gulf between them, and one which could not be crossed over so long as its presence was constantly kept before the mind of the people. So long as they remembered the essential and distinctive holiness of God, and so long as they did not allow themselves to think God was altogether such a one as themselves, then it was impossible for them to compare him with other gods and still less to prefer any of them to him.

We today share this benefit with the Israelites. God's holiness is a check to sin and an incitement to righteousness. It is impossible for anyone to comprehend a clear and distinct idea

of the holiness of God--that sin, that whatever defiles is abhorrent to his pure and holy nature--without hearing his voice crying to us, "Oh, do not that abominable thing which I hate!" When sin entices and temptation is near, we cannot doubt that he hates it, for he is holy. And if we are strongly persuaded of his holiness, we can never be in doubt as to those things that a holy God must hate.

This use of the holiness of God in promoting the holiness of those who love him is constantly enforced in Scripture. In the New Testament, no less than in the Old, the fact that God is holy is urged as a reason why we should be holy too. For it is then that we shall be like him, that is, in a state of union with him and conformity to him, in a state of fitness for his presence. God's holiness is proclaimed in the courts of heaven continually by the cherubim and by saints made perfect in glory. It is one of most exalted importance and claims our most careful thought--not abstract thought, but thought evidenced by a wholesome influence upon all our conduct. Indeed, we are told that "without holiness no man shall see God" (Heb. 12:14). Seeing that it is so important to our welfare, it is therefore of supreme importance for us to consider what this holiness, this reflection of God's holiness, is.

We apprehend, first, that without holiness not only will no one see God but no one will have any real desire to see him. There are thousands who desire a place in heaven, but not because they love God or long to be made partakers of his holiness. It is simply because they dread hell and know no other way of escaping it. But of such is not the kingdom of heaven. They would be as miserable in the immediate presence of God, with whose holiness their souls have not been brought into union, as they would be in hell. It is impossible for the soul of man to be happy with God until it has become holy like him.

Second, seeing that to be holy is to be like him, it behooves us to count holiness as our highest attainment and most glorious distinction. Instead of imitating the ignorant Bethshemites, who put the ark of God far from them because they could not stand before his holiness, let us rather strive to be like him in order that we may keep the ark among us. Aspiring to be holy as God is holy might seem presumption to some; but it is not. In fact, it is a glorious privilege and it becomes us to regard it as such; and it is no less an essential duty. Here our ambition may have free range, and we may seek a greater degree of that holiness which brings us nearer to God. To stand before a holy God in holiness like his may indeed seem difficult to flesh and blood; but a safe, certain, and pleasant way is known by those to whom Christ is revealed as a Redeemer and to whom the Spirit has come as a Sanctifier.

God has pointed out what this holiness is. In man it consists in that blamelessness of feeling and conduct that at once constitutes and adorns the Christian character. It is also seen in the habitual abhorrence of sin and love of goodness. In this way the Christian becomes like God and loves him from similarity of disposition. He is a dutiful son who resembles his Father. Man is destined by God for holiness and for the happiness invariably connected with it. Hence, when anyone is admitted to the communion of saints, holiness becomes the great goal of his pursuit. Without this longing after holiness, his admission into the fellowship of the saints

would avail him little. Indeed, his condemnation would be the greater on account of the privileges; for to whom much is given, much will be required.

Holiness is therefore justly stated by theologians as at once the result and the evidence of conversion, or of repentance and regeneration. Let no one cherish vain delusions. He who is destitute of holiness or remiss in the pursuit of it has not been converted, has not repented, has not been born of the Spirit, and has not been sanctified.