

Psalm 30:4

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[0 : 00] Would you turn with me this evening to the book of Psalms and Psalm 30, in which we read earlier. Psalm 30, and you'll find our text for our sermon this evening in verse 4.

Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. Sing thanks unto the Lord. Ye sing praise unto the Lord, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

That sinful creatures should ever be able to give thanks for the holiness of God is almost a contradiction.

It's a contradiction in every sphere of thought, except in the sphere of the thought of grace. Of God's power coming into the life of sinful, lost, God-hating men.

[1 : 16] And so transforming them from the inside out, that one of the things which fills their minds and their hearts and their days with gladness, grace is the thought that God is our holy God.

Apart from grace, that could stir no sense of gratitude in our hearts at all. Yes, we might be very thankful in the view of our sin and our sinnership and our ungodliness.

We would be very thankful at the thought of mercy in God. We can understand that. I'm sure that even the darkest of us in here tonight can understand why a sinner should even occasionally be thankful that there is mercy in God.

We might even on occasions when we feel dumbed down by life, be thankful that there is ultimate justice with God.

But isn't it strange that creatures like us should ever be so thrilled with the thought of the holiness of God that spontaneously we say, oh, praise God and be grateful that he is holy.

[2 : 55] That was the spirit that moved and filled the heart of this man of God long ago. And you know, this is not the only place in Scripture where God, by his spirit, through the experience of his servant, calls upon his people to thank God for his holiness.

I wonder if you can sympathize with that spirit tonight. It's a very good test, I think, of where you stand, where I stand before God.

Are you thankful tonight that above all things the God of eternity is a holy God?

Or does the very thought of his holiness seem so awe-inspiring to you, and it is awe-inspiring, seems so awe-inspiring to you, that you wonder how anyone could ever thank God for it?

Test of where you really stand. Because only if you're at peace with this holy God, and only if you see that his holiness is really on the side of your salvation, only when and if you see that, can you truly say, praise his name, that he is the holy one of Israel.

[4 : 32] And he's that in every age. Now let's look at this a little bit more closely. Let me say, first of all, that we owe the very word and the idea of holiness to special revelation.

The idea, the thought, the fact of God as a holy God, we owe only to the Bible. Only the Bible, in all the literature of the world, sets out God as he really is.

Therefore, only the Bible sets him out as holy. And the Bible speaks of God as the only holy one. Listen to it.

There is none holy but thee, O Lord. That's the message of the Bible to the children of men.

There is none who is glorious in holiness as God is. Now the root idea of the Bible meaning of holiness seems to be something like this.

[5 : 45] It is a quality, a spiritual, moral quality of character that belongs to a being who is separate, different, who is other than everything which is not himself.

And the way the holiness of God is spoken of, it constitutes the distinctiveness of God over against everything else and everyone else.

He is the one and the only one who is separate from everything else because of his holiness. The root meaning of the Hebrew word is to cut and to separate so that you get distinction and division and difference.

The holiness of God is that attribute of his nature and being which permeates all the other attributes and characteristics that make up his Godhead and his deity.

And it is that which sets him off supremely. Other things set him off for men. He is not a creature, for example. He is the creator. In his being there has been no beginning and there shall be no end.

[7 : 18] He is God from everlasting to everlasting. That sets him off. But his eternity is characterized, the eternity of his being is characterized by holiness.

And that sets him off in a very distinctive way. He is merciful. His mercy is a holy mercy. He is love. This is one of the ways the Bible defines God for us in a positive sense. He is often defined negatively. We're told what God is not. But we are also sometimes told what God is.

And dear me, isn't it terrible that as Christians we often forget that God is love. And we live as if we were living under the axe of a terrorist.

And my friend, God is not that kind of God. He is just and holy and terrible, yes. But he is God who is love.

[8 : 26] But he is the God whose love is a holy love. And perhaps that makes his love terrible to us because of ocean.

Even his love has an awesome aspect to it. Now the text calls us not just to recognize the holiness of God.

I hope we do recognize that and we're only touching in that aspect of it. There are many texts which do call men to recognize the holiness of God.

But that's not what the text is doing. The text is calling us not to recognize it nor even to acknowledge it. Our text is calling us to gratitude for it.

How can we ever be brought to the place where our hearts are warmed in filial gratitude to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit because He is the Holy God?

[9 : 45] I think that for all who know Him as Savior in Christ, that gratitude is always there.

Perhaps not always recognized but always there. Can I say that even those of us, if even those of us amongst us tonight who are unconverted, if you could understand your need as a sinner, you would be grateful for rather than afraid of the holiness of God.

And that's the point I just want to try and bring out in a simple kind of way. Let us illustrate, let me use three ways of illustrating how men can praise God and have gratitude to Him because He is holy.

And first of all, let me say this, I believe that the holiness of God is the very, is to be, is to be, we have to be thankful for it because it gives us our basic warrant for the worship of God.

Let me say that again. Gratitude for the holiness of God because it gives us our basic warrant for worshipping God.

[11 : 14] What kind of God do you worship? Then we put another question. What kind of God do you think you should worship?

Let me put the question just a little bit differently yet. What kind of God do you think is worthy of your worship? The worship of a rational, intelligent mind.

The worship of someone whose thinking has been informed by the creation of God and by the light of His Word. What kind of God is worthy of the worship of the hearts that have been redeemed and washed and cleansed in the blood of God's own Son?

What kind of God is worthy of the worship of sinless creatures in heaven? I think the God who is worthy of the worship of angels and archangels and seraphim, the burning, bright, sinless ones, I think the God who is worthy of their worship must be a great God high and lifted up.

and I believe that the God who is worthy of the worship of the soul, even that's defiled in sin and that lives in the gutters of this world, I believe that the God who is worthy of their worship is also a God who has to be high and lifted up.

[12 : 54] If God were not worthy, men would deny their basic spirituality in giving him worship at all.

One of the sad things in society today, one of the things that leaves us sore at heart is to see men giving their adoration and worship to things that are so unworthy of rational, reasonable, moral, spiritual creatures bowing down to people that they call stars, pop singers, football players.

And they'll give their money and their time and their talents to praise them and to get near them and touch them. who are none better than themselves.

And you know, holiness is something that only our God has. Take the whole pantheon of gods of the ancient nations, the gods of the Greeks and of the Romans, the gods of the pagans, and you know, one other thing, one thing that's true about them all is that the worship of them degraded men.

Some of the most lucidous and lustful practices that the world has ever known came in among them because of the worship of pagan gods.

[14 : 41] even the sacrifice of children and fire, the worship of mullahs, things like that. And they were the worship of gods who were unclean and unholy even in the eyes of those who worship them.

And in doing that, man degraded himself. My friend, the God who calls for the worship of your mind and your heart. The God of whom our Lord Jesus was speaking when he said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all the heart and all the mind and all the soul.

But God is totally, absolutely, essentially worthy of that love. And he is worthy of far more adoration and far more worship and far more love than any one creature can ever give him.

Because he is God, everlastingly holy. God in whom there is no tinge or taint of imperfection. that in control of all things is an eternal spirit in whom there is no imperfection at all.

[16 : 11] where we brought before a God in whom there was only mercy, for example, we might be able to rejoice in that mercy, but our rejoicing would be tempered.

we might be afraid that it was not a holy mercy, an unselfish mercy, a mercy that would last forever and forever more.

Could we trust a mercy which itself might be sinful and biased and imperfect? We know what it is to get mercy from our fellow creatures.

I would guess that most of us do. We've had sometimes to apologize and flying down from the little pedestals we put ourselves on and we've had to say I want your forgiveness and the person perhaps our brother in Christ or our sister in Christ has given us the mercy and we have been glad to get it and yet we have been afraid that it might not be full-hearted mercy.

We're afraid that it might not be totally pure mercy. We're afraid that it might not be disinterested mercy. We're afraid that the mercy they give us might be tainted with their own faults and their feelings and so it could be with a God who was not not only merciful but holy in his mercy and who dispenses his mercy as a holy mercy.

[18 : 10] We could cringe before a God who had all power and yet he was not holy but could we ever love him could we ever really worship him could we ever trust him all that our souls are for time and for eternity.

No, give thanks. Do you begin to see and we can only open up just a little way. Do you begin to see what worthily calls forth the worship of the believers are of the God who is holy in all his ways.

And remember how he's manifested to us. He is manifested supremely in the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. And what does scripture say of him? He too was holy and harmless and undefiled and separate from, different from, sinners.

No, my friend, because of that the Lord Jesus calls forth the worship and adoration and the blessing of our health.

only in perfect holiness can spiritual men or anyone find a fit object for the worship of his mind and his heart and his soul.

[19 : 43] I want to pause here and just emphasize that all through the Bible, wherever worship is mentioned, the holiness of God is very closely related to it.

For example, take the manifestations of God to his people in the Old Testament. Take his directions and requirements for the worship of him.

And we have to worship God not according to our own thoughts and our own plans and our own feelings. we have to worship God in the way that he dictates to us and sets out for us in his word.

And when you come to the worship of God in the Old Testament, you get holiness attached to it.

When he reveals his name as Jehovah, the covenant God of his people, you know how he reveals it?

He reveals his name as holy. I, he says, I am the holy one of Israel. Oh, how much that means.

[20 : 49] My friend, he hasn't changed. When he demands your worship, and he does demand it, and when he presents himself for your worship, he presents himself still and he says, I am the holy one of Israel.

he's worthy of your worship. His name is worthy of your worship. Worship in the name of the new aspect of Jehovah, the name of Jesus, and that's how his New Testament church worships him. In and through the name of Jesus, is that name holy, my friend? Where has God set it? He has set it cleanly in the heavens.

He has exalted it far above every name. the name of Jesus, holy, harmless, undefiled, worthy of the worship not only of your heart, but of worlds.

We would give it to him tonight if we love him. The worship and adoration of every man and woman and child who has ever lived, is worthy of it.

[22 : 06] does he have the worship of your heart? Holy his name. Take his day when he reveals and sets apart a special day, one in seven, in which men will bow down and set themselves aside from other things for the worship of his name.

What does he call his day? A holy day. A day which is to be separate and set apart from others. And there are areas of the evangelical church that are forgetting that that is a prerequisite of the worshiping people of God. When he speaks of his house and the places that he gives them in which to worship in the earth, what does he call them?

He calls them holy, the place of his habitation, his holy. When he gives them his word which will direct them, tell them their duties, spell out their privileges, what does he call it himself?

He calls it his holy word. No matter where you go in scripture in relation to the worship of God by his people, it is permeated with the thought and the word and the fact and the reality of holiness.

[23 : 42] And that's only the Old Testament. Yeah, that's only the Old Testament. There's the New Testament. And there's the New Covenant blood with which the New Covenant is sealed.

The blood of God's own son, holy blood. sealed unto redemption with blood that is holy. For the emphasis in the New Testament, my friend, is just as strong on holiness as the emphasis on the Old Testament.

There is the holiness of God incarnate. There is no doubt but reading through the Gospels, and I hope that as you get older in the Christian faith, my brothers and sisters, I hope that as you get older you'll go more and more to the reading of the Gospels.

That's what I find when I'm halfway to a hundred. Like, there used to be the Pauline Ephesians, Ephesians, and Galatians, and now it's more and more the Gospels fire, because there in the Gospels I meet my Savior, and I'm brought up fresh under the influence of his amazing character. I hear his words and I see his deeds, and wonderful although Paul is, he's always leading us off into realms where we lose our thoughts, isn't he, the Apostle Paul?

[25 : 06] Wonderful although Paul is, my friends, he's no Jesus. And I think that one of the most attractive things about the Jesus, the character is portrayed to us in the Gospel, is just his holiness.

That's his loveliness. He comes so near to us and yet he's so different from us. A calmness, a peace, reigning through everything he is and everything he says and everything he does.

Never flustered, never at a loss, never upset, never frustrated, never frustrated, but holy calmness in them all that I want an attractive passion our Lord Jesus Christ is.

and the thing that makes me most attractive of all is his holiness. Come to the sacrifice of Calvary. Come to the place, my friend, where the mercy of God flows like everything.

And what is true supremely of that sacrifice and we tend to forget it. All the other aspects of the atonement, its pain and its suffering, its accomplishment, its glory and safeguarding the throne of God, all these things must not take our eyes away from the fact that his sacrifice is also a holy one.

[26 : 53] He has separated himself fully unto God and unto new salvation. And the perfection of the atonement is the perfection of the person who makes the atonement.

The perfect one coming under the sentence and judgment of death. All through the Bible right, worship related to holiness.

All through the Bible, God's people praising God for his holiness. The psalmist, whose words we're thinking about, for example, he says this, he says, exalt ye the Lord, the Lord, the Lord, the Lord, the Lord, our God, and worship at his footstool, for he is holy.

The book of Revelation, the song of Moses and of the Lamb, the song of the redeemed to all eternity, what is it? Do you remember how to sing by the sea of glass?

Who shall not fear thee, O Lord? And glorify thy name, for thou only art holy. the living creatures that John saw around the throne, the seraphim, what were they singing?

[28 : 24] Holy, holy, holy, holy, the Lord, God Almighty. The same sin as had been seen by Isaiah and recorded in Isaiah 6, long before that, the Christ, holy God.

Holy the Father, holy the Son, holy the Spirit of God. Holy the Father, holy the Son, holy the Holy Spirit of God.

So, the holiness of God calls for the worship. I want to suggest, too, that the holiness of God, not only the final world of our worship, but it's the final fortress of Christian faith.

I say not very much about this. I've spent far too long on our first heaven. And I'm doing something tonight that I'm always telling our divinity students they mustn't do.

Spend too long and get their sermon all out of their shape. And here I've gone and done it. Half too long, I'm almost, to be just the first part of my sermon.

[29 : 32] But we'll try and cut this down a little bit. The final fortress of Christian faith. Let me ask you, you're here tonight and unconverted. And you don't know God.

Could you ever put your trust in a Savior who was not holy? I defy you. You couldn't do it. You're afraid of the holiness of God.

And yet with it not for the holiness of God, you would not have a hope of ever being saved from our lost eternity. Not one hope ever. Because God is holy.

Christians in here who tell you that. Because God is holy. And because our holy God has purpose to save a great multitude whom no man can number.

Then if you're unconverted, you can begin to take hope. And you can know this. I'm sure even your reason will tell you this. But if you're converted and saved and redeemed by a holy God, then the conversion and the redemption and the salvation will be worthwhile.

[30 : 40] And it will be harmonious. It will be consonant with the nature of the God who saves you. And of course, that's the kind of gospel.

That's the kind of redemption. That's the kind of salvation that's held out in Christ to you. That's why it's such a fortress of faith. My word, this gospel can call out all the forces and convictions of your mind.

The more you know it and the more you understand it and the clearer God makes it to you. Then you get great pins which hold your convictions.

Nail the convictions into your soul and your mind forever and forevermore. Because this God is worthy of outcasts.

You see, faith might just try and reach out its hand to a God who was not holy.

[31 : 46] But it would be trembling as it did it. It would never know what kind of reception it would get. But if faith tonight reaches out of hand to a God whose holiness has been revealed in the cross, faith knows that when God lays hold of its hand, he will never let it go.

He is the holy God. Because he's holy, for example, he cannot lie. Therefore, all his promises to you as a sinner are true and they're sure and they're worth trusting and you can trust them to the utmost.

Every word he says is true and he expects you to believe it and accept it as true. It's a holy word. Mercy. Mercy. Mercy. Mercy.

Yes, there's mercy and it's mercy which is respect to holy. Mercy is freely offered to you and to me in the gospel.

But let's remember this, that mercy, the mercy that is offered is consonant with holiness and righteousness and equity. And my friend, it was costly to God.

[33 : 04] I think it was the man that they speak of as Macrahanmore, Big John McRae, minister of last century. He ministered in Greenock and the Black Island in Lewis.

He was famous in his day for very graphic sayings. And one of the beautiful sayings he had, which I've never forgotten since I've read, was this.

Remember, he said to a congregation preaching in Lewis once, remember, he said, how the mercy of God has come to you. It has swum out through the sea of Christ's suffering in order to rescue you.

My friend, that's how the mercy of God came. It was costly. And it is costly still. It's expensive.

And it's holy. And the measurement of its holiness is this. It's this that before it could be exercised towards creatures like you and like me, the Son of God had to taste death.

[34 : 12] And it's through his death that mercy flows out. That's a mercy we can trust. Faith could never live at ease with a mercy which had not fulfilled the demands of holiness.

Could it? It couldn't. But because mercy has met the demands of holiness, our faith and our trust can live at ease with it.

And again, our faith rests here in this fortress because we know that ultimately holiness will triumph. It's true. I believe that even the most ungodly people around us, when they weigh up two principles, the principle of right or good and the principle of wrong or evil, I believe that even the most godless believe that ultimately the principle of right should prevail.

The principle of right should prevail over that's built into our nature. And my friend, the one thing that guarantees for us that righteousness will prevail is the fact that God is a holy God.

[35 : 49] Tonight, my total conviction is that one day sin will be confined to the place that God has prepared for the devil and for his angels.

And it will be confined there, I believe, because of what the Bible says about God and the kind of God he is.

He is of purer eyes and to behold iniquity. The ultimate guarantee that there shall be a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness will live is his holiness.

So faith, you see, has many guarantees that truth and righteousness will time in the end.

And finally, just this thought. Not only is the holiness of God the ultimate warrant for our worship of him, or the fortress of our Christian faith in which we garrison our hope, but the holiness of God, I believe, is also the final heaven of Christian hope.

[37 : 06] What is the ultimacy of the Christian hope? Well, it's just heaven, isn't it? But what is heaven? It is where God is. And it is where conflict has ceased.

And it is where there is no more curse. But the throne and the sovereignty of God and of the Lamb are in it, and where his servants shall serve him, and where there is peace and blessing and bliss and glory.

Who can describe it? Now here we do have conflict. The moment a person comes into Christ, the moment he's renewed, the moment he's converted, the moment we trust, there is conflict.

There's a tension set up within us, and we begin to know the experience that Paul had when he said, Oh, wretched man that I am. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? There's a trinity of evil arraigned against us, the Bible says.

The world, the flesh, and the devil. And the Christian pathway is not easy. It would be foolish, it would be wrong, it would be unscriptural.

[38 : 19] For me to say to you tonight, if you're unconverted, if I were to say to you, Come to Christ tonight and accept Christ, I did say that, but if I were then to go on and say, Come to Christ and accept Christ, and then all your troubles are over, and your wife will become good-natured, and you'll sleep well at night, and you'll never have indigestion, and you'll be nothing in the world to worry you anymore, if only you come to Jesus.

Now, that, you smile. I see you smiling at the triviality of it. And you know, sadly, that is the kind of gospel that has been hawked around the world today.

Christ as a sort of super-psychedelic pill. What a blasphemy. That's not the scriptural gospel. Jesus said, If many man will follow me, let him take up his cross daily, and be my disciple.

Jesus said, A man must deny himself, or he cannot be my disciple. Jesus says, Your mind, and your talents, and your time, and your days, and your money, and your home, and your life, everything he wants it all.

And he's worthy of it all. And it's not easy to be a Christian. You're going to have to fight against the stream.

[39 : 52] But my friend, you're fighting on the winning side. And you've got Jesus with you. I will uphold you. Perhaps one of your fears in trusting the Lord, or in committing yourself fully to, is this that you couldn't keep it up?

Ah, but he'll keep you up. His holiness is a guarantee of that. His holiness is a guarantee that every promise he gives, he will fulfill to the utterness.

To the utterness. Now let's remember, his requirements are ultimate. They demand holiness. What we read in the New Testament there, sums it all up.

Be ye holy, for I am holy. His work, his service, is a holy work, and a holy service.

If you begin to follow Jesus, and come into his service, no matter where he puts you, or what he asks you to do, you're working for one who is holy, in all his ways.

[41 : 00] And you must be holy too. His holiness, is the standard, by which you and I are to live. And his holiness is the pledge, that one day, we ourselves will be holy also.

We shall be like him. We don't feel like that, very often in this world. We see such a gap, between what we are, and what the Bible says, that one day will be that, we say, Lord, can it ever be?

And the Lord answers back, and he says, yes it shall be. And he says, to us, by the apostle John, we know not yet, what we shall be.

But we do know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him. What will that be like? That will mean that, we are no longer sinful.

And we mean that we are holy, as he is holy. God is holy, and he has holy creatures to serve him, and worship him, in heaven.

[42 : 30] and he wants holy creatures, to serve him, and worship him, on earth.

They will not be perfectly holy, but the moment they are regenerated, converted, born again, in the Holy Spirit, they have been separated, unto God, and they begin to serve him, out of a new heart, and a new life.

One of the things, that happens to them, is this. They are not made, perfectly holy, but, they begin to long, to be holy.

They begin to long, to be rid of sin, of lies, of untruth, and hypocrisy. And that longing, grows, and grows, and grows, until it becomes, a reality, in the heaven, which is God's presence.

Give thanks, unto the Lord, for his holiness. Can you do that? I'm asking, can you do that?

[43 : 51] I should be asking, can you do anything else? Surely not. Give thanks. What's the best way, to give thanks, to God, for his holiness?

To obey him. To obey him, in everything. And that kind, of obedience, must just begin here. Let me stress that, to all the young people.

It must begin here, by believing, in the Lord Jesus Christ. By resting, your soul, and your salvation, for a time, and eternity, upon him.

that's where, obedience to God, begins. And that's where, becoming like him, also begins. And when you begin, to do that, by his grace, then he, will never, let you go.

A word of prayer. Our gracious God, we bow before, the majesty, and the mystery, of thy holiness.

[44 : 54] And we thank thee, tonight, that thou art, the holy one of Israel. We bless thee, for all righteousness, and holiness, and perfection, in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We thank thee, too, for the, creaturely holiness, of the, those who, who sing, thy praise, creatures who sing, thy praise, and who never knew, what sin was.

And we bless thee, O God, that even tonight, around, the throne of heaven, there are those, who once were sinners, but yet now, in holiness, perfect praise, comes from them, and they, they adore thee, and magnify thee, for what thou art.

We praise thee, Lord, that in our own measure, our hearts, can do that, here this evening. We pray, that they shall, do it in very deep.

Bless each one of us, watch over us, through the remaining hours, of this, Lord's day, and through the week, which follows. Bless us, as we take up, our work.

[46 : 06] Bless, those of us, who return, from holiday, back to, whatever our task is, and, help us, to fulfill, our tasks, and our works, in the fear, of the Lord.

Go before us, hold up our goings, and pardon, and cleanse us, from all sin, for Jesus' sake, amen. Amen.