

The Holiness of God
and the
Necessity of Holiness

I will start right out with a quote from Bishop Ryle, 😊

“I ask to be heard today about this question. How stands the account between our souls and God? In this hurrying, bustling world, let’s stand still for a few minutes and consider the matter of holiness. I believe I might have chosen a subject more popular and pleasant. I am sure I might have found one more easy to handle. But I feel deeply I could not have chosen one more seasonable and more profitable to our souls. It is a solemn thing to hear the Word of God saying, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. xii. 14.)”

— Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots by J. C. Ryle

Here is the final purpose of God for His elect -- He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love (Eph 1:4). But to get to that end we must begin at the beginning. But the beginning is not in ourselves. The first part of this study will be to present the Biblical testimony of God’s holiness in and of itself. Then we will step back and consider what holiness is and why it is ineffable, that is wonderful and incomprehensible in its nature. Then we will look at four case studies which show the effect of God’s holiness on sinners in His presence. My aim in this is not only to inform and instruct but also (honestly) to terrify us all a bit because we live in such a profane world where there is no place nor room for the idea of the holy and holiness is really foreign concept to us. We live in a culture that has become so jaded and degraded that we are not easily awed into a proper reverence for the holiness of God.

Then, with this material in our minds as background, we will highlight the dreadful plight of mankind, set forth the ground and root of holiness and then present two principles for the development and growth of holiness in the life. Let’s begin with a word of prayer and ask the Lord for His blessing on this study.

<<Heavenly Father, who dwell in light unapproachable, I pray that you will send your Holy Spirit to attend and superintend this study and bless it to all of our souls. Convict of sin, convert sinners to Christ, strengthen us in Him. I am greatly in need of grace and mercy from the throne of grace and mercy. Lord, we come as empty vessels to be filled by your grace. May the eternal Son of God be glorified among us, and the blessed Trinity greatly magnified in all our thoughts and considerations today. Amen and amen.>>

We begin with a review of the Biblical material on the holiness of God.

I. The Holiness of God

A. The Biblical Data

1. Transcendent Glory – the Creator/creature distinction

- a. Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? (Exodus 15:11)
- b. No one is holy like the LORD, for there is none besides You, nor is there any rock like our God. (1 Samuel 2:2)
- c. Let them praise Your great and awesome name—He is holy. (Psalm 99:3)
- d. For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy ... (Isaiah 57:15)
- e. Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. (Rev 15:4)

God is glorious in holiness; his holiness is his glory. It is that attribute which angels adore, Isa. 6:3. His holiness appeared in the destruction of Pharaoh, his hatred of sin, and his wrath against obstinate sinners. It appeared in the deliverance of Israel, his delight in the holy seed, and his faithfulness to his own promise. God is glorious in holiness - this is his honor. All of creation must always stand in awe of Him. God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him (Psalm 89:7).

2. Moral Purity

a. Separation from Sin

- i. Therefore listen to me, you men of understanding: Far be it from God to do wickedness, and from the Almighty to commit iniquity. (Job 34:10)
- ii. For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. (Psalm 5:4)
- iii. You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness. (Hab 1:13)

God sees all the sin that is committed in the world, and every single sin is a grievous offense to him, each and every sin is odious in his eyes, and those that commit sin are thereby made obnoxious to his justice. The holiness of God is a complete and entire antipathy toward every disposition and practice contrary to his holy law – for wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18).

b. Perfection in Purity

- i. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. (Joshua 24:19)
- ii. Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker? Behold, he puts no trust in his servants; and his angels he charges with folly: (Job 4:17-18)
- iii. The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. (Psalm 145:17)

Here is the terrifying nature of God. Joshua means that you cannot serve the Lord, except you put away all other gods for he is holy and jealous, and will by no means admit a rival, and therefore you must be very watchful and careful, for it is at your peril if you come in your own strength, in your own righteousness and fall short in even the slightest detail. God is perfect in purity and cannot tolerate even the slightest imperfection.

3. What in the World is White?

Whiteness is a commonly used metaphor in the Bible. We know what white is....right? or do we? What does the Scripture say?

- a. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. (Psalm 51:7)
- b. "Come now, and let us reason together," says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. (Isaiah 1:18)
- c. Many shall be purified, and made white (Daniel 12:10)
- d. [speaking of Jesus' transfiguration] and his garments became glittering, white exceedingly, as snow, so as a fuller upon the earth is not able to whiten them. (Mark 9:3)
- e. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; (Rev 1:14)
- f. [speaking of the church] And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. (Rev 19:8)

Now, with this material in mind, let's refer to the theologians and read what they have to say on the theology of holiness.

B. The Theology of Holiness

1. Louis Berkhoff wrote that, The Scriptural idea of holiness then is twofold. In its original sense it denotes that He is absolutely distinct from all His creatures, and is exalted above them in infinite majesty. So understood, the holiness of God is one of His transcendental attributes, and is sometimes spoken of as His central or supreme perfection.....but the holiness of God also has a specific ethical or moral aspect.

It does not seem proper to speak of one attribute of God as being more central and fundamental than another; but if this were permissible, the Scriptural emphasis on the holiness of God would seem to justify its selection. It is quite evident, that holiness in this sense of the word is not really a moral attribute which can be coordinated with the others, such as love, grace and mercy,

but is rather something that is coextensive with, and applicable to, everything that can be predicated of God.

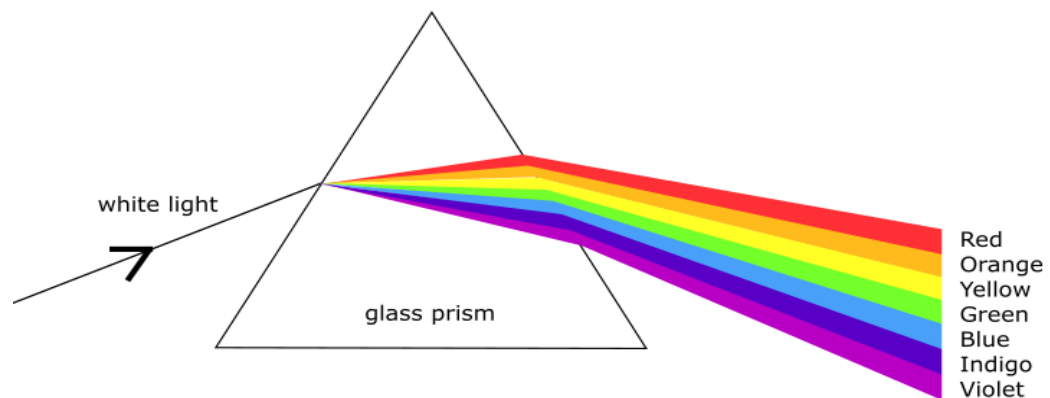
(Louis Berkhoff, Systematic Theology, 73-74)

2. James Boyce wrote that, Holiness is, *however*, not a distinctive attribute, but rather the combination of all these moral attributes. We may suppose a being in whom there may be love without justice, or truth, or any one of these to the exclusion of the other two; but no being can be holy who does not combine in himself all of these, and all other moral perfections.... It is evident, therefore, that holiness is the sum of all excellence and the combination of all the attributes which constitute perfection of character. (James Boyce, Abstract of ST, 92-93)
3. Stephen Charnock wrote that, If any, this attribute hath an excellency above his other perfections. [...]
 - a. None is sounded out so loftily ... He is "Holy, Holy, Holy" Is 6:3, Rev 4:8
 - b. He singles it out to swear by "I have sworn by My holiness" Psalm 89:35, "The Lord GOD has sworn by His holiness" Amos 4:2
 - c. It is his glory and beauty. 1 Thess 4:4, Eph 4:24, 2 Chron 20:21, Psalm 27:44.
 - d. It is his very life. "they were alienated from the life of God" Eph 4:18

As it seems to challenge an excellency above all his other perfections, so it is the glory of all the rest. As it is the glory of the Godhead, so it is the glory of every perfection in the Godhead. As His power is the strength of them, so His holiness is the beauty of them. (Stephen Charnock, Existence and Attributes of God, Vol 2, pp. 112-113)

4. Dabney wrote that Holiness, therefore, is to be regarded, not as a distinct attribute, but as the resultant of all God's moral attributes together. *And as His justice, goodness, and truth are all predicated of Him as a Being of intellect and will, and would be wholly irrelevant to anything unintelligent and involuntary, so His holiness implies a reference to the same attributes. His moral attributes are the special crown; His intelligence and will are the brow that wears it. His holiness is the collective and consummate glory of His nature as infinite, morally pure, active and intelligent Spirit.* (Robert Dabney, Systematic Theology, pp. 172-173)
5. This is the mystery of holiness! We have trouble defining and understanding holiness because it is wonderful, like the pure white by which it is represented in Scripture. We experience the light of the sun and we can enjoy the beauty of it, but even such a seemingly common thing is too wonderful for us. Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun! (Eccl 11:7). White light is like God's holiness in itself – incomprehensible to us because it is terrifying in its transcendent and yet simple, such knowledge is too

high for us! But as the white light from the sun is refracted in the clouds to form a rainbow, or in a prism to reveal the color spectrum, so when the transcendent holiness of God shines through this fallen world, we see the full spectrum of His holy attributes made manifest. Where there is no sin, there can be no revelation of God's mercy, forgiveness and long-suffering. Where there is no sin, there can be no revelation of His righteousness, justice and wrath. Just as the clouds refract the light of the sun to reveal His bow in the clouds, God's glorious moral attributes are like individual colors of God's glorious white holiness refracted in a sin-cursed world to the revelation of His glory. He set His rainbow in the cloud to reveal to us that His holiness is majestic above all things and certainly terrifying but that in the full spectrum of His nature, that there is mercy with Him, that He might be feared (Psalm 130:4).



C. Response of Sinners

1. Case study 1: Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10)

(1) Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them.

(2) So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

(3) And Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke, saying:

'By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy;
And before all the people I must be glorified.'"

So Aaron held his peace.

(Leviticus 10:1-3)

These two sons of Aaron attempted to approach God in an unauthorized way. Though the account is brief, we surmise that they took common fire (not from

the altar on which fire had fallen from heaven) and ordinary incense (not from Moses in accordance with the command but common incense) and they complacently went and presented it to the Lord. The reference is to Exodus 19:22, where the Lord said – “And let the priests also, which come near to the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break out against them.”

This is a demonstration of God’s terrifying holiness. When men acquire a familiarity with God leading to contempt and fail to regard His holiness with reverence and proper awe, they may attempt to approach Him in an unlawful way. As Matthew Henry wrote, “If God be not sanctified and glorified by us, he will be sanctified and glorified upon us. He will take vengeance on those that profane his sacred name by trifling with him.”

2. Case study 2 -- the story of Uzzah (2 Samuel 6)

(1) And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart.

(4) And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it.

(5) And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.

The story of Uzzah is another terrifying and tragic tale of men in the presence of God’s holiness. At first sight, it might seem that Uzzah did a good thing, or, if it wasn’t good, at least it doesn’t seem to us worthy of death. As the ark was being transported on a cart (which we know is wrong), the oxen stumbled and the cart wobbled, it seemed like the ark might fall into the mud and worse at the threshing floor. And, in what must have been an instinctive reaction, Uzzah reached out his hand and touched the ark, so that it wouldn’t fall into the mire. And this was Uzzah’s error, for which he was struck down – he considered his own hand to be more worthy of touching the ark than the mud. But which is filthier in God’s eyes? Dirt and manure never disobeyed God. It turns to mud when it rains and dries when the sun warms it, all precisely in accordance with the will of God. But man’s hand is wicked and disobedient – it was by the wicked hand of man that Christ was crucified and slain (Acts 2:23) – and therefore God commanded in Number 4:15, “they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die.” Uzzah’s failure to consider aright, to know himself in relation to God, and to properly reverence God’s holiness, this negligence cost him very dearly – he was struck down! He should have thought beforehand about his condition before God and not have been presumptuous with regard to the terrifying holiness of God.

3. Case study 3: The call of the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 6)

- (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.
- (4) And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.
- (5) Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

In the call of the prophet Isaiah, the Lord reveals Himself in His majestic holiness – high and lifted up. A king's flowing robe would have a train or a trailing garment in proportion to his majesty. A truly majestic robe would have a long train that required servants to carry it along. Here, the Lord's train is so long that it fills the temple. This speaks of His infinite majesty.

In this vision, the servants of the Lord are themselves majestic beings. The name 'seraphim' has the root meaning related to "burning" – they are literally "the burning ones" -- the same word is used to describe the serpents in Numbers 21 as "fiery". So the seraphim are truly majestic beings specially created to serve in the very presence of God. They are holy creatures and without sin. God made them with six wings because they are forced cover their faces and their feet in God's presence. God's holiness is so overwhelming in its brightness and glory that even the holy angels dare not look into His face lest even they be consumed. This God IS a consuming fire – utterly beyond mortal comprehension and terrifying in His intrinsic Holiness. That the angels cover themselves speaks of the necessity of great humility and reverence in attendance upon God, for He is greatly feared in the assembly of His holy ones, Ps. 89:7.

The angels cry out continually that God is "holy, holy, holy" – using the Hebrew superlative degree, that is, by using the literary device of a threefold repetition to raise the degree of God's holiness to the ultimate degree. Scripture says that God is love, God is good, God is truth, God is righteous, God is just, and so forth but only God's holiness is ever repeated three times. This is a very special emphasis. By this we understand that God's holiness is an attribute not on a par with His other moral attributes, God's holiness is the comprehensive union

and perfection of His being – the union of all the moral attributes, as we mentioned earlier, as white light is to the colors of the spectrum. And the overwhelming intensity of the glory of God’s holiness not only forces the holy angels to shield themselves it completely disintegrates Isaiah.

Isaiah cries out, “Woe is me! for I am undone!” Here the prophet comes face to face with not only his pitiful creaturely nature in comparison with the majestic holiness of God and His angels, but there is the additional crushing weight of sinfulness. Isaiah’s cry comes from the depths of his soul and expresses his realization of his utter loss as a pitiful creature standing guilty before the majestic holiness of God. The presence of God in His holiness is judgment upon the creature. God’s holiness breaks out against sin, it pours out wrath in fury with a burning vengeance against any and all sin and the pitiful sinful creature cannot bear it for an instant. But this is the end of all who are outside of Christ:

The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and [the sinner] shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: (Rev 14:10)

Here fire and brimstone express the effect of the Lamb’s holiness on the sinner who finds his sinful immortal soul unconsumed in the eternal, inescapable presence by the consuming fire of God’s terrifying holiness.

4. Case study 4: Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5)

- (1) But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession.
- (2) And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet.
- (3) But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?
- (4) While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."
- (5) Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.
- (6) And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him.
- (7) Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.
- (8) And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much."

(9) Then Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.”

(10) Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband.

(11) So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

It seems like Ananias and Sapphira are the Nadab and Abihu of the New Testament. God is still the same Holy God who wrote in Lev 10, “By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified.”

Lying to the Holy Spirit – this is one of the texts that clearly demonstrates the personality and the Deity of the Holy Spirit – is the same sort of hypocrisy that caused Nadab and Abihu to present strange fire before the Lord. The Holy Spirit is holy, and the Holy Spirit is God, and He must be regarded as holy.

Now God made examples of them to demonstrate His holiness for our sake that we might learn from the mistakes of others – great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things. Elsewhere in the NT we read of judgment of approaching God in the Lord’s Supper –

For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. (1 Cor 11:29-30)

Thus we have a warning and a fence around the Lord’s Table because God’s holiness is terrifying, and we must be careful not to let anyone approach Him in His divine ordinance who is unprepared. Please let no one ever be offended if you are hindered from the table but take care for your soul lest the Lord break out against you, it is good to be cautious in this matter.

God’s holiness is absolute and it is a consuming fire and it is only now being held back by His mere long-suffering, His self-control which He exercises in His marvelous providence of drawing wicked men to Himself in love and mercy, having overcome the legal obstacles which stood in the way, by His own dear Son, who took our nature, bore the wrath due to us, was crucified, died and was buried – He ascended on the third day and now He ever lives to make intercession for us.

II. Holiness in Man

A. The Utter Lack of Holiness in the Natural Man

1. Just as light will be other than white if the source isn't producing the full spectrum of colors, so too, the absence of any aspect of holiness means there is no holiness. Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I can remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. For the garment to be white, the perfect union of colors must be present --
2. But the natural man, all sons of Adam, are corrupted and perverted in every single moral attribute. Every single one of us naturally lacks
 - a. righteousness – there is none righteous, no not one (Rom 3:10)
 - b. goodness – There is none who does good, no, not one (Rom 3:12)
 - c. truthfulness – With your tongues you have practiced deceit (Rom 3:13)
 - d. love – living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another (Tit 3:3)

There is no end to the miseries and contentions and quarrels that flow from our boundless corruption which is rooted and grounded in self-pride and self-exaltation – each of us naturally want to be his own little god, wickedly at war with the One, True God and with all the other wicked little gods who dare to think of themselves as god above ourselves! We are utterly estranged from holiness in our natural condition. It is so far from us that we cannot even see it!

B. The Ground and Root of Holiness

1. He who would know holiness must understand sin; and he who would see sin as God see it, and think of it as God does, must look at the Cross and the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and must come to personally know the meaning of Gethsemane and Golgotha.
 - a. Our sin separates us from a thrice Holy God – “your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2)
 - b. We must understand and fully accept that God alone can provide the righteousness which merits our acceptance by Him or else we will not be fully emptied of self-righteousness. The surprising depths and the subtle perversions of self-righteousness must be seen for what they are – an endless hall of mirrors seemingly promising but only leading to death.
 - c. God's terrifying holiness is such that even a single sin is grievous to Him and He absolutely must and will break out against it in fury & vengeance
2. He that would know holiness must know God, for apart from God there is no holiness

- a. Justification is by grace alone, through faith alone
 - i. the legal barriers to reconciliation are removed by the death of Christ
 - ii. faith is the instrument of justification
 - iii. regeneration is the grace of God, from which flows saving faith
- b. No man comes to the Father but through Christ
 - i. we must die to self, die to the world through the death of Christ

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me (Gal 2:20)

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. (Gal 6:14)

- ii. we must rise to newness of life in the resurrected Christ (Rom 6:4)
- c. Christ is the ground of holiness

Our holiness is in Christ – in our union with Him in His life and death, He is the very ground of our holiness.

(5) For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,

(6) knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

(7) For he who has died has been freed from sin.

(22) But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

- d. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit produces love which is the root of holiness
 - i. that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, (Ephesians 3:17)
 - ii. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love. (Gal 5:6)

3. So, count the cost, enter in by the gate (which is Christ) and set yourself upon the narrow way which leads to life, the Highway of Holiness, with great tribulation we must enter the kingdom.

C. The Necessity of Holiness

1. And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine. (Lev 20:26)

2. But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, be ye holy; for I am holy. (1 Peter 1:15-16)
3. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: (Hebrews 12:14)

The vision of our glorious God in heaven is only for those who have holiness. This is the pearl of great price, for which we should sell all that we have, count it all as dung, in order to obtain it.

D. The Fruit of the Spirit

But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. (Romans 6:22)

As we have been discussing, holiness is the holistic fruit of the Holy Spirit. Naturally, the work of the Holy Spirit in us is to produce the fruit of the Spirit – It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing (John 6:63). The life of the Spirit is seen in the fruit and the fruit is holiness in the life – the Spirit is one and holiness is one, but the fruit of the Spirit is manifested in the various fruits of the Spirit, listed in Galatians 5:22-23.

But the fruit of the Spirit is

- love
- joy
- peace
- longsuffering
- kindness
- goodness
- faithfulness
- gentleness
- self-control

What we have learned from the consideration of pure white light and the colors of the rainbow is that not one of the fruits of the Spirit is optional. The entire spectrum is needed to make the light white. If one is missing, then there will be no whiteness at all. So we must yearn for the Spirit to cultivate all the fruits in our lives. We must have holiness and that means we must be diligent in cultivating every single one of the fruits of the Spirit.

E. Practical advice on cultivating the fruit of the Spirit in the life

1. God only fills empty vessels

Man's original sin was to desire to become like God and in this he followed Satan into his proud rebellion against the Holy One. And no tree can grow except from the root and from the seed from which it sprang. The seed of the Adamic nature is pride and the fruit of the tree is the constant filling of the mind with all manner of self-justification and self-glorification. But this is utterly contrary to the humility demanded in light of God's holiness.

(5) Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,
(6) who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,
(7) but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.
(8) And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.
(Philippians 2:5-8)

Now the salvation He brings forth is nothing less and nothing else than a communication of His own life and death, His own nature and attitude, His own humility, as the ground and root of His relationship to God and His redeeming work. His humility wrought our salvation in us and that salvation must produce His humility in us. It must or Christ has not been formed in us.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. (2 Cor 4:7)

Humility is the sense of our entire nothingness which comes with the realization that Christ is our all-in-all and that in us dwells no good thing.

But we must understand and believe that we are empty vessels before we can expect the Father to fill us with the Spirit.

For thus says the High and Lofty One
Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:
"I dwell in the high and holy place,
With him who has a contrite and humble spirit,
To revive the spirit of the humble,
And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.
(Isaiah 57:15)

This then is the mind of Christ, that though He Himself is the High and Lofty One, the Son of God, and the King of glory, He humbled Himself all the way, all the way to the death on the cross. And He has commanded us to

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:29)

If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. (John 13:14)

2. You become what you think about all day long

The first principle involves the special place which must be given to humility in the pursuit of holiness, which is obviously found in Christ but is given a special place because humility is often overlooked but is so absolutely essential to not only our first entrance into salvation but also to our continued cultivation of the fruit of the Spirit in our characters.

The second principle is that you become what you think about all day long.

This is how humans are conformed to one thing or another over time, even contrary to their desires. Astonishingly, we can even become like the very thing we hate if we dwell on it obsessively over time. Children who obsess about not becoming like their parents become just like their parents. The mind set on the flesh never escapes from the flesh and so we must not only NOT set our minds on the flesh, we must set our minds on the things of the Spirit.

Yes, if we are to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit, we must set our minds on the things which reflect the fruit of the Spirit. As Paul wrote,

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor 3:18)

This is the second principle of holiness—we become what we think about all day long. If we would earnestly pursue the fruit of holiness in our lives, we must “receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21) and we must fix our view upon Him who had the Spirit without measure, in the gospel is an abundant garden of all the fruits of the Spirit. He is the Holy One of God – glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders – it was He whom Isaiah saw in his vision, as is confirmed in John

12:41, “These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him.” He is holy, holy, holy.

Do we lack any of the fruits mentioned in Gal 5? Christ has them in abundance! If we gaze on Him with unveiled face, and adore the perfections of His character and humble ourselves as empty vessels, the Holy Spirit will transform us over time into His image. This is not the process of a minute or an hour but of a lifetime – we must keep our gaze on Him, believing the gospel of grace, and bear fruit with patience (Luke 8:15).

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. (Phil 4:8)

Is anything or anyone more true, more noble, more just, more pure, more lovely, more praiseworthy than Christ Himself?!? He is worthy above all!

I will end with this – we must lift our eyes into the very heaven of heavens, and there see the King of glory, seated on His throne, high and lifted up, and we must fix our gaze upon Him whose perfect holiness is manifested to us by His grace as lovingkindness, gentleness and lowliness of heart, so that we may be transformed daily into His glorious image, so that we will bring forth the fruit of holiness without which no man will see the Lord.

(8) The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying:

“Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God Almighty,
Who was and is and is to come!”

(11) “You are worthy, O Lord,
To receive glory and honor and power;
For You created all things,
And by Your will they exist and were created.”
(Rev 4:8,11)

Amen and amen.

