

# The Doctrines of Grace

## Doctrine 1-The Absolute Sovereignty of God

### Part A/Lesson Five

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## Part A- The Character and Nature Of God- continued

### God is Holy

Exodus 3:1-6

**1** Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

**2** And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

**3** And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

**4** And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

**5** And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

**6** Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

1Samuel 2:2

There is none holy as the LORD : for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.

Psalms 99

**1**The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved.

**2** The LORD is great in Zion; and he is high above all the people.

**3** Let them praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy.

**4** The king's strength also loveth judgment; thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.

**5** Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy.

**6** Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the LORD , and he answered them.

**7** He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them.

**8** Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.

**9** Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God is holy.

#### **Isaiah 6:1-3**

**1** In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

**2** Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

**3** And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

#### **The Revelation 4**

**1** After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

**2** And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

**3** And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

**4** And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

**5** And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

**6** And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

**7** And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

**8** And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

**9** And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

**10** The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

**11** Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Most of the time when many people speak about the Holiness of God- they are actually referring to His Purity and Righteousness. And surely God is both Pure and Righteous- but that is *not* the dominant meaning of the word, "Holy". The Biblical word, "Holy" has two distinct meanings:

1. God's "Apartness" or His "Otherness"
2. God's unique *Actions*

### The "Apartness" of God

When we use the word "Holy" in our descriptions of God- we are referring to the profound difference between God, and everything and everyone else. Holy means that God is "other" or "different" or "set apart" or "unique" from His Creation in His Worth and Power and Beauty and Importance and Glory. And, this Truth makes it correct and proper for us to worship God, and it also makes it foolish, sinful, and offensive not to.

God is "unlike" anyone or anything that He made. He is *superior to* and *more important than* anything else. God is the single most valuable Commodity in the entire Universe. And, because God is Omniscient and knows everything about everything- no one knows, understands, and appreciates the great Value of God more than God Himself. God is not "like" Man in that He does not think, speak, act, love, or desire what we do or even in the same way that we do. God's Holiness makes Him infinitely *worthy* and *deserving* of our adoration; our worship; our love; our devotion; and our obedience. And His Perfect Holiness also makes it proper for God to be angry and offended when we do *not* honor Him in the way that He is entitled to be honored. Therefore, God is correct to Judge us when we do not worship Him.

One of the greatest sins was when God's Own people (the Jews) began to try to "bridge the gap" between themselves and God (without Jesus) by thinking of God and referring to God as though He was nothing more than an exalted Man.

#### **Psalms 50:21**

**These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.**

#### **Be Ye Holy**

##### **Leviticus 20:7**

**Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God.**

##### **1 Peter 1:15&16**

**15** But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation (daily life);

**16** Because it is written, **Be ye holy; for I am holy.**

Now when we speak about people or objects being "holy" we are speaking about them being "set aside"; "consecrated"; or "made different" precisely because of the "Touch" of God that is upon them- not because of any *inherent* holiness or sinlessness in them. For example- in **Exodus 3:5**, God told Moses

**...Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.**

The dirt that Moses was standing on was *made* "holy" only because God was there- speaking to Moses from the burning bush- not because the dirt *itself* had any holy qualities by itself.

So too- all genuine believers are called to "be holy" in the same sense- due only to God's Grace and Presence in our lives. We are called to live "counterintuitively" to the ways of the lost pagan world, and be "set apart" or "different" from those who are lost and unsaved. That doesn't mean that we are to simply be strange or weird- but that we should struggle daily against the lusts of our flesh by the Power of the Spirit to live in humble and joyful submission to the Authority of Scripture rather than to do "what is right in our own eyes".

When we are called to be Holy (**Leviticus 20:7; 1Peter 1:15&16**), that does *not* mean that we are asked to share in God's Divine Majesty or Deity, or that we are to reach a position of sinless perfection. That is blasphemy. But rather that we are to live and act and speak and behave in a way that testifies to the fact that God has "set us apart" or "made us different" from our normal fallen sinfulness. To be called to holiness, therefore is for frail sinful humans to attempt to reflect the Moral Character and Activity of God and to mirror and emulate (however weak and clumsy it may be) His Holiness.

We must be careful though, that as we strive to be holy- we do not assume a self-righteousness that would deceive us into thinking that we are morally superior to others due to the fact that God has called and chosen and redeemed us.

### **Romans 12:3**

**For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.**

### **Not Our Own**

We must understand that true Biblical Holiness is *foreign* to Man- it is *alien* and *external* to Humanity. Holiness is not *intrinsic* to Man- it does not originate from inside of *any* human being. Holiness is a gracious Gift and Calling of God and therefore, when understood properly, it will humble our hearts; break our pride; and shatter our arrogance.

We must remember that it is the Presence and Purpose of God alone that makes the ordinary to be extraordinary; the common to be uncommon; and the unholy to be holy.

## God's Unique Actions

God's Holiness not only means that everything that about God Personally- is special and unique- but it also means that everything that God *does* is also just that unique and special and different from what humans or animals or any other created thing (angels) can or would do. No one is like God.

## God is Righteous

### Deuteronomy 32:4

**He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.**

### Job 36:3

**I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.**

### Psalms 7:9

**Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.**

### Psalms 36:6

**Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD , thou preservest man and beast.**

### Psalms 119:142

**Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.**

The word, "Righteous" comes from the Hebrew word, *tsaddik* in the Old Testament and the Greek word, *dikaïos* in the New. Both words mean: *rightness; correctness; or moral excellence*. The Bible declares repeatedly that the one true living God is perfectly Righteous and always operates in absolute consistency with His Righteous Nature.

There is nothing wrong or incorrect or sinful about God's Person or Acts. God will never *do* anything or *be* anything that could justify any accusation of wrongdoing. His Being, Works, Decrees, and Judgments are always in all ways- Righteous. In the words of Paul Washer,

"On that day when God judges all men according to their works- even the condemned will bow their heads and declare that God is right!"

We must understand, when examining God's Righteousness, that, like every other Characteristic and Attribute about Him- God's Righteousness is *intrinsic* and *inherent*- which means that it is inward and essential- belonging to His Nature.

Righteousness is not something that God *aspires* to be or something that He periodically accomplishes with the aid of others- but God Himself *is* Righteous and

it is His Own Personal Righteousness that is the perfect Standard for all other moral excellencies.

We must also understand that God's Righteousness is reflected in His Attitude toward the deeds of both men and angels. The God of the Bible is not morally apathetic- but He fervently and passionately loves Righteousness and He hates all Unrighteousness.

### **Romans 2:5**

**But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;**

### **2Timothy 4:8**

**Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.**

### **The Revelation 16:5-7**

**5** And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.

**6** For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.

**7** And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

We must also try to grasp that *everything* that God does is in perfect harmony with His Own Will- even if we do not see the connection. The very fact that God said or did something testifies that it is Right- even if it does not meet our approval. God *always* acts in a Righteous manner because His Nature is *perfectly* Righteous. There is never at any time or in any way any evil mixed in with God's Righteousness. And God will always Sovereignly rule over all His Creation without taking any bribes; without any partiality; and without any injustice.

### **James 1:13**

**Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:**

### **2Chronicles 19:7**

**Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.**

### **Job 8:3**

**Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice?**

### **Job 36:23**

**Who hath enjoined him (God) his way? or who can say, Thou (God) hast wrought iniquity?**

## **God is Good**

### **Exodus 34:6&7**

**6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD , The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth**

**7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.**

### **Psalms 25:8-10**

**8 Good and upright is the LORD : therefore will he teach sinners in the way.**

**9 The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.**

**10 All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.**

### **Psalms 100**

**1 A Psalm of praise. Make a joyful noise unto the LORD , all ye lands.**

**2 Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.**

**3 Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.**

**4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.**

**5 For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.**

### **Romans 8:28-39**

**28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.**

**29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.**

**30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.**

**31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?**

**32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?**

**33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.**

**34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.**

**35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?**

**36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.**

**37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.**

**38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,**

**39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

When people walk in the sunshine- they cast shadows on the ground. But, when James wrote his inspired Epistle- he said that with God there is:

**... no variableness, neither shadow of turning.**

Now, James was not only referring to the fact that God is immaterial- and thus incapable of casting a shadow- but also that there is no "shadow side" to God in a *moral* sense. Shadows suggest darkness of some kind and, in spiritual terms, darkness suggests evil. Since there is no evil at all in God in any way- there is no hint of darkness in God and God is therefore The Father of Lights.

**1John 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.**

God's Goodness refers both to His Character and to His Behavior. All of God's Actions flow out from His perfect Being. God acts according to Who and What He is. In **Matthew 7:18**- Jesus said,

**A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.**

God is utterly Good and is therefore *incapable* of bearing evil fruit. The Law of God reflects God's Goodness. God is not Good because He obeys some "Law" *outside* Himself nor because He acts in a lawless manner and simply calls Himself, "Good" based upon His Authority and Omnipotence. No, God's Goodness is not arbitrary or haphazard- it is part and parcel to His Nature. God does however obey a Law- but the Law that God obeys is the Law of His Own Sinless and Perfect Character and Nature. God always and in all ways acts according to His Own Character which is eternally and immeasurably Good.

**James 1:17**

**Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.**



In this statement- James is not only teaching that God is the ultimate *Standard* of Goodness- but James is also saying that God is the *Source* of all Goodness.

### **Romans 8:28**

**And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.**

This statement by the Apostle Paul about the Divine Providence of God is as difficult to understand as it is comforting. If God is able to make everything that happens to His elect work together for Good- then *ultimately*, everything that happens to God's Elect is therefore, by definition, "Good".

Our difficulty with this verse lies in the fact that- in our eyes- some things appear to be evil, unfair, or wrong- and because inherently "bad" things happen to God's people such as trials, afflictions, sufferings, persecutions, and sorrows.

But we must be careful that we heed the warning given to us by the prophet in **Isaiah 5:20**:

**Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!**

So, the Promise of Scripture is not that all things are "Good", but that God works all things *together* for "Good" so that God- in, by, and through His Goodness transcends all of those things and Sovereignly works all of the "bad" things with all of the "good" things for the ultimate Good of those who are both called and who love God!

So, for the Christian- in an ultimate sense- there are no accidents, no mistakes, and no tragedies. Ultimately, the Providence of God operating by and through God's Goodness works all of these terrible things together- along with those things that are wonderful for the final good of the believer.

In 1529, during a discussion with Ulrich Zwingli, when the great Reformer, Martin Luther, was asked about these very things, he replied,

"If Christ told me to eat the dung from the streets, not only would I eat it- but I would be convinced that it was good for me"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Luther, Martin, *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, Volume iii, Baker Books, 2000.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

## Recap- Lesson Five

1. What term best describes what is meant by the term, "God is Holy"?
  - a. God is Good
  - b. God is Powerful
  - c. God is Righteous
  - d. God is Different
  
2. What two meanings define God's Holiness? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
3. What connection to worship does God's Holiness have? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Who or What is the most valuable Commodity in all the Universe?
  - a. Angels
  - b. Heaven
  - c. Physical Healing
  - d. God
  
5. Who understands better than anyone else how valuable God is? \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. Why would God be angry if He is *not* worshipped obeyed or adored properly?
  - a. Because He is mean and dictatorial
  - b. Because He can't control His Anger
  - c. He doesn't get angry at not being worshipped
  - d. Because His Holiness makes Him deserving of worship
  
7. What was one of the greatest sins that the ancient Jews committed? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
8. What does it mean when the Bible says that God's *people* are to be "holy"
  - a. They are sinless
  - b. They obey the Law of God
  - c. They go to Church more often
  - d. They are "set aside" and "distinct" from the world
  
9. How are sinful people made "holy"
  - a. By the Touch of God on their lives
  - b. By taking Communion
  - c. By being Baptized
  - d. By memorizing Scripture

10. What does it mean for God's people to "live counterintuitively" to the ways of the lost pagan world? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. Is it possible for anyone to "be holy" and live in consistent disobedience to Scripture? \_\_\_\_\_

12. Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. Does being holy mean that we are now Deity? \_\_\_\_\_

14. What is that thinking called? \_\_\_\_\_

15. What does being Holy mean? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

16. What does it mean to say that true Biblical Holiness is alien to Man; not intrinsic to Man; and does not originate from inside any human being? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

17. Finish this sentence, "God's Holiness also mean that everything that God *does* is also \_\_\_\_\_"

18. What does God's Righteousness mean? \_\_\_\_\_

19. What point is Paul Washer making in his quote? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

20. What does it mean to say that God's Righteousness is intrinsic and inherent?  
\_\_\_\_\_

21. What does God's Righteousness cause Him to hate? \_\_\_\_\_

22. Complete this sentence, "The very fact that God said or did something testifies that it \_\_\_\_\_"

23. Why is it comforting for us to know that God rules over all His Creation without taking any bribes; without partiality; and without any injustice? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

24. How does what James wrote in his Epistle relate to God's Goodness? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

25. What Law does God obey? \_\_\_\_\_

26. Complete this sentence, "God always acts according to His Own \_\_\_\_\_ which is eternally and immeasurably \_\_\_\_\_"

27. God is not only the ultimate *Standard* of Goodness- but James says that God is also the \_\_\_\_\_ of all Goodness.

28. What does **Romans 8:28** mean? \_\_\_\_\_

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29. To whom is **Romans 8:28** written? \_\_\_\_\_

30. Why do we have difficulty with this verse? \_\_\_\_\_

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31. Complete this sentence, "Since the Promise of **Romans 8:28** is true- to the Christian- there are no \_\_\_\_\_"

32. What does Martin Luther's quote mean about the Goodness of God? \_\_\_\_\_

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