

Fool

Before Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they got along very well with him. But immediately after they defied God, they hid from him because they became afraid of him. They knew they would be uncomfortable in his presence. And it was God who had to take the initiative to reestablish contact with them. (See Genesis 3:8.)

Here is what Job finally said to the Lord after he self-righteously argued with God and questioned him: *"I am unworthy...I put my hand over my mouth. I spoke once, but I have no answer - twice, but I will say no more"* (Job 40:4-5). *"I know that you [Lord] can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes"* (Job 42:2-3, 5-6).

When the prophet Isaiah found himself in the presence of God, here is how he involuntarily reacted: *"This is awful! I am as good as dead! For I am a man with an unclean heart and live among people who have unclean hearts and my eyes have seen the Sovereign Lord Almighty."* Then one of the angels flew over to me. He brought a hot coal, which he took with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my lips, saying: *'There! Your insubordinate spirit is taken away and your sin is cleansed'"* (Isaiah 6:5-7, MOT). Until the prophet saw a partial manifestation of God, he was like most people; he had an attitude of insubordination toward God. After God touched him, Isaiah was a changed man.

And when fisherman-turned-apostle, Simon Peter, first met Jesus Christ, he exclaimed: *"Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"* (Luke 5:8). That is a normal, honest human reaction to an encounter with a holy, pure God. A close encounter with divine holiness intensifies the awareness of our sinfulness.

God is not the enemy; we are. We have been our own worse enemy ever since Adam disobediently ate the forbidden fruit, became spiritually dead and morally degraded. And we have been killing each other ever since Cain killed his brother, Abel.

God is not the problem; we are. It starts with our defiled *nature*, continues with our defiant *thinking* and ends with our disobedient *behavior*. God is able to save us from ourselves. Knowing God has nothing to do with *science* but everything to do with *conscience*.

A close encounter with divine holiness intensifies the awareness of our sinfulness. A self-centered, self-indulgent individual is naturally reluctant to admit the existence of a God who requires repentance, humility, godliness and accountability. And, a morally pure God understandably cannot have a positive, productive and progressive relationship with a person whose life – essentially – displeases him.

"The fool [that is, the morally deficient person] said in his heart, 'There is no God'" (Psalm 53:1). With his *mouth*, a person may say there is no God, but he will not say it with his *heart* – unless he is a "fool" – someone who is seriously spiritually challenged. But, it is safe to say that, in spite of all the brash denials and bold declarations, down deep – especially in totally helpless, emergency moments – *everyone* believes in God. ◇◇◇