

**The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 2 – “Of God and the Holy Trinity”,
Message # 17 – “The Remembrance of God’s Holiness”, Presented in the Adult
Sunday School Class by Pastor Paul Rendall on December 25th, 2016.**

Chapter 2 – Of God and the Holy Trinity, Paragraph 1 -

The Lord our God is but (a)one only living and true God; whose (b)subsistence is in and of Himself, (c)infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but Himself; (d)a most pure spirit, (e) invisible, without body, parts, or passions, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; who is (f)immutable, (g)immense, (h)eternal, incomprehensible, (i)almighty, every way infinite, (k)most holy, most wise, most free, most absolute; (l)working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, (m)for his own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; (n)the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and withal most just (o)and terrible in his judgments, (p)hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the (q)guilty.

John Brown of Haddington says in his Systematic Theology – “The Holiness of God is that essential perfection of His nature, which lies in perfect freedom from, and hatred of all sin, and in perfect love to everything holy and pure.”

1. We are to give thanks at the remembrance of His Holiness. –

Psalm 97: 11 and 12 – “Light is sown for the righteous, And gladness for the upright in heart. “Rejoice in the Lord you, righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name.” (Or – “the remembrance of His Holiness”) The light being talked about here the revelation to the mind of a believer which gives them understanding concerning the greatness and preciousness of His Being and attributes, and the greatness of His grace in Christ. Light is the revelation of spiritual truth of the word of God to our mind and our heart. Spiritually speaking what God does is that He sows this light, this revelation into our minds and hearts, opening our minds and hearts to the truth and even convincing us of that truth, and moving us to respond to the truth.

John Owen says: “It (the love of God) is a love of complacency, and therein of benevolence. Upon that view which we have by spiritual light and faith of the divine goodness, exerting itself in the way before described, our souls do approve of all that is in God, applaud it, adore it, and acquiesce in it. Hence two great duties do arise, and hereon do they depend. First, Joyful ascriptions of glory and honor unto God. All praise and thanksgiving, all blessing, all assignation of glory unto him, because of his excellencies and perfections, do arise from our satisfactory complacency in them. The righteous “rejoice in the Lord, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness,” Psalm 97:12. They are so pleased and satisfied at the remembrance of God’s holiness, that it fills their hearts with joy and causes them to break forth in praises. Praise is nothing but an outward expression of the inward complacency (rest in and the satisfaction) of our hearts in the divine perfections and their operations.

And, secondly, Love herein acts itself by benevolence, as the constant inclination of the mind unto all things wherein the glory of God is concerned. It wills all the things wherein the name of God may be sanctified, His praises made glorious, and His will done on earth as it is in heaven. As God says of His own love unto us, that “He will rest in His love, He will joy over us [thee]

with singing,” Zephaniah 3:17 — as having the greatest complacency in it, rejoicing over us with his “whole heart and his whole soul,” Jeremiah 32:41; — so, according unto our measure, do we by love rest in the glorious excellencies of God, rejoicing in them with our whole hearts and our whole souls.” Vol. 1, P. 155 of Owen’s Works

2. God is Separate or “Other” in His Holiness –

Habakkuk 2: 20 – “But the Lord is in His holy temple.” “Let all the earth keep silence before Him.”

H. J. Hastings, M. A. says - The Lord in His holy temple –

“What comparison can be formed between an idol which is nothing, and the great God who made heaven and earth? What stronger proof can be given that man is far gone from original righteousness, and inclined to evil continually, than this,—he has chosen idols, and bowed the knee before them, in preference to that Being who is, and was, and is to come? Notwithstanding, however, the indifference and rebellion of His creatures, their neglect and contempt of His word, “The Lord is in His holy temple.” The Lord, that is Jehovah, is self-existent. He is indebted to no other for His being, for He has life in Himself. He is accountable to no one. He is indebted to no one. In this vast temple of creation He dwells. Though God is everywhere present, He is present in some places in a more peculiar sense. The Lord’s throne is in heaven. In order that we may be worshippers in that temple which is above, it behooves us to be constant in our worship in the Lord’s temple here below. In a peculiar sense also the house of prayer is His temple. The Jewish temple was. “Keeping silence” indicates a sense of weakness and unworthiness, reverence and devout attention. It points also to the glory, majesty, and power of the Lord God omnipotent. God, indeed, permits us to speak to Him, whether with the voice of confession, of prayer, or of thanksgiving. Notwithstanding our own unworthiness, God does not reject our sacrifices. Keeping silence is indicative of fear. There is a fear of God without which there can be no religion; a fear which is the beginning of wisdom, and which is productive of much spiritual fruit.

There is a fear of God which has respect chiefly to His power, greatness, or majesty. Such a fear is reasonable. But the fear is tempered with love, and thus it grows into reverence. It is the feeling entertained toward those who are our seniors in age or station, piety or virtue. This reverence of God is the perfection towards which we tend. Keeping silence before God betokens attention. It implies not merely the dread of God’s power and majesty, but attention to His words. God speaks to man in nature and in providence. But especially by His Word. He, in a sense, speaks to man by His ministers and through His sacraments. Let me urge upon you the solemn truth that the Lord is in His holy temple, and press upon you the sacred duty of drawing nigh unto Him constantly, and with reverence. If on His throne in the heavens He waiteth to be gracious, here in His temple He ordinarily dispenses His benefits. Let me impress upon you the importance of joining not only heartily, but with your voice also, in those parts of our service which are proper to a congregation. God waiteth to be gracious to us, and ought we not gladly to avail ourselves of every opportunity of hearing His voice and receiving His mercy.”

Luke 1: 46-50 – “And Mary said: ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.’ “For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.” “For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name.” “And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation.”

William Hendricksen says: “What is perhaps somewhat surprising is the fact that between these two statements about God, the first stressing His power, the second His mercy, stand the declaration “Holy is His name”. “At first glance these words may seem to be out of context.” “One asks, perhaps, ‘But why did Mary insert this reference to God’s holiness or sinlessness?’ “What has that to do with the matter with reference to which she is lifting up her voice in sincere, eloquent, and enthusiastic praise?” “Some are of the opinion that in this connection Mary was thinking about her conception; and that, in view of the fact that so often among men sin is connected with bringing about conception, she is saying that in her case conception had been brought about by God’s holy power, ‘utterly separated from the sin and sinfulness of man.” “But is not this interpretation of God’s holiness too narrow?” It should be borne in mind that Mary was a Jewess, instructed from childhood in the Jewish religion.” “Accordingly, her words and phrases must be understood in the light of the Old Testament.” “When this done is soon becomes evident that her exclamation “Holy is His name” – That is, “Holy is God as He has revealed Himself – is definitely in place.” “To the Jew the adjective קדוש/ qadosh basically meant separate, set apart, exalted.” “To ascribe “holiness” to God meant to describe Him as being lifted infinitely high above all creatures hence also above all creaturely weaknesses including sin.”

“Holiness, when ascribed to God, was not considered to be an attribute to be coordinated with the other attributes”. (Herman Bavinck) “Perhaps the best way in which to gain a true idea of the basic meaning of the word holy as ascribed to God in the Old Testament would be to read and reread Isaiah 6: 1-5.” “Another helpful approach would be to sing that touching refrain, based on Psalm 148: “Let them praises give Jehovah, for His name alone is high, and His glory is exalted , and His glory is exalted, and His glory is exalted, far above the earth and sky.” (taken from the Trinity Hymnal #105. Applying all this to the Magnificat, we must conclude that Mary was so deeply impressed with the great things God had done for her, and to which she had just now referred (in the immediate preceding line of verse 49) that she cried out, ‘Holy (that is, infinitely exalted) is His name.” “And was it not also very natural that, reflecting on her own experience, she would apply this “holiness” or “incomparable greatness” of God not only to his power (the great things that He did for me) but now also to His mercy?” “Hence, in which she had conceived, would not God’s power stand out?” “When she thought of the honor God had bestowed on her, would not His mercy or tender compassion immediately occur to her?” “And since both of these qualities were marvelous in the highest degree, was it not after all very logical for Mary to express this fact by thus combining the two?”

3. We are to come to church and worship the Lord because He is holy.

Psalm 99: 9 - “Exalt the Lord our God and worship at His holy hill; for the Lord our God is holy.

David Dickson in his commentary on Psalm 99, verse 8, says: “It is a part of our exalting the true God, to join with His true church, and to offer unto Him, with others, such worship as He prescribes: Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His holy hill.” “The Lord’s holiness requires of all men the exaltation of His name and subjection to His ordinances; neither can His holiness suffer any other than what He Himself appoints: worship at His holy hill, and the untainted glory of all His attributes, are both the glory and comfort of His people who are in covenant with Him, and a motive also them to invite all men to the fellowship of His service with themselves: exalt the Lord our God, for the Lord our God is holy.”