

The Incomparable Excellency and Holiness of God

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(1599-1646)

"Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, amongst the gods!
Who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness,
fearful in praises, doing wonders!"

(Exodus 15:11)

This Scripture is this day fulfilled in our ears and before our eyes. That which God has already begun to do for this kingdom and the neighboring churches, shows us that there is none like the Lord, who is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders.

The words, though they are in the middle of a song, are a kind of an epiphonema, a conclusion which is usually at the end, but the spirit of Moses, admiring and blessing God for the great things He had done for His people, does not wait for the end but breaks forth in the very middle with the applause of the glory of God, Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, amongst the gods, who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders! You see, then, that the words are a part of Moses' song, occasioned upon the goodness of God in delivering His people from Egypt and carrying them through the Red Sea.

This is the most ancient song in the world. It is the first in Scripture, and we know of no author before Moses. Those who were skillful in poetry came many hundreds of years after Moses. It is a spiritual and a most excellent song. The style is full of elegance, the matter is of great variety. It is eucharistical, triumphant, prophetic, and it is a pity we do not have such an excellent song as this turned into meter to be sung in our congregations. It is a most delightful song, and therefore observe that when God promised a mercy to His people, in which they should rejoice exceedingly, He refers to this song, Hosea 2:15, And I will give her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope, and she shall sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came out of the land of Egypt.

When God intended any great mercy to His people, He wanted them to sing this song of Moses. So then, if God is in a way of mercy, if He is opening a door of hope to us, you can see how timely the song is. It is a symbolic song, as the deliverance of God's people out of Egypt is a type of the deliverance of God's people from the bondage of Antichrist. Therefore, it is observable that this song is

to be sung again when the people of God are delivered from the Antichrist. In Rev.15:1-2, you see God's judgments upon Antichrist. In verse 3 it is said they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying 'Great and marvelous are Thy works, God almighty; just and true are Thy ways, thou King of Saints.' By this you may see that God would show us that the bondage under Antichrist is like the bondage in Egypt, and therefore Rome is called Egypt in Revelation because, when we shall be delivered from Antichristian bondage under Antichrist. It is good for us to acquaint ourselves with this song because it is that which will be sung over again when the bondage of Antichrist is removed. It is a miraculous song, according to the opinion of Austin. He brings in this song as one of the miracles, that is, that God, at the same time by the Spirit, inspired all the people of Israel to sing one and the same song together, and therefore it was miraculously true if it had been so, but the Scripture is not clear in that.

But we leave the generals and come to the words which are, as it were, a recapitulation of all, containing the substance of all, as if he had said, "I have spoken of many particulars that God does for his people...but there is none like unto the Lord, who is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders." There are four things wherein the name of God is advanced here. First, there is none like the Lord; secondly, glorious in holiness; thirdly, fearful in praises; and fourthly, doing wonders.

I confess that when my thoughts first came to speak upon this text, I intended only the one particular, the opening of that title of God, "fearful in praises." We do not find any such title in all the book of God that I know of, except in this one place. But because I saw that there was much of God in the two former ones, I thought it useful to show you what there is of God in them and was unwilling to pass them by.

For the first then, Who is like to Thee, O Lord, amongst the gods, who is like to Thee, glorious in holiness, who is like to Thee? This, you see, is put in the form of interrogation. Interrogations in Scripture are especially brought in two ways: first, by way of admiration; secondly, by way of negation. Sometimes it is by way of admiration, Isaiah 63:1, Who is this that cometh from Edom with dyed garments from Bazrah! We might name many others by way of admiration. There are hundreds of examples of the way of negation. We are to understand both of these in this text. First, by way of admiration, Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, amongst the gods, and so on. Moses and the people, being struck with astonishment at the glory of God now manifested by the great works He had done, admire Him and say, Who is like unto Thee, O Lord? By way of negation, Who is like unto Thee, O Lord? That is, there is none like Thee. That is the first expression of the glory of God, the lifting up of the name of God above all things whatever, there is none like God.

God so glories in this expression of His glory, that there is none like Him. We see this often in Scripture, I Chron.17:20, O Lord, there is none like Thee, neither is there any God besides Thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears. So also Psalm 86:8, Among the gods there is none like unto Thee, O Lord. And Psalm 89:6, For who in heaven can be compared unto the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord? We might name various other places where God glories greatly in the expression of His glory. The people of God have gloried much in it, and there is great cause that they should do so.

It is said of the godly Maccabees that at first, by reason, their name was an offense, meeting with this sentence, "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, amongst the gods?" Being quite taken with it, they wrote the first Hebrew letter of every word in this sentence in their banners of war, and carried them with them. Upon this ground they were called the Maccabees, glorying in this title of God, "Who is like unto Thee?"

Upon this same ground the Holy Ghost concludes that all should honor and glorify God, because there is none like Him. Among the gods there is none like unto Thee, O Lord, neither are there any works like unto Thy works, Psalm 86:8. Mark what follows in verses 9-12, All nations whom Thou hast made, shall come and worship before Thee, O Lord, and shall glorify Thy name; for Thou art great and doest wondrous things, for Thou art God alone; teach me Thy ways, O Lord, I will walk in Thy truth; unite my heart to fear Thy name; I will praise Thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify Thy name forevermore. Thus you see how the holy prophet was taken with this expression of God, that there is none like Him, therefore, teach me Thy way, O Lord, I will walk in Thy truth.

There is none like unto the Lord amongst the Gods. It might as well be translated "among the mighties." God is lifted up here not only among the heathen gods, so that there is none like Him among them, but He is also lifted up above whatever has any excellency in it. "There is none like Thee among the mighties." Whoever is mighty and great, yet God is infinitely above all. It would take up too much of our time if we were to speak at length to show you something of the glory of God in this, how He is above all things and that there is none like Him. I will, therefore, only name a few passages, apply this particular, and move on to the second.

There is none like God, first, in that whatever is in God is God Himself. This is a property of God. There is no creature who has any excellency in it that reaches to this excellency, that whatever is in that creature is the being of it, all creatures being made up of several things. Whatever is in God is God Himself. Again, there is a universal goodness in God and there is none like Him in that. One creature has one good in it and another another, but God has all good in Him. There is all excellency and beauty in God in an eminent manner, there is none like Him in that. All beings are just one excellency in God, but we apprehend God in several excellencies, one attribute shining through one creature and another through another, yet all are united in God. And all that is in Him is originally in Him, He is

of Himself and from Himself and for Himself. Then none can communicate Himself as God can, none can inflict evil or convey good as God can.

It is peculiar to God to communicate as much of Himself as He will, which no creature can do. Though the creature has only little, some drops of goodness in comparison to the infinite ocean that is in God, yet the creature cannot communicate those drops as he wills. It is the propriety of God alone to communicate His goodness as He wills. And not only so, but He can make the creature to which He communicates His goodness to be as sensible of His goodness as He pleases, which none else can do. Though one creature can communicate good to another, it cannot make that creature as sensible of that good as it wills, which God can do.

And so in inflicting evil, there is none like the Lord in that. The Lord is able to let out all evil, to bring all evil at once, which none else can do. He is able to make the creature upon whom He inflicts an evil to be as sensible of that evil as He wills. One can hurt another but he cannot make him as sensible of that hurt as he pleases, but this God can do. As He can bring all evil together, so He is able to make the creature as sensible of all as He wills, and God challenges this as His own propriety, that He alone can do good and He alone can do evil and therefore there is none like Him.

As a result it follows, then, that there is none to be worshipped as the Lord. There is none to be honored as the Lord. The heathen gods, because they only communicated some particular good, demanded only particular service. External worship, and worship in some particulars, would serve the heathen gods and they were satisfied with it and required no more. There was a reason for it, because they could not challenge to themselves a communication of a universal good, for one god was for one particular good and another for another particular good. Therefore they had only particular worship suitable to them, but there is none like the Lord. He demands a universal worship and obedience, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and strength. So that there is none like Him in the excellency of His nature and in the way of communicating Himself unto His creature.

Now this which I have spoken is exceedingly useful in the whole course of our lives in ordering our ways and thoughts toward God. Consider how useful it is. It should be our care in beholding any beauty, any good or excellency in the creature, to keep still in our thoughts and hearts the infinite distance there is between God and the creature. The lack of this is the cause of almost all the evil there is in the world, and the true apprehension of this is a special means to enable us to glorify God as God. So I say, when you behold any excellency, beauty, or comeliness in a creature and taste any sweetness in it, be sure you then keep in your heart the sense of this truth, that though there is some sweetness here, yet God is infinitely above the creature, and there is an infinite disproportion between that good, beauty, and excellency that is in these

creatures and God Himself. God gives us permission to let our hearts out on, and to take the comfort of, the creature when we see a beauty and excellency in it. That is because it is His image upon the creature and it is God's excellency that is there. A spiritual heart has more freedom to let itself out to the comforts of the creature than any in the world, because he can meet with and taste God there. But though God gives us permission to do this, yet it is so that evermore we will be sure to reserve our hearts to God, to be aware of the infinite excellency that is in God above any creature and, if we are not careful, we will soon fall off from glorifying God as God and our hearts will stick to the creature.

This has been the ground of all the outward and spiritual idolatry in the world. Outward idolatry arose thusly: men first seeing some excellency and worth in the creature (as the sun, moon, and stars) acknowledged God as being above them and that these were but creatures. There was more excellency in God than in any of these, but at last coming to look upon the creature too much, and being taken with the excellency they saw there, their hearts stuck on the creature. They lost the apprehension of the infinite excellency of God above the creature and so fell from God and worshipped them who were not gods.

Spiritual idolatry has to do with those who commit idolatry with riches or any creature. Come to them and say, "How do you apprehend the comforts of the creature? Is there not infinitely more in God than there is in the creature?"

"Yes," they will say, "but by letting our hearts out upon the creature and by gazing upon the beauty of the creature, we begin at length to lose the power of this understanding that was on our hearts and so commit spiritual idolatry with the creature." Therefore it must be our care to keep fresh and unbroken our apprehension and sense of that infinite distance that there is between God and all the comforts of the creature.

As long as you keep your apprehensions fresh and strong here, there is no danger and you do not sin in letting out yourself to the creature if it has not abated your apprehension of the infinite disproportion between God and the creatures. Therefore now, seeing that there is an infinite, overwhelming height of excellency in God above all creatures, there should be similar thoughts in our hearts toward God and the creature. As there is an infinite distance between the excellency of God and the excellency of all creatures, so there ought to be a kind of infiniteness in the distance and disproportion between that esteem, delight, and dependence we have in and upon the creature and that which we have in and upon God. Therefore, you should not satisfy yourselves in that you acknowledge God above the creature, for all will do so. But you are to find in your souls such a disproportion between your esteem, joy, and desire for the creature and that which you have for God is something like the distance there is between God and the creature. Now the distance is infinite between God and the creature. Therefore, there should be a kind of infiniteness in the distance between your esteem of, and the workings of your hearts and endeavors after, the creature and

the esteem and workings of your hearts and souls which you have towards God. This is to glorify God as God. This is the soul worship we owe to God in the world. This is the true sanctifying of the name of God when this comes practically upon our hearts.

Secondly, if there is none like God, then it follows that there are none like the people of God, for as a man's God is, so is he. Whatever god a man chooses, he is as his god is. If a covetous man makes riches his god, he is so to be judged, and so a voluptuous man or a heathen. Now if the saints of God have chosen this God to be their God, and if there is none like Him, then it must follow that there are no people like God's people. Mark how the Holy Ghost makes this inference in various Scriptures. Deut.33:26 and 29, There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven, in thy help and in His excellency in the sky. What is the logical conclusion of the Holy Ghost? Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like to thee, O people saved by the Lord. So that you see according to the glory of God in any particular, there is a reflection of it upon the saints of God, and this is the wonderful excellency of God's saints, to have the reflection of God upon them. Happy are they who have God to be their God. If God is so excellent, so are they! If God is above all and there is none like Him, so are they above all and there are none like them!

You have the same inference of the Holy Ghost in II Samuel 7:22-23, Wherefore Thou art great, O Lord God, for there is none like Thee, neither is there any God besides Thee; according to all that we have heard with our ears. Mark what follows, and what one nation in the earth is like Thy people, even like Israel? So that there are none like the people of God, and it must follow from this, for they are as their God is. Therefore Moses says, speaking of the people of God in Exodus 33:16, So shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the earth. That is how you read it in your Bibles, but the word in the original signifies "wonderfully separated." God's people are wonderfully separated from the world. As God is wonderfully high above all creatures, so are His people. Therefore in Numbers 27:9 it is said that God's people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Why? Because they are the people of God, and the people of that God who has none like Him, and therefore there are none like them. That is the consolation of the saints of God.

Thirdly, it follows from this that it should be our care that none should do for their gods as we do for ours. For if there is none like our God, then it is a shame that any who choose other gods should do for them that which is above what we do for our God. As for idolaters, there is none like our God. Certainly all the idolaters in the world do not have a god as we have, their rock is not as our Rock. What a shame it would be, then, if we should do no more for our God than they do for theirs. Yea, we should labor to do that for our God which will come up to the level of excellency we perceive to be in Him.

Will you see what idolaters do for their gods? First, observe the earnestness of the spirits of idolaters after their gods. Their hearts are enflamed with their idols. So we have in Isaiah 57:5, ...enflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree. Their hearts were enflamed after their idol gods which are not like our God! Oh how, then, should our hearts be enflamed after our God! Should we content ourselves with, and rest satisfied in, cold and dead services to our God? How much strength should that exhortation of the Apostle have upon us in Romans 12:11, Be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. It is the Lord we serve, it is our God, the great and glorious God, and therefore we should be fervent in spirit, serving Him.

Secondly, the Scripture says that idolaters, those who worship false gods, are mad upon their idols, Jer.50:38. The people of God, then, should have their hearts run after God so that those who are carnal and not able to judge should look upon them as madmen, and indeed they are so. Whenever the hearts of the saints are fully after God they are looked upon as madmen. St. Paul was counted a madman by Festus, Acts 26:24, and we should not be afraid of the reproaches of the world in this way, though they despise us and think of us as base, vile, and out of our wits. Idolaters are mad upon their idols. Therefore, if there is anything God calls for at our hands, though the world accounts it as madness, yet our hearts must work after God in it. It is a shame that any men's hearts should be more for their gods than our hearts are for ours, because there is none like our God.

Thirdly, the earnestness of the hearts of idolaters after their idol gods appears from Jer.8:1-2, At that time saith the Lord, They shall bring out the bones of the Kings of Judah, and they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried. I have often thought of this Scripture, it is exceedingly remarkable. I do not know one Scripture in all the book of God that has as many expressions to show the strength of the hearts of God's people after God as this one, which shows the strength of idolaters after their idols. And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the hosts of heaven.... Mark it: (1) whom they have loved; (2) whom they have served; (3) after whom they have walked; (4) whom they have sought; (5) whom they have worshipped, and all in so few words. Thus their hearts were after their idol gods. How much more, then, ought it to be said of us concerning our God, whom we have loved, and whom we have served, and after whom we have walked, and whom we have sought, and whom we have worshipped.

Observe how the Scripture sets out the spirits of men after their idol gods with regard to the cost they are willing to bestow upon them. Isaiah 46:6 says, They shall lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith, and he maketh it a god. They do not care what it costs to worship their idols. Oh, what a shame would it be if we should not be willing to part with much

of our estates for the true worship of the true God. Though we might lose our estates, if we can serve God better and in a purer way, we should be content, for idolaters will lavish gold out of the bag on their idols. Now there is none like our God, therefore it is a shame that they should do more for their gods than we do for ours.

And then what are idolaters willing to suffer for their gods? In I Kings 18:28, the priests of Baal cut themselves with knives and lances until the blood gushed out to show their respect to their idols. Let us then be willing to suffer anything that God calls us to. And how constant they were to their idols. Therefore God says in Jer.2:10-11, Consider diligently and see if there be such a thing: hath a nation changed their gods which are yet no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. How badly God takes this that idolaters will not change their gods which are infinitely below Him, and yet His people change their God who is infinitely above them!

Again, let us take heed lest there be any found who have their hearts set more upon their lusts than we are upon God. Take all the excellencies in the world and they are infinitely below God. How much more, then, is a lust below God? For what is a lust in comparison of all creatures in heaven and earth? Yet how are men's hearts set upon their lusts? Yea, how has your own heart been set upon wicked lusts before this? Then think to yourself what an infinitely unreasonable thing it is that the heart of any man in the world, or your own heart, should be set more upon a base lust than upon the living, eternal, and infinite God. It is said of Ahab that he sold himself to work wickedness, I Kings 21:20. Then you be willing to sell yourself to God, to give up yourself to God. Ecc.8:11 says that the hearts of the sons of men are set, and fully set to do evil. Do not content yourself with some faint wishes and desires after God, but let your heart be set, and fully set, for God. In Micah 7:3 it is said ...they do evil with both hands earnestly. Mark it. They do evil, and they do evil earnestly, and they do evil earnestly with both hands. Now then, for shame! Do not be sluggish in doing service for your God. Do that which is good, and do it with both your hands, and do it earnestly with all your heart.

We have one more notable Scripture that shows how the hearts of men are set upon that which is evil. Prov.19:28 says, The mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity. It is an elegant expression of the Holy Ghost. It is a metaphor taken from the practice of brute creatures. Take a beast that has been kept from drink a long time and is exceedingly thirsty. If you bring it to the water, it will thrust its head into the water as if it would devour the whole river and never be satisfied. That is the meaning of this phrase, "the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity." When he comes to his sin, he is as greedy of it as the beast that has been kept from water is greedy of water. Oh how our hearts should be infinitely more greedy after God and His service than wicked men are, or can be, after the service of their lusts.

To conclude all this, you have Exodus 30, verse 34 to the end. There was a perfume there to be made by the composition of the chemist, but there was this charge given, ...as for the perfume which thou shalt make, you shall not make to yourselves, according to the composition thereof, it shall be unto thee holy for the Lord. So I conclude this point: there is none like God, He is above all. When your hearts, therefore, are in any good frame towards God, perfumed and lifted up towards God, take heed that they are not lifted up towards any creature in the same manner as they are towards God, for your service to God must be suitable to the nature of God. Now there is none like God, therefore there should be no service tendered to any as it is tendered to God. This much for the first thing whereby the name of God is advance here, Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods!

We now come to the second, "glorious in holiness." The word translated here as "glorious" as well signifies "magnificent" or "noble," and so it is used in many places, Thou art magnificent and noble in Thy holiness. Brethren, it is the greatest magnificence, the greatest nobility and height of spirit that can be, to be holy. God Himself is a magnificent God and He is ennobled by His holiness. This sets out the excellency of holiness.

"Glorious in holiness" is rendered by some as "glorious in holy things," that is, glorious in His holy angels, glorious in His holy saints, glorious in His holy Word, glorious in His holy ordinances, glorious in His holy worship. God, indeed, is very glorious in His angels, in His saints, in His Word, in His worship, and in His ordinances, but we will take the words as you have them here, "glorious in holiness."

For the explication of the glory of God in this title, there are these three things to be done: first, to show you a little what holiness in God is; secondly, I shall open to you how God is said to be glorious in holiness; and then thirdly, I shall show you why God has this title given to Him, why He is said to be glorious in holiness rather than glorious in power, for it was an act of power that God put forth in the destruction of the Egyptians and deliverance of His people.

First, what is holiness in God? We understand this, as we do most things about God, by way of negation: by what it is not rather than by what it is. We used to say that God's holiness is that whereby His nature is free from all kinds of mixture, from the least soil and filth of sin. Therefore, God is called light because light is so pure a creature, and so free from any mixture of pollution that it can be among filthy things without being defiled itself. So God can work with sin itself without any defilement of His nature.

If you would know what the holiness of God is from a positive position, I would describe it to you thusly: it is the infinite rectitude and perfection of the will of God especially whereby He wills and works all things suitable to the infinite excellency of His own being. The excellency of God is the highest and, therefore, the rule of

all excellency, and the will of God, being always suitable to His own infinite excellency and unable to vary in the least from it, is the rule of all holiness.

Let us consider it a little by looking into the holiness of the creature, and by that we shall see something of the holiness of God, for as we cannot see the glory of the sun by looking directly on it (being too bright an object for us, so that we behold its glory by the reflection of the beams in the water), so the holiness of God is too bright to be beheld in itself. We cannot behold the infinite purity and holiness of God immediately, but by looking upon the creature which is, as it were, the reflection of God's holiness upon it, a ray and beam of it, we may come to see something of the holiness of God.

The holiness of a creature is the separation of it from common things to a holy use, or the dedication of a creature in some immediate manner to God for the lifting up of His name. The holiness of the saints is the separation of their spirits from all common things to God as the highest and last end. When they are able to work to God as the utmost end and to will what they do in order to God as the last end, and so as is suitable to God as the highest end, that is the holiness of their wills.

So it is in God's holiness. God's holiness is a dedication, as it were, of God to Himself; that is, God, being of and from Himself and having Himself as His own last end, gives up Himself to Himself and wills Himself as the highest and utmost end, and so wills all things in order to Himself as the last and highest end. This is the holiness of God, and the image of this holiness is that stamp and work of grace that is upon the creature. When the creature is enabled to will God as the highest end and all things in subordination to Him, the creature is then said to be holy because it has a stamp of God upon it. This is God's holiness.

But "glorious in holiness?" How is God "glorious in holiness?" God is glorious in all His attributes and works, and, the truth is, there is not one thing in God more glorious than another, every attribute of God being in itself equally glorious. But in regard to manifestation, and according to our apprehension, one thing appears more glorious than another and God is pleased to speak to us according to our apprehensions. Therefore you may see how the saints especially glory in God as a holy God. Looking upon Him as a holy God, they greatly rejoice and glory in Him. Therefore the Psalmist says, Ps.99:3, Let them praise Thy great and terrible name, for it is holy, and verse 5, Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at His footstool, for He is holy. And later in verse 9, Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His holy hill, for the Lord our God is holy.

Thus the people of God look upon God in His holiness as the special ground of His praise and exaltation. Yea, the angels in heaven look upon God in His holiness and especially exalt Him because of this, Isaiah 6:3. The cherubim and seraphim cry three times, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. You will never find any of God's attributes mentioned in this way three times together. It is true,

though, that God is infinite in power and wisdom as well as in holiness, yet you never find in Scripture that God is said to be wise, wise wise, or almighty, almighty, almighty, but holy, holy, holy, three times together. And as the angels of heaven adore God especially for His holiness, so the church of God, Rev.4:8, cries out, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, showing the blessed condition of the church of God when it shall be hereafter more sanctified. God shall dwell among them and then they shall exceedingly adore God's holiness above any other attribute.

Yea, God Himself seems to glory in His holiness above any other attribute. Therefore, when God would lift Himself up in His glory and give you the highest expression of Himself, He does it in this: that He is holy. Isaiah 57:15, For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy. When God would lift Himself up, it is in this: whose name is holy. So when God would swear by Himself, Amos 4:2, He swears by His holiness. Now as the Scripture says that when God could swear by nothing greater He swore by Himself, so I say that when God could swear by no excellency above this, He swears by His holiness.

God glories in heaven itself as the inhabitation of His holiness. Heaven is the habitation of God's glory. There God lets His glory out fully, but what is that glory? Why, the top of all is the holiness of God, Is.63:15, Look down from heaven and behold from the habitation of Thy holiness and Thy glory. Yea, the throne of God is God's holiness, Psalm 47:8, God sitteth upon the throne of His holiness. You know that kings on their thrones are exalted and lifted up, so God is lifted up on the throne of His holiness. Solomon made himself a throne of ivory and overlaid it with the best gold, I Kings 10:18, but the throne of God is a throne of holiness, a throne of bright, shining holiness.

When God rejoices in His people, He does it as they are a holy people, Deut.7:6, For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself above all the people that are upon the face of the earth. Further, you find that this attribute of holiness is more especially attributed to the third person of the Trinity. God the Father is a holy God, the Son is the holy One of God, but the Holy Ghost has His name from holiness. It is very observable that all three persons demand an equal share in the working of holiness in the creature, being such a part of God's glory that all three persons work it wherever it is.

The Father is a Sanctifier. Jude speaks of the work of sanctification wrought by God the Father in the first verse of his epistle, To them that are sanctified by God the Father. The Son, Eph.5:25-26, Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word. Christ gives Himself for His church. To what end? Not only that He might bring it to heaven, but that He might sanctify it also. Then the Spirit of God, I Cor.6:11, And such were some of you, but ye are

washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. So that all three persons come in for a share in this work. This is the glorious work of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

But to further demonstrate it, holiness must be the glory of God because it is the highest perfection and rectitude of an intelligent free agent. An intelligent free agent is the highest being of all, and holiness is the rectitude of that being and therefore must be glorious. Hence it is that grace is called God's image because it is that which represents God in His highest excellency. An image of something is that which sets forth the excellency of it. If it only does it in a common and general way, it is not an image. In Scripture, holiness is called the beauty of God, Psalm 27:4, One thing I have desired of the Lord, that I will seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple. Now what is God's beauty but the beauty of holiness? The holiness of God which appears in His ordinances and His worship is the luster and beauty of the infinite God of glory. In Psalm 110:3 the ordinances are called the beauty of holiness, Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power of the beauties of holiness.

Yea, seeds of holiness, even the very image of it in the creature is called the glory of God, Rom.3:23, All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The very beginning of the work of holiness in the hearts of saints is called the glory of God, much more, then, the infinite holiness of God's own nature. Further, it is holiness that puts a luster upon all the other attributes of God and makes them glorious and honorable. Psalm 111:9, Holy and reverend is His name. This name of God is therefore worthy of reverence because it is holy.

So take all the height of excellencies that are in God. If they are such as you can conceive them separated from His holiness, they do not make His name worthy of reverence. This shows how infinitely it concerns us to labor after holiness. If all the excellencies of God cannot make His name worthy of reverence, being separated from holiness, then let the creature have what excellency it will for parts, for estate, for dignity and honor in the world. Take away holiness and you cannot say reverend is His name, but it is holy and reverend is His name. It is said of God that His name is reverend because it is holy.

God's name is glorious because of holiness, because it is the special end of all His works to advance holiness. When an artist draws something, he shows art in the beginning, but when he comes to the end he shows the excellency of his workmanship. It is so with God. God will be honored in all His works of creation and providence, but now He comes to the height and zenith of all, and it is that He might be honored as a holy God and that He might have a holy people to honor Him here and to all eternity. Holiness is that at which God aimed in creating heaven and earth. It is that at which God aims in all the ways of His providence. It is the great business for which the Son of God came into the world: that He might redeem to Himself a people to serve Him in holiness. It is the end

of the great counsel of God from all eternity: that He might manifest the beauty of His own holiness in those two great attributes, mercy and justice. These are the branches of His holiness. That He might make them shine to all eternity, this is that at which God aims. Therefore holiness must be the glory of God's name.

But what is the reason this title is given to God in the song of Moses, "glorious in holiness?" The reason is to show that the infinite excellency of God's power is such that it is without any mixture of the least evil in exercising it. Here was an act of mighty power put forth, and God was infinitely holy in this act of power. It is otherwise with men (observe the difference between God and men). It is a very hard thing for a man to do great things and to manifest great power without a mixture of evil. When water runs shallow it may run clearly, but once the waters rise and overflow, they run muddy. Usually a great deal of filth comes in with great streams. We do not manifest our uncleanness in common and ordinary works, but when we aim to do great things. Seldom do we not manifest a great deal of filthiness, but it is otherwise with God. God is great in power and, in that, keeps the glory of His holiness. And God manifested here the greatness of His wrath upon His enemies and the glory of His holiness, too.

It's a very hard thing for men to do this. Let men have their anger stirred a little and how much filth they reveal! How many are there who are exceedingly meek and loving while they are pleased, but let anything stir their passion and what a great deal of filth appears. Like a pond that is full of mud at the bottom and clear at the top, stir it a little and it is nothing but filth. A father or a mother cannot be displeased with a child or correct it without having an abundance of corruption come upon their anger, nor can a governor with his servant. Who can execute justice upon others without having much of self, self-ends, and self-interest? But here is the glory of God, that when He manifests His wrath, though it is sore wrath, He is still glorious in holiness in great wrath.

He is infinitely powerful in His wrath and in the execution of His judgments, and yet infinite in holiness, too. Therefore the vials of God's wrath are said to be made of gold, which is the purest metal. So is God in the executing of His judgments. Oh, let us labor to imitate God in this. You who have a passionate spirit and are easily provoked and reveal an abundance of filthiness, how unlike God you are. Though you are displeased with that which is sinful and may correct your children and your servants, be sure to keep that which is the beauty of all in correcting others, and that is holiness.

This title is given to God because, in this great work of His, He manifested His faithfulness by fulfilling His promises to His people. God made many promises to His people for their preservation and deliverance, and God fulfilled these promises. Now God's faithfulness is a branch of His holiness. Therefore, because He manifested His faithfulness in this work, Moses and the other people extol His name by this great title, "glorious in holiness." It is of great use to us that God's faithfulness is a branch of His holiness. If you compare two Scriptures, you will

find it so. Isaiah 55:3 is one where God says, I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. And this Scripture is quoted in Acts 13:34, I will give you the sure mercies of David. That is how we read it, but in the original it is "the holy and faithful things of David." So that when God comes to show mercy according to His Word, He manifests the glory of His holiness, and it is of admirable use to God's people to strengthen their faith.

You have heard that the glory of God is His holiness. Now one part of this holiness is His faithfulness in fulfilling His promises to His people. Therefore, it concerns God, as He loves His own glory, to be faithful in fulfilling His promises, and God looks at it as His glory to do it. Your comforts are dear to you and your preservation is dear to you, but God's glory is dearer to Him. Yea, God's glory is dearer to Him than your soul or your eternal state can be to you. The top of God's glory is His holiness, and His holiness consists in this, for one thing, His faithfulness to His promises.

Now for the application of this. From this you may observe whether or not you have ever understood God correctly. Let me put this question to you: what is that excellency of God that your soul closes with? We speak much of God's excellency and we all say that we love God, delight in God, and bless God. But now what is it in God that draws your heart to Him and causes your soul to love your God, to bless your God, and to delight in your God? What? Is it that God will show mercy to you, pardon your sin, save your soul and bring you to heaven? These are things that we ought to love and bless God for, but there must be more. It is the very person of God Himself that our hearts must be taken with, and it must be the person of God in His excellency, and what is that? His holiness!

Has the luster of the infinite holiness of God ever shone upon your heart and drawn your heart to Him? And has your heart ever leaped at the sight of the brightness of His holiness? Is this why you love Him? If so, you know God correctly and your heart has been correctly drawn to Him. David says, Psalm 119:140, Thy word is very pure, therefore Thy servant loves it. Can you say this? "O Lord, You are pure, You are holy, and therefore Your servant loves You. Your Word is holy and Your worship is holy, and Your servants are holy, and Your ordinances are holy, and therefore Your servants love all these." If the beauty of God's holiness is that which draws your heart forth in love to God, then proportionably it will be the beauty of holiness in all holy things that will draw your heart to love and delight in them. Then you will look upon His saints as glorious in holiness, upon His worship and Word and ordinances as glorious in holiness, and so your heart will be drawn to them. In Psalm 33:21, you see how the saints of God rejoiced in the Lord and had their hearts drawn to Him because of His holiness, ...for our hearts shall rejoice in Him because we have trusted in His holy name. Trusting in God's holy name is that which makes our hearts rejoice in Him.

Secondly, from this the people of God should greatly comfort themselves in God in that they have to deal with Him as a holy God. Though they meet with much unholiness in the spirit of men with whom they converse, there is nothing in God but holiness, yea, the very beauty and glory of holiness. Brethren, it is a delightful thing, yea, a rare and blessed thing, to meet with a friend who has a clean and a pure heart, who has no mixture in him, who is holy in his ends and in his aims, who has a spirit free from guile. What rejoicing there is when one friend who has a pure and clean heart, free from guile, can meet with another such as himself and can close together in every point! But what a delight is it, then, to meet with a God who is infinite in purity and holiness, in whom there is no mixture at all! God takes delight in us because we have just some drops of His holiness. Oh, how should we rejoice in Him, then, who is infinite in holiness?

When we deal with men, we do not always find them to be what we expected. Many times we meet with men of excellent parts and gifts, but when we become intimate with them we do not find their ways and spirits suitable to the eminency and excellency of those parts and gifts. This is a grievous vexation to the saints, when they look upon men who are eminent and excellent and hope to find a proportion of spirit suitable thereunto, but instead they find an abundance of filth in their spirits. Though this may trouble you, bless your God in this that when you are to deal with God, you shall find nothing but holiness in Him. You shall find Him working according to His excellency, for I told you that was the nature of God's holiness. It is the perfection of His will whereby He works all things suitable to His eminency and excellency. Man has an excellency in him, but not always grace in his heart to work it suitably. But God always works suitable to His eminency and excellency. Now when our hearts are raised with the sight of God's excellency and we think that we shall always find God working according to it, what a comfort this is to a gracious soul against all the evil he meets with in the spirits of men among whom he converses.

For the further comfort of the saints, if God is glorious in holiness, so the saints are glorious in holiness, too. Remember the former point: as there is none like God, so there are none like His people; as a man's god is, so is he. That which can make an infinite God glorious must make a poor worm a glorious creature. It is true, that which will make a poor man glorious will not make a king glorious, but that which will make a king glorious must make a beggar glorious. Now holiness puts a luster and glory upon the divine nature itself, upon the infinite God, so that if you have it, it must put a glory upon you.

Therefore, it is observable that the communication of God's holiness to us is expressed in a different way than He communicates any other attribute to us. When God communicates His knowledge to us we are not said to partake of the divine nature by it, His power and the like. But when He communicates His holiness to us, we are then said to be made partakers of the divine nature. The holiness of the saints is the same as God's holiness, as it were, a beam of His. So the Scripture says in Heb.12:10, He chasteneth us for our profit, that we might

be partakers of His holiness. Mark it, "His holiness." Therefore it puts a wonderful glory and excellency on us, for it enables us to work as God and to live as God, for what is God's holiness, as I said before, but that by which He works to Himself as His final end, suitable to His own excellency?

So the saints come to work to God according to their measure as their final end, suitable to the infinite excellency of God Himself. They live as God lives and work as God works, and so are fitted to have communion with God. The life of a plant makes it unfit to have communion with beasts, nor the life of beasts with men, nor men with the life of God. Now holiness is the highest life of all beings, being the life of God. Therefore, it makes one fit for communion with God, for in communion there must be the same life.

Therefore, no creature can have communion with God who does not live the same life that God does, but if you partake of holiness, you live the life that God does and so are fit to have communion with God Himself.

Further, it puts not only a glory upon your person, but upon all you have and do. It sanctifies all. As the gold was sanctified by the altar, so the very natural actions and ways of God's common providence are sanctified to God's people. There is a luster upon all the good they enjoy by virtue of that holiness which God puts into them. As God's holiness puts a luster upon all His attributes, so holiness in the saints puts a luster into their parts, names, estates, and conversation with others. There is a beauty upon all by holiness. If a man of excellent parts has no holiness, there is no luster and beauty in him; but take a man who has able parts and holiness as well, oh, the luster that then appears in him!

Holiness is the very principle of eternal life, the very beginning of eternal life in the heart, and that which will certainly grow up to eternal life. Holiness is the proper object of God's delight. God does not delight in the legs of a man but in his holiness. Let a man be what he will, if God sees any impression of holiness in him, His soul closes with that soul.

Holiness is that which separates the creature for God and eternal life. There is a two-fold separation of a creature for God. You have the expression in Psalm 4:3, The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for Himself. He is set apart passively, and then he has an active principle to set apart himself for God. God, in His eternal election, sets apart those He intends to save for Himself. "Here are those," God says, "that I have set apart from the common lump of mankind to magnify the riches of My grace upon and to live with Me for all of eternity."

If God were to look from heaven upon a man or woman in the congregation and say, "Be it known to all the world that I, from eternity, have set apart such a man and woman to glorify them with Myself forever," everyone would look upon such a man or woman as glorious creatures indeed. But now know that if God has stamped the image of His holiness upon you, you have as much honor from God

as if He had spoken thusly to you, and, in some respects, more. For if God were to declare that from all eternity you had been set apart from the creature for God, this would be glorious; but when God has put a principle of His own Spirit into you to enable you to get yourself apart and to consecrate yourself and all you have to God, this is more. In the other you are passive, but in this you are active.

There is more evil in unholiness than in reprobation. Men are afraid of reprobation, that God should set them apart from eternity to magnify the glory of His justice upon them, and this is truly terrible. But while you apprehend this as terrible, you are active in that which is more terrible. By the filthiness and wickedness of your heart and life you actively set yourself apart for eternal wrath and misery. The other is passive and you are only set apart, but in the wickedness of your heart you are active and set your-self apart. Holiness is the dedication of the creature to God, the separation of it from all other things to God by an active principle. On the other hand, sin is the separation of the creature by an active principle from God to all misery.

As holiness makes the name of God to be revered, so holiness in the saints puts a reverend respect upon them in the very consciences of wicked men. Take the vilest of wicked men. Though they cry against you, if you walk strictly, your close walking with God will gain respect and reverence from their hearts in spite of their hearts. The reason why the people of God do not gain respect and esteem is because they do not walk strictly. Many men deceive themselves. They think that strictness is slighted and condemned and, therefore, they begin to lessen and abate in their exact walking. But this makes them unesteemed, and it is just with God that it should be so.

Does the abatement of holiness help you to gain more respect? No, walk more closely with God and you will have respect from men's consciences. Do what they can, you will anger their lust, but you will convince their consciences. In their most serious mood they will say, "Oh, that my soul were in this man's soul!" How often do they say so on their death beds! Holiness puts an excellency and glory on low and mean things. In the Law, what a glory it put on a piece of wood, or leather, or brass when it was consecrated to a holy use. That was God's ordinance. God put it in, not man. For a man to think that it is in the power of his will to make God esteem a creature, or that others in reference to God should esteem a creature more than what God has put into it is a great mistake. That I should put a divine excellency upon that which only has a natural excellency in it would be great boldness on my part, but if God's ordinance be so, then there is a glory put upon it, as in the temple. Because it was dedicated to God by divine institution, the very wood, brass, and everything had an excellency upon it. If ceremonial holiness puts such an excellency upon a piece of leather, then what shall the image of God put upon the immortal soul!

A further use is this: if God is glorious in holiness, then certainly God will maintain holiness in the world. This is one reason, among others, why this title is given to

God, because He worked for His church. God will honor His own ordinances and worship, and will maintain His saints that are holy. "Preserve me, O Lord," said David, "for I am holy, and Thou wilt not give Thy holy one to see corruption." If you are God's holy one, He will not leave you to the power of corruption. He will defend you and maintain you. Therefore, says the Psalmist in Psalm 68:35, O God, Thou art terrible out of Thy holy places.

Are there any who will be injurious to God's people when they are in the way of His holy worship? God will be terrible out of His holy places unto such. These expressions are against the enemies of God, because it is the holiness of God and the people of God's holiness that they set themselves against. Let all men take heed what they do in opposing the saints and the ways of God's holy worship, for God will maintain holiness. Therefore, it concerns us all to honor holiness ourselves and to set up the glory of God's holiness as much as we can in the world. Let us all labor to be holy as our heavenly Father is holy. Let Psalm 90:17 be our prayer, Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us. Oh, grow up more in holiness, which is the beauty of God. Converse much with God that you may be holy. When Moses was forty days in the mountain conversing with God, he came down with his face shining, and certainly those people who converse much with God will have their faces shine with holiness. There is much to be had by conversing with God who is a holy God.

Show forth the beauty of holiness in your conduct that others may say that if one beam of holiness is so delightful in a person, then how glorious in holiness is God Himself! I remember what a heathen said of the God of the Christians when he saw their courage. He said that the God of the Christians is a great God. Let us walk so holily before others that they can read holiness in our conduct and be forced to say that the God of this people is a holy God. Especially look to your heart, to cleanse it when you draw near to this holy God in this holy worship. Then labor to sanctify His name. Look to your feet. Do not come in your filth into the presence of so holy a God.

It is a notable expression of Joshua in Joshua 24:19, when the people say, We will serve the Lord, for He is our God. Joshua said, You cannot serve the Lord, for He is a holy God. It is as if he should say, "It is another manner of business to serve the Lord than you think, for you have to deal with a holy God. External worship will not serve His turn."

It is proof that people do not know God when they can turn His service off so slightly. The sight of God would put you in another frame. If you knew God in His holiness, you would look upon the service of God as a great service. You would serve a holy God. As I Samuel 6:20 says, Who can stand before this holy God? If you apprehended God to be a holy God, your heart would be stricken with fear and awe, and you would say, "Who can stand before this holy God?" Psalm 89:7 says, God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of His saints, and to be had in reverence of those that are round about Him. God is to be held in reverence by

all men, but if you come near Him, then you must labor to sanctify your hearts. How can you come before the luster and beauty of God's holiness with willfull uncleanness in your heart? Job 13:11 is a remarkable text, Shall not His excellency make you afraid? You have heard that God's holiness is His excellency, so I say to you that have to deal with Him, shall not His excellency make you afraid? Are you conscious of your uncleanness, and do you come into the presence of a holy God and not fear and tremble before Him? O what a bold, daring heart you have that can come into the presence of a holy God with an unholy heart and not tremble. It would be of admirable use in all our dealings with God to have clear apprehensions of His holiness.

Labor to magnify God this way. As God is glorious in holiness, so set Him out in His glory by keeping His worship pure. It is a special thing God looks at, that we take heed of what we do in defiling His worship. God's ordinances are the beauty of His holiness. Therefore we must labor to come pure and clean to them. It is that which God commands His church, to keep the vessels of His sanctuary holy, and those are the ordinances. In Exodus 20:24-25, God gives them charge to make Him an altar, but God says, If thou wilt make Me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.

"What," they might say, "shall we have an altar of rude stone? Shall we not polish it and make it fine and sumptuous? Will not that make it more attractive to look at?"

"No," says God, "if you lift up a tool on it you pollute it." We are apt to think that such and such mixtures of men and such and such ceremonies would make the worship of God glorious, but this is a great mistake.

It is a normal thing for whores to paint their faces. They will not be content with their natural beauty but are more pompous in their apparel than the chaste matrons are. It is so with the whore of Babylon. How glorious are they in all their worship? What strange things do they have to take the outwards senses, not having the purity of God's worship? Certainly these things defile the worship of God. Compare two texts for this. Isaiah 44:9, They that make a graven image are all of them vanity, and their delectable things shall not profit. Mark it, the images of idolaters are delectable things in their esteem, but see what God says of them, Ezek.7:20, As for the beauty of His ornament, He set it in majesty, but they made them images of their abominations, and of their detestable things therein. They call them delectable things, but God calls them detestable. But when God speaks of His own ordinances, He says that He set the beauty of His ornament in majesty.

Oh, the worship of God in the plainness and simplicity of the gospel! It is the ornament of God, the beauty of His ornament, and the beauty of His ornament set in majesty! What phrases are here? This is God's worship, but if man mixes

anything of his own in God's worship it is detestable to God. Therefore, if we would honor and magnify God in His holiness, let us keep His worship pure, for holiness becomes the worship of God forever.

The consideration of this should humble us and make us ashamed for the remainder of the unholiness that is in our hearts. The sight of God's holiness made Isaiah cry out, Isaiah 6:5, 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. Certainly there is nothing in the world that has the power to humble the heart as much as God's holiness. Your heart is correctly humbled for sin when you look on it as that which is opposed to the pure nature of God. I am not only troubled for my sin because I am afraid it will bring hell along with it, but because I have had a sight of the infinite holiness of God and the purity of His nature. I have a nature so filthy and opposite to that infinite holiness of His. Hereby examine your hearts whether your humiliation is right or not. It is a good argument when the infinite holiness of God has made you see your uncleanness and, upon that, has humbled you.

Lastly, what need we all have of Jesus Christ. If God is glorious in holiness, we should all say, "Who can stand before so holy a God!" Were it not for the holiness of the blessed Mediator who stands between the Father and us, and presents His infinite satisfaction to the Father for our sins, and clothes us with His righteousness, woe, woe unto us! If you could possibly imagine that all of the excellencies of heaven and earth were put into one creature except holiness, if that creature had only the least drop of uncleanness and unholiness in it, God would eternally hate that creature. Were there not a Mediator between that creature and God, God would eternally let out His wrath upon it, for God is so glorious in holiness that He infinitely hates filthiness. We wonder when we hear of the great misery threatened to wicked men, but we would not wonder if we knew God's holiness.

God so infinitely hates sin that he instantly sent all the angels that fell down in chains of eternal darkness and refused to enter into the least parley with them or to be reconciled with them. Now what is the reason that, though we have so much uncleanness in us, God is pleased to be reconciled to us, and admits us into His presence and gives us hope to see His face with joy to all eternity? It is this: because we have a Mediator and they have none. Were it not for that, we could weep streams of blood from our eyes and God would hate and abhor us. His wrath would eternally seize us.

Therefore, though you may rejoice in inherent holiness, let your hearts be particularly upon the perfect holiness of Jesus Christ and offer that up to God. Though you have much uncleanness in yourself and in your duties (for what is it for us to offer duty to the holy God), let this comfort you. You do not have to deal with God in yourself but through Christ, and in Him you have liberty to come. You may look upon God's face with boldness. This is the great mystery of godliness

revealed in the gospel, that, notwithstanding the infiniteness of God's holiness, there is a way for us polluted creatures to look upon this God with joy. This mystery is only taught in the gospel. Though men now think they can come and cry to you, and you come to see your uncleanness, your heart will sink down in eternal despair. You will not be able to endure beholding God then. And if you are not acquainted with God in this way of reconciliation, you will be undone forever. Therefore, study the mystery of the gospel. Make use of Christ that the glory of God's holiness may not be to your terror but to your comfort.

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