

THE HOLINESS OF GOD BY R C SPROUL
CHAPTER 7: WAR AND PEACE WITH A HOLY GOD

References (Black book, White book, Kindle)

I. Introduction (161, 131, 1339)

- A. Though God is transcendentally holy, yet He Is a God with whom we can wrestle.
- B. Examples of those who have “gone to the mat with God and come away with peace.”

II. War (161, 131, 1339)

A. Jacob (161, 131, 1339)

- 1. Jacob’s ladder at Bethel
 - a. Jacob’s ladder bridged heaven and earth and brought a distant Jacob into contact with God
 - b. In John 1:51, Jesus says that He is the ladder of Jacob, the one who spans the chasm between mere humans and a transcendent God
 - c. After his dream, Jacob named the place Bethel and said “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.”
 - d. Our culture today is the same way – God is here but we are unaware
 - e. “The moment awareness of His divine presence begins, the deepest personal struggle a person can experience begins as well.”
 - f. How awesome is this place: “People do not normally feel that way in church. There is no sense of awe, no sense of being in the presence of One who makes us tremble. People in awe never complain that church is boring.”
- 2. Jacob’s wrestling match at Peniel
 - a. When Jacob wrestled with the angel, “his victory was not one of conquest but of survival.”
 - b. “When we wrestle with the Almighty, we lose.”
 - c. “We must know what it means to fight with God all night if we are also to know what it means to experience the sweetness of the soul’s surrender.”

B. Job (168, 137, 1407)

- 1. Job’s trials
 - a. “No one ever carried on a livelier, more strident debate with God than did Job.”
 - b. “If ever a man seemed to have a right to challenge God, it was Job.”
- 2. Questioning God
 - a. But Job did not blaspheme or take the easy way out – he rose to challenge God
 - b. Instead of answers, he got questions - In answer to God’s questions, Job repented
 - c. “As soon as Job saw who God is, Job was satisfied.”

C. Habakkuk (172, 141, 1434)

- 1. Habakkuk’s demand

- a. “The prophet was appalled that God’s people should suffer at the hands of a nation that was more wicked than they were themselves.”
 - b. Habakkuk was so angry with God that he said “justice never prevails” and demanded answers
2. Responding to God
- a. With the appearance of God, all of Habakkuk’s angry protests ceased.
 - b. “Suddenly the tone of his speech changed from one of bitter despair to one of unwavering confidence and hope.”
 - c. “Habakkuk was now as fierce in his joy as he had been in his despair. He was able to rest absolutely in God’s sovereignty.”
 - d. “Jacob, Job, and Habakkuk all declared war on God. They all stormed the battlements of heaven. They were all defeated, yet they all came away from the struggle with uplifted souls.”

D. Saul (175, 143, 1461)

- 1. Saul’s persecution
 - a. Saul was determined to wipe out Christianity
 - b. “He was doomed to an ultimate confrontation with the very Christ he opposed.”
- 2. Surrendering to God
 - a. “No angel appeared to wrestle with Saul, yet some supernatural force threw him to the ground...Sovereignly and powerfully he was knocked flat to the desert floor.”
 - b. “In this experience Saul became Paul just as Jacob had become Israel. The battle was over. Saul struggled with God and lost...In defeat Paul found peace.”
 - c. He had a vision of God’s holiness that it not only changed him but the whole of world history

III. Peace (180, 147, 1503)

- A. The first fruit of our justification
 - 1. “We are at war with God unless or until we are justified. Only the justified person can be comfortable in the presence of a holy God.”
 - 2. Sproul learned from the celebration of the end of the war that “peace is an important thing, a cause for unbridled celebration when it was established and for bitter remorse when it was lost.”
 - 3. Earthly peace is fragile and doesn’t seem to last for long so we learn not to trust it too heavily
 - 4. When our holy war with God ceases, when we are justified by faith, the war ends forever; we enter into an eternal peace treaty with God.
- B. The legacy of Christ
 - 1. He is the Prince of peace and is *our peace*. He gives peace away with no ulterior motives
 - 2. Our peace with God is not fragile, it is stable. He will correct us when we rebel but he will never go to war against us.
 - 3. “We are to fear God not with a servile fear like that of a prisoner before his tormentor but as children who do not wish to displease their beloved Father.” – Luther