

## **False: Holiness is an Unenjoyable Bore - By Thailer Jimerson**

There was a funny saying that used to go around when one would describe the manner of the Puritans: "They always had a sneaking suspicion that someone, somewhere was having a good time." And no doubt we can think of various church ladies in our past who seemed to think the God of the Bible was like them – austere and arbitrary, as if God did not invent the natural reflexes we call laughter. As if he did not himself say that one of the greatest things man can do is enjoy himself (Ecclesiastes 2.24).

"From a failure to properly understand God comes a world of unhappiness among good Christians even today. The Christian life is thought to be a glum, unrelieved cross-carrying under the eye of a stern Father who expects much and excuses nothing. He is austere, peevish, highly temperamental and extremely hard to please."

**(A.W. Tozer)**

This is a popular misconception of God. And this is a popular misconception of the Puritans. Their origins are in England, and they were composed mainly of those Calvinistic Anglicans who were fiercely devoted to God above all things. But this did not preclude joy. They believed man's chief end is to glorify God *and enjoy him forever*. They believed in joy. And they came to America. Many of our forefathers were Puritans. And they received that designation because they were...well, pure.

But "puritan" has come to denote in our days something very negative. Do we really think being pure is something worthy of attainment anymore? Does our culture seek to esteem purity? Or when we see "pure" do we think "puritan," and write it off.

Righteous. *Self-righteous*.

Holy. *Holier-than-thou*.

Moral. *Moralism*.

Sanctified. *Sanctimonious*.

And crumbling down comes the mighty bricks of virtue, of goodness, of holiness, that God desires for his people and gives to his people along with grace, forgiveness, salvation.

But being holy doesn't mean being "boring." It was never boring in the Bible. I never see that as an option on the grand table of acceptable reactions for people to choose from when they encounter something gloriously holy like the holy God of the Bible. Thinking back on the sermon last Sunday, did Isaiah seem bored when he encountered God's holiness? No! He was terrified, in awe, felt reverence and gravity. And those feelings do not preclude joy either. No – it was an invigorating, heart-pacing, joy-oozing gasp we call reverence.

I think specifically of a instance towards the end of Matthew's gospel when the women encountered the angels at Jesus's tomb who looked "like lightning," so glorious that the guards fell over as dead men. The women not only experienced these holy figures, but they encountered an impossibly open tomb with an impossibly resurrected Savior. They ran to tell the other disciples, and it's here that the Bible relates the feelings, the experience: "So they

departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy..." (Matthew 28.8). When you truly experience God, those feelings go together.

So, no. Holiness when lived out and seen in God is not boring.

I'll tell you instead what's boring: a god I don't read about in the Bible. But he's a popular god, held in esteem in many churches and among many Christians today. He's a god that is chill and laid back like us. He's a god who doesn't think much of sin. And therefore, didn't really do all that much to save us. And therefore (again) is a god that isn't all that relevant and not all that necessary. He's an unholy, dead god, for an unholy and dead people.

That's boring.