

Title: Holy
Text: Hebrews 12:10-14
Main Point: God is holy and expects His people to “strive for holiness.”
Date: 2/8/2026
Series: That’s My God

INTRODUCTION

America is a divided country. It is divided politically, morally, and spiritually. Different worldviews are competing for prominence. One divide I see within Christianity is: How should God be understood? Is God loving, or is God just, meaning that for some, being a nation requires law, order, and consequences for breaking established laws? Christian divide over these two positions. Although I have no interest in debating politics in this message because of our highly charged political environment, I do have a political example to make a theological point.

Hillary Rodham Clinton recently wrote a piece in *The Atlantic* titled “MAGA’s War on Empathy” ([Hillary Clinton: MAGA’s War on Empathy - The Atlantic](#)). Quoting Mrs. Clinton, “When I first saw the video of the killing of Alex Pretti, an ICU nurse at the Minneapolis VA hospital, I immediately thought of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Federal agents shot Pretti after he tried to help a woman they had thrown to the ground and pepper-sprayed. Jesus tells us to love our neighbors as ourselves and help those in need. ‘Do this, and you will live,’ he says.” The article continues to make a case for the bedrock Christian values of dignity, mercy, and compassion.

What Christian would disagree with these values? Not me. It is subtle, but something theologically is missing in her argument: Where does God’s justice, expressed in respect for the rule of law, find a place within dignity, mercy, and compassion? God’s justice is an expression of His holiness. God’s mercy and compassion express His love. I wish to challenge the idea that God is either love or justice because He is both. Faithfulness to the Bible will not reduce God to either holiness or love.

What I am trying to say is that theology matters. How you understand God defines how you know yourself and your world. In our series, we have already talked about God’s love. Today, I want to reflect on God’s holiness. I like what R.C. Sproul says, “We must seek to understand what the holy is. We dare not seek to avoid it. There can be no worship, no spiritual growth, no true obedience without it. It defines our goal as Christians. God has declared, “Be holy, because I am holy (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16). To reach that goal, we must understand what holiness is.” (RC Sproul, *The Holiness of God*, 13)

Perhaps some questions will help as we begin.

1. When you think of God as holy, how do you understand God?
2. Does God begin holy provide encouragement, fear, or some other emotion?
3. How would you describe God’s holiness to a friend?
4. Is holiness an essential Bible teaching or a more peripheral teaching?
5. Is there a personal cost to ignoring biblical holiness?

Our entire ministry is summarized in this statement: Castine seeks to “Grow godly men, women, marriage, and the Next Generation to reach the world.” This goal is intergenerational, fully embedded in the Bible, consistent

with God’s will, and holds the potential to change families and communities for generations. Anyone who joins this goal cannot ignore personal holiness. To be godly is to be holy.

HEBREWS 12

“In the present English ordering of the New Testament books, Hebrews stands like a bridge document between Paul’s Letters (Romans—Philemon) and the Catholic Letters (James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, Jude). Its author, provenance (place of origin), and date are debated. Its original recipients and destination are likewise unclear. Even Hebrews 13:24b does not provide a definite answer. However, its author was known to its recipients (13:18–19, 22, 23b). The author employs the male gender in one instance (11:32). He also had contact with the Pauline mission, as the mention of Timothy (13:23a)—a long-time companion of Paul—implies. Many of the early Eastern Church fathers attributed Hebrews to Paul, either directly or indirectly. Yet the early church did not universally accept Paul’s authorship.

While many historical questions remain unresolved, the letter’s overall message is much clearer: The content of Hebrews is all about that which is “greater” or “superior” (Heb 1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35). Hebrews exhibits persuasive and dissuasive lines of argument. The author seeks to persuade his recipients regarding Christ’s superiority.” (James P. Sweeney, “Hebrews, Letter to the,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).)

1. The Bible declares that God is holy (Hebrews 12:10; Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16).

1.1. “What is ‘holiness’? Contrary to what you may hear today in some sermons and popular religious songs, the emphasis in the Bible is on the holiness of God and not on the love of God. ‘Love is central in God,’ wrote American theologian Augustus H. Strong, ‘but holiness is central in love.’ God’s love is a holy love. . . . Love without holiness would be a monstrous thing that could destroy God’s perfect law, while holiness without love would leave no hope for the lost sinner. Both are perfectly balanced in the divine nature and works of God. God’s holiness isn’t simply the absence of defilement, a negative thing. The holiness of God is positive and active. It’s God’s perfect nature at work in accomplishing God’s perfect will.” (Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Holy*, “Be” Commentary Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 10–11.)

1.2. To say God is holy means He is without flaw or weakness, set apart, different from all creation.

1.2.1. **Deuteronomy 32:4**, “The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.”

1.2.2. **1 Samuel 2:2**, “There is none holy like the LORD: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.”

1.3. To say God is holy means **every moral attribute is holy**: Holy love, holy good, holy faithfulness, holy righteousness, holy grace, holy mercy, holy patience, holy wisdom, and holy truthfulness.

2. God’s people **may share in His holiness** (Hebrews 12:10).

2.1. Those who are “in Christ” share in God’s holiness through the **sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit**: Hebrews 2:11; 3:1; 6:10; 13:24; 10:10, 14, 29; 3:1; 6:10; 13:24

- 2.2. However, to share in His ethical holiness **requires effort**: God’s people must “strive” to share in His holiness (Hebrews 12:14).
- 2.3. To share in His ethical holiness **provides the spiritual pathway to “see the Lord”** (Hebrews 12:14). The process of sanctification through discipline is the means to this pathway.
 - 2.3.1. “Sanctification is a progressive setting apart of the Christian more and more to Christ and less and less to sin. . . . Anyone who does not want to be more clean and holy, like his heavenly Father, is not a true son of God (Matthew 5:8). If there is absolutely no progress in becoming sanctified, the [person] . . . either is doing the wrong things, and needs to change his endeavors, or he is not a believer after all. (Jay E. Adams, *Hebrews, James, I & II Peter, and Jude*, The Christian Counselor’s Commentary (Cordova, TN: The Institute for Nouthetic Studies, 2020), 124–126.)
3. To share in God’s **ethical holiness**, followers of Jesus must be serious about sin if they wish to see God.
 - 3.1. In this current context, “**Strive for peace** with everyone.”
 - 3.2. In this current context, allow “**no root of bitterness**” to spring up through forgiveness and not keeping an account of the wrong things others have done to you. Practically, deal with conflict to avoid the sin of bitterness.