



SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

KNOWING HOLY GOD

KEY PASSAGE: Isaiah 6:1-8 | **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES:** Leviticus 11:44-45; 20:26; 21:8 | Numbers 1:51; 3:10
Isaiah 59:2 | Luke 5:5, 8 | Romans 3:23 | Titus 3:5 | 1 Peter 1:15-16 | 1 John 1:5, 10

► SUMMARY

What causes people to distance themselves from the Lord?

Some simply ignore Him, but there are others who become angry and hostile toward Him. As believers who know that God is love, goodness, mercy, and kindness, those adverse reactions are sad to see. But there is an attribute of God that causes the unbelieving world to withdraw from Him because it reveals their sin—His holiness.

► SERMON POINTS

In the year that Judah's King Uzziah died, Isaiah saw a vision of "the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple" (Isa. 6:1). Seraphim standing above Him were calling out, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of armies. The whole earth is full of His glory" (vv. 2-3). The foundation trembled and smoke filled the temple in this awesome display of His holiness (v. 4).

All God's laws, principles, and actions are derived from His attribute of holiness. In the book of Leviticus, the Lord used His commands to teach the Israelites that He was holy, saying, "So you are to be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy; and I have singled you out from the peoples to be Mine" (Lev. 20:26). He set them apart for Himself and established various laws to govern how they worshipped Him. This principle is reiterated in 1 Peter 1:15-16, "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.'"

God's Holiness Defined

Here are two aspects of God's holiness.

- 1. His Moral Purity.** The Lord is perfectly sinless and pure with no evil thoughts, words, motives, or actions. Nothing He's ever done or will do is wrong. He despises all wickedness and can neither tolerate nor overlook it. As sinful creatures, we cannot perceive just how pure and holy He is.
- 2. His Separateness.** God's holiness sets Him apart from His creation. He's transcendent, which means He's far above and beyond everything else. His righteousness and purity are so great that they separate us from Him because we're all born with sinful natures.

The words saint, sanctify, and holy all come from the Greek word *hagios*. To be sanctified means to be set apart or to be made holy. God is the only One who can make someone holy because He alone is the epitome of holiness. Since sin is present in us, we have no power to make ourselves righteous. But we're made saints (holy ones) by an act of God in a moment of time based on our faith in Jesus Christ. He sets us apart for Himself and then works to make us holy in character and practice through the process of sanctification, which continues throughout our lives until we reach heaven.

How do people react to the holiness of God?

- **Isaiah's response.** Isaiah was overwhelmed by his vision of the Lord and responded with reverence and humility. God's holiness brought his own human sinfulness into sharp contrast, causing him to cry out, "Woe to me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of

unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of armies” (Isa. 6:5). Upon his confession of sin, one of the seraphim touched his mouth with a burning coal taken from the altar, saying, “Behold, this has touched your lips; and your guilt is taken away and atonement is made for your sin” (vv. 6-7).

Secondly, Isaiah responded to the Lord’s question, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Having been cleansed from sin, Isaiah quickly volunteered to serve the Lord as His prophet, saying, “Here am I. Send me!” (v. 8).

- **Peter’s response.** Seeing Jesus produce a miraculous catch of fish after his own futile night of fishing, Peter recognized that He was no ordinary man. When confronted with the holiness of Christ’s deity, “He fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!’” (Luke 5:8).
- **The Pharisees’ and Sadducees’ response.** A conversation between the religious leaders and Jesus is recorded in John 8. The signs and claims Jesus made regarding His deity frustrated and antagonized the Pharisees and Sadducees. They criticized and challenged Him and eventually responded with animosity, rage, and an attempt to destroy Him. They couldn’t tolerate the presence of Holy God in the person of Jesus Christ.
- **The response of non-Christians today.** Those who don’t know Jesus as Savior are very uncomfortable with God’s holiness because, like a light, it reveals their sin. They usually don’t want to hear anything about God, Jesus Christ, or His Word, and are sometimes antagonistic toward believers and the church. Their reaction ranges from disregard and ridicule to hatred, anger, and persecution.
- **The response of saints living in rebellion toward God.** When Christians tolerate sin in their lives and live in disobedience, they become resistant to correction and

uncomfortable with God’s holiness. But all believers have been set apart for God, and He continually works to bring them back and sanctify them until the day He calls them home to Himself.

- **The response of saints who desire to live in God’s will, walk in His ways, and obey Him.** These believers are awed and overwhelmed by God’s holiness. They’re quick to fall on their knees in repentance, acknowledge their unworthiness, and worship and praise Him. Their desire is to gather together to adore the God who saved them and see the gospel proclaimed around the world. These are saints who want holiness to rule and reign in their lives.

How can Holy God have a relationship with sinful mankind?

This is the great dilemma. Our sins separate us from the Lord, and the only one who can bridge that gap is Jesus Christ. In His holiness, God requires that His wrath be poured out in judgment upon every sinner for every sin committed. Yet in love, He placed our sins on His perfect Son who bore the cross that we deserved to bear. Now all who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus as Savior can be forgiven because the penalty of their sins has been paid. They themselves have been justified--declared not guilty--and clothed with Christ’s righteousness.

It’s all the work of God. There’s nothing we could do to save ourselves. He’s the One who obtained our salvation through His Son, convicts us of sin, opens our minds to understand the gospel, draws us to Himself, and sets us apart as His holy possessions.

► RESPONSE

- When was the last time you thought seriously about the holiness of God? What emotions did you feel? How did you respond?
- Does God’s holiness delight you or make you uncomfortable? Why?

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