

BUILDING FAITHFULNESS, OBEDIENCE, AND PURITY ON THE FOUNDATION OF GOD'S HOLINESS AND FORGIVENESS

Bruce A Ware, Professor of Christian Theology, Southern Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

I. Introduction

Overarching Principle: We will only be committed and devoted to lives of faithfulness toward one another and purity before God as our lives are expressions of our deep and abiding love for God. But deep and abiding love for God is the outgrowth of knowing the greatness, expansiveness, and the extravagance of his merciful forgiveness in Christ. But to see more of the fullness and magnitude of this gracious and merciful forgiveness we must see the weightiness, extensiveness, and horror of our sin. But to understand rightly how deeply sinful we are and how great is our just condemnation and ruin before God, we must see more clearly and more fully the glory and magnificence of God's transcendent excellence, holiness, and purity.

So, we must see God's **holiness** to see our sin, our **sin** to appreciate God's forgiveness, God's **forgiveness** to possess and live out abiding love for God, and **love** for God to live lives of **obedience, faithfulness, and purity** before God.

So, H – S – F – L – P — Holiness, Sin, Forgiveness, Love, Purity

II. God's Transcendent Holiness that Breeds Depth of Understanding of Sin and Forgiveness (Isa 6:1-8)

A. Aspects of God's Majesty, Glory and Holiness (6:1-4)

B. The Depth of Isaiah's Sin (6:5)

C. The Extravagance of God's Forgiveness (6:6-8)

III. Forgiveness that Breeds Love and Purity (Luke 7:36-48)

A. "He who is forgiven little loves little" (7:47b) – the proportionality principle. The extent of the understanding and embrace of our forgiveness is proportionate to the extent of the possession and expression of our love (7:41-42)

B. The woman's deep sense of forgiveness yielded deep expressions of love and transformation in her life toward purity.

Now, the question becomes this: If depth of our understanding of forgiveness yields depth of our love and longings for purity, how do we grow in the depth of our understanding of our forgiveness?

There are two routes: 1) Sin all the more that grace might abound! The more we sin, the more we're forgiven!! – Rom 6:1ff shows us the error and folly of this route. 2) Grow in your knowledge of the One you've sinned against to see how great is your sin and remarkable is his forgiveness of you.

IV. Conclusion: Grow in the knowledge of God – his greatness and grace, his majesty and mercy, his purity and perfection, his holiness and compassion – and learn more deeply and profoundly of your sin and his forgiveness. He who is forgiven much, loves much. And he who loves much, longs to show forth his heartfelt thanksgiving, expressing that love through a life of obedience, faithfulness, and purity. So, H – S – F – L – P — Holiness, Sin, Forgiveness, Love, Purity