

# God's Holiness Reveals Our Need

By Tom Hill

**Bible Text:** Isaiah 6:1-7

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To the vast majority of people, God resembles an indulgent old man. To them He shows Himself as having a dislike for folly, but at the same time displays leniency at their wrongs. This view of God has become a popular myth in the world.

It grieves my heart when I see the same attitude today in the Church of Jesus Christ and in the lives of believers. Too often, I observe fellow Christians who emulate the world in this regard. They, too, liken God to an indulgent old man Who winks at sin. They view God as lenient with their sin. Some even go so far as to say that He has set aside His rules and demands for them.

As evidence for my conclusion, I submit these common clues. Toleration of sin has spread throughout the Church. Somehow Christians have confused toleration of sin with God's mercy. Similarly, believers frequently call sin by other names, e. g., indiscretions, foolishness, errors, or mistakes. Again, Christians equate God's mercy with His cancellation of demands. In general, the Church and vast numbers of believers take a light-hearted view of sin.

As a consequence, the Church today and multitudes of believers in Jesus Christ lack spiritual power and God's glorious presence in their lives. We deny the glory to God He rightly deserves. Our sinfulness grieves the Holy Spirit and quenches His work and ministry in our lives. We face a crossroads. We desperately need spiritual revival because of our sinful conduct.

Our present sad state comes, in part, from a misrepresentation of God's nature and a misunderstanding of His character. If the Church is to experience once again God's glorious presence, She must once again examine the Bible for the truth of God's nature and character. Then in light of the truth, we must confess our sins of unbelief and disobedience. In repentance, we need to turn from our sinful ways to believe and obey God's truth. Nothing short of a change of mind, heart, and life will do.

God has promised a spiritual revival to those who do repent. Once again they will experience God's supernatural authority and ability. He will pour out His glorious presence upon them with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

The Scriptures reveal in numerous places God's true nature and character. I call your attention specifically to Isaiah 6.1-7. In this passage, the Holy Spirit discloses the King of

Glory. From this passage, I want to examine with you three certain truths and the role they should have in believers' lives. I pray that the Holy Spirit will use these truths to bring a spiritual transformation in your life.

### **Revelation of God's nature**

In our passage, Isaiah immediately describes the revelation he saw of the Lord. In his description, one feature stands out above the rest, the holiness of the Lord. In fact, it gets a trinity of acclamation, holy, holy, holy. The heavenly hosts declare with great assurance the holiness of the King of Glory.

In understanding the Lord's holiness, note first its negative aspects. It shows the absence of sin. He has no marks, spots, or blemishes against His character. His nature lacks all defilement of vice, idolatry, and any other impure and profane thing.

In addition, the Lord's holiness exhibits positive virtues. He does not conform to a standard, nor is He the best of many. He is the Standard. His holy nature exudes moral excellence and righteousness. His holy character is intrinsic and self-sufficient. His righteousness is infinite, above mankind and all created beings. Mankind and the angelic hosts catch only a glimpse of His incomprehensible, absolute holiness. Further, all that he does or ever did, His works, the Law, the cross, His attitude toward sin, manifests His holiness.

The Scriptures abundantly confirm this attribute of God. Moses sang of it upon crossing the Red Sea after seeing God's mighty destruction of the Egyptians. In Exodus 15.11, he sang,

"Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

The Apostle John said it in a different yet conclusive manner in 1 John 1.5

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

To Her disgrace, the Church has seldom experienced such a revelation. It forever changed Isaiah's life; it will have the same effect in our lives today, too. It will change our view of God, our circumstances, others and ourselves.

### **Recognition of our condition**

Immediately upon his revelation of God's nature, Isaiah recognized his true condition. The holiness of the Lord of Hosts exposed his unworthiness. Isaiah the prophet, the friend of God, found himself undone. This word has multiple aspects to its meaning. It means to be dumb or silent. In addition it describes one cut down to size. The revelation of the Lord silenced him and left him speechless.

Additionally, the infinite holiness of the King brought dread and astonishment to Isaiah because of his sinful condition. Isaiah knew his uncleanness. He recognized his imperfect and incomplete conduct before God. Isaiah then saw not only his uncleanness and unworthiness, but also that of those around him. He saw the encompassing evil in the lives of the people of God. The brighter the light, the more dirt you see.

When we catch a glimpse of Jesus as He really is, we see ourselves as we really are. To the untrained eye, an eye unexposed to the Holy Christ, the flesh looks good, harmless at least. Yet the Scriptures repeatedly affirm that the flesh is the enemy of God.<sup>1</sup> All of its actions and purposes have one aim, to dethrone and defame the Lord. The flesh can never produce anything of the Spirit; it produces only fleshly results.<sup>2</sup> Thus the flesh can never please or honor God. It requires an experience with God like Isaiah's for believers to recognize the sinfulness of their own flesh.

### **Realization of our need**

To stand before a holy God demonstrates our acute and actual need of repentance and relief from sin. Such an one needs pardon and purification which rests upon the supernatural grace and mercy of a living God. Note what happened to Isaiah.

To bring cleansing to Isaiah, an angel brought a live coal from the altar. The angel touched Isaiah's lips with the live coal. This personal application brought cleansing to Isaiah and prepared him for God's purposes.

The imagery of Isaiah's experience describes the great need of an unclean Church of today. It pictures the sanctifying work that we require. We need the refining and purifying fire of the Holy Spirit Who applies the word and work of Jesus Christ to our lives. God's Spirit convicts of sin and uses God's word to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. The Holy Spirit brings repentance and relief from sin. This personal application of Christ's work brings pardon and purification.

It seems the Church knows little and sees little need of this sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, the modern Church of Jesus Christ emulates Martha, who was troubled and disturbed about many things, except the right thing, like Mary and Isaiah.<sup>3</sup> As evidence, note the increasing numbers of Christians who flock to hear the latest tricks on how to build a Sunday School, how to program Church growth, how to handle your money, or how to solve the latest psychological trauma.

To my grief, I have yet to examine materials from these kinds of accents that emphasize the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit. He receives only token and "proof text" acknowledgment. Further, none of them that I have seen have set forth the possibility and the necessity of a fresh revelation of the King of Glory, which is of permanent value and importance. Instead, we pursue these rainbows, which the Bible does not demand nor condone, as if they will yield the golden pot of holiness, which the Bible does require.<sup>4</sup>

We have failed to recognize our true condition, and thus our true need, repentance and relief from sin unto holiness. The Church today emphasizes performance instead of purity, personal happiness instead of personal holiness, crowds instead of Christ, regalias instead of righteousness. But you cannot serve both God and mammon.<sup>5</sup> The pursuit of purity and personal holiness cannot coexist with other efforts nor can it rank behind other endeavors. It must take first place.

I have concluded one thing from observing Biblical and Church history. We have failed to learn from it. For without exception, the pursuit of personal, practical holiness has always produced a revived, effective, growing, powerful people of God. In contrast, every other emphasis has produced a weak, unclean, ineffective, slumbering Church. The current modern Church is a prime example of the later truth.

Without question, the Church, Christians, perhaps even you, need to recognize our true need. We need the sanctifying purifying work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Nothing else will turn the tide. Purity always precedes the outpouring of God's glorious presence.

### **Reason for these truths**

What does the Holy Spirit want these truths to accomplish in your life today? At the very least, He wants you to know the truth. He desires you to discern the fallacies that abound in current Church trends. He also longs for you to know the truth of His word. These truths will enlighten you in the character and nature of God, His relationship with mankind, His demands for mankind, and mankind's relationship with God. Are these truths what you believe? Do they mold and shape your life? Do you avoid and reject the fads of today that oppose Scriptural truth? Do you shun those practices they recommend? Truly this passage provides an example from Isaiah's life for believers to follow. I pray that the Holy Spirit will open your eyes and clarify these truths in your life.

In addition, the Holy Spirit wants these truths to convict you of sin. Where in your life has He identified your failure to apply these truths in your life? Has He discovered unbelief and disobedience? Whether it arises from ignorance, a satisfaction with the status quo, adaptation to society, or outright rebellion, sin is still sin. It glorifies self, centers upon personal gratification, and denies glory to God that only He rightly deserves. It quenches the work of the Holy Spirit. I pray that the Spirit of God will do His convicting and examining work in your life and identify your failures in these issues.

What conclusions about your conduct has God's Spirit revealed to you? Has He found you faithful or doubtful? Obedient or disobedient? Approved or disapproved? Innocent or guilty? The guilt of sin and the reproof of the Spirit call for relief from the judgment of God. Even the smallest of sins, if there is such a thing as a small sin, causes broken fellowship with the Father. The nature of these truths, the characteristics of their duty, and the plight of mankind unequivocally necessitate the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit to apply these truths in your life.

What changes does the Holy Spirit need to bring into your life today because of these truths? At the outset, we must realize the refuge of lies that keep us from faith and obedience. Self-defense, excuses, justification, and delay only continue our broken fellowship from God for our sins. We must recognize God's demands and our obligation to them. He requires personal holiness and immediate repentance from any departure from it. He does not excuse delay.

Only complete repentance brings relief. It starts with a clear sense of our sin, without compromise or concealment. A profound sorrow and shame for sin accompanies a hatred for what God hates. In turning from sin unto Jesus Christ in humble, detailed confession, the repentant one finds relief from sin.

I pray that the Holy Spirit will apply these truths in your life today. I pray that He will bring repentance to you and relief in His precious blood.

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1. Romans 8.5-8
2. John 3.6
3. Luke 10.40-42
4. Hebrews 12.14
5. Matthew 6.24.

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