

EXCERPTS FROM

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THE LINK

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BIDEFORD

Internet Edition

Our quarterly message this issue is somewhat different. Having completed our studies on the "Attributes of God" on Sunday mornings, some have felt that it would be helpful to have a summary of these addresses. Because of the vast amount of ground covered over the months, this article obviously must be very terse and sketchy, nevertheless may it be the means of bringing back to our minds some of the scriptures which have revealed to us the Wondrous and Glorious Perfections of the Divine Character. After all that we have seen, we still feel that we have not touched the fringe. The words of Zophar seem so apt:- Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the almighty unto perfection? it is high as heaven. What canst thou do? deeper than hell; What canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. (Job 11 v. 7-9)

INTRODUCTION The attributes apply to God in the Unity of His Being. Father, Son, Holy Ghost. Three persons within the Trinity, to be distinguished, but not divided, ONE GOD. The attributes are the properties or qualities of the Divine Being and are inseparable, not separate parts of God but essential qualities in which, and by which, God is revealed. It is essential that we seek to know God in the fullness and glory of all His qualities. If we only appreciate a few of the attributes, then our doctrine will be unbalanced, there will be bias in our thinking, a slant in our preaching. An over stressing of some truths at the expense of others. The attributes are perfectly balanced, they must be, for they are the qualities of Supreme Perfection. It is only as we know and appreciate God in the full glory of all His Perfections that we really honour Him. To labour one aspect, creates an imbalance in the character of the Supreme Being, to isolate certain attributes casts a shadow upon His Eternal Perfection. His attributes are equal and inseparable, in their entirety they are the outshining of God, to declare part is to dishonour, (not honour) HIS HOLY NAME.

THE ETERNITY OR SOLITARY MAJESTY OF GOD. (IS. 40 v. 9-28)

In the beginning God. Gen. 1 v. 1. This is where the Bible begins, dateless, timeless, matterless, no world, no heavens, no universe, no creature, angelic, or human, nothing, no one, BUT GOD. Not for years, not for ages but from everlasting, He ever was, self-contained, self-satisfied, in need of nothing, worlds, angels or humans.

His creating of them added nothing to His Essential Being, His Essential Glory can neither be augmented nor diminished. He changes not (Mal. 3 v. 6) That God chose to create was purely a Sovereign act on His part, He was under no obligation, no necessity. That he did create was for His manifestative glory, but in His Divine Person He is Holy Perfection - ABSOLUTE. The King Eternal.

THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD (IS. 46 v. 9-U)

Not susceptible to variation, unchangeable. Our God is a Rock. What he was from everlasting. He is today and ever will be. I change not, is His own unqualified affirmation. His power can never diminish, His glory never fade, His Word is forever settled in heaven, His purpose is fixed, His Will is stable, His Word sure. No power in earth or hell can stay the hand of our God for He is immutable.

THE HOLINESS OF GOD (PS. 99 v. 1-9)

This is the attribute of attributes, it transcends all else, for it enshrines all the others, Holiness is the supreme excellency of the Divine Being. The Bible styles God as Holy far more often than Almighty, or Loving or Gracious. This is the perfection continuously celebrated before the Throne with tremendous solemnity (IS. 6 v. 1-3) This attribute is seen so vividly at Calvary, God's hatred and abhorrence of sin is displayed here as nowhere else outside of hell, God's wrath let loose upon His Son when He made to meet upon Him the iniquity of us all; forcing from His soul the words of Psa. 22. My God my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? followed by a most revealing statement, "THOU ART HOLY". Every sin of every being is judged by a Holy God, either at Calvary or in the Lake of Fire.

THE POWER OF GOD (HAB. 3 v. 1-16)

The power of God is His ability to bring to pass all that He determines and decrees in His infinite wisdom, power is that which gives life and action to all the Perfections of the Divine nature. How vain would be His counsels, His promises, His threatenings, if He were not the God of infinite power, so immense is the power of Deity that it is inconceivable. Whatever may be happening in the earth, the seas, or in the heavens at any one time, God is there in power working out His Sovereign Will.

THE LOVE OF GOD. (EPH. 3 v 14-19. 1 JOHN 4 v 7-10 & 19 ROM 8 v 35-39)

This attribute must not be confused with either, the mercy, or the grace of God. The love of God is uninfluenced, there was nothing in the objects of His love to call it into exercise, nothing in the creature to attract or prompt it. The love of God is spontaneous and uncaused. The love of God is also eternally tied with His Sovereign Will, this must be, for the attributes are inseparable. This is the love of a SOVEREIGN GOD who works according to His own pleasure. (DEUT. 7 v 7-8) God's love is holy, again this must be for just as grace reigns, not at the expense of righteousness but through righteousness, so God's love never conflicts or infringes upon His Holiness, His love is not affected by emotion, sentiment or passion, although God is love, He will never wink at sin, there is no effeminate weakness or sentimentality, but pure, holy, immutable love. Calvary is the supreme demonstration of these two attributes. Through grace one arm of God is extended to us in love bringing us salvation, whilst His other arm is raised in holiness against His own Beloved Son, bringing the Wrath of God to bear upon Him as He bore our sins in His own body on the tree.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD (PS. 139 v 1-18)

God is omniscient. He knows everything, all events, all creatures of the past, present and future. He is perfectly acquainted with every detail of the life of every being in heaven, in earth or in hell (DAN. 2 v 22) He never errs, imagines, exaggerates or overlooks. (HEB. 4 V 13. PS. 139 V 6. PSA. 139 v 1-4. HOS. 7 V 2. PS. 90 v 8). Whilst God's Knowledge is a very solemnizing truth it is also fraught with much comfort. (JOB. 23 v 10. PS. 103 v 14).

THE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD. (ROM. 8 v 28-30)

Foreknowledge in scripture differs from knowledge in that foreknowledge always has reference to persons not to events or actions. Only four references in Scripture Acts 2 v 23. It is the Person crucified foreknown, - HIM CHRIST, GOD'S SON. ROM. 11 v 1-2. Again, plain reference to persons. (Not events or actions). ROM. 8 v 29-30 examine carefully, - not WHAT He did foreknow, but WHOM, it is the persons themselves in view. 1 PET. 1 v 1-2 Again persons in view. From this attribute stems the doctrine of election,

(II THESS. 2 v 13 ROM. 8 v 29) Our belief, is not the cause of our election, but the effect of God's foreknowledge and election.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD AND THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD. (PS.107 v 1-15)

Actually two separate perfections, but with great similarity. (PS. 119 v 68). God is good, eternally good, immutably good, all that emanates from God is good. His decrees, His laws, His creation. (GEN. 1 v 31. PS. 107 v 21). God is faithful (PS 89 v 8. ISA. 11 v 5. H TIM. 2 v 13. PS. 36 v 5. NUM. 23 v 19. LAM. 3 v 23) It is sheer impossibility for God to be unfaithful. When God's dealings seem mysterious, we can always rest on the attributes of His Goodness and Faithfulness. (PS. 119 v 75« PS. 89 v 22-33. NAH. 1 v 7. 1 PET. 4 v 19)

THE MERCY OF GOD (PS. 136 v 1-26)

A threefold distinction in Scripture. 1. General Mercy - to all His creation, believers, unbelievers, brute creatures, yea all creation, (PS. 145 v 9) 2. Special Mercy - exercised toward the children of men, helping, sustaining them, notwithstanding their sins. (MATT.5 v 45). 3. Sovereign Mercy - this is to the heirs of salvation. God's mercy bestowed on the wicked are solely temporal, confined to this present life, no mercy extended to sinners beyond the grave. The merits of Christ make it possible for God to righteously bestow spiritual mercies on the believer.

THE PATIENCE OF GOD (ROM. 15. v 4-7)

Patience and longsuffering, one and the same term. The God of Patience is a wonderful title given to the almighty. So often linked with His mercy (EX. 34 v 6. NUM. 14 v 18. PS. 86 v 15. PS. 145 v 8) Slow to anger, longsuffering, patient. The power of control, which God exercises over Himself causing Him to bear with the wicked and forbear so long in punishing them. It is a superb quality within the Godhead that causes Him to sustain great injuries without immediately avenging Himself. This is wonderfully brought out in Noah's day. 1 PET. 3 v 20. HE WAITED. Concerning Israel. ACTS 13 v 18. HE SUFFERED THEIR MANNERS. How wonderful that this attribute is still in exercise in 1974.

THE GRACE OF GOD (EPH. 2 v 1-10)

The mercy of God, and indeed the love of God, are much more general in Scripture than is grace. Grace is more specific. Grace is the source from which flows the salvation of God to the believer. This attribute is very closely allied to the Foreknowledge of God. Divine grace is the sovereign saving favour of God exercised toward those who have no merit, and for which no compensation is demanded. It can neither be bought or earned. 1. Grace is Eternal (11 TIM 1 v 9) Planned before it was exercised. 2. Grace is free (ROM. 3 v 24) none ever have, or ever will purchase it. 3. Grace is sovereign (ROM. 5 v 21) Grace reigns, it is on the throne, it is sovereign. Hence - The Throne of Grace - not to all men. The Throne of God is not a throne of grace to everyone, but to the elect - the believer. The Father is the fountain of grace. The Son is the channel of grace, the gospel is the publisher of grace, and the Holy Spirit is the bestower of grace.

THE WRATH OF GOD (REV. 19 v 1-6)

There must never lurk in our minds a secret resentment for this attribute, or the thought that Divine Wrath is not consistent with Divine love, goodness, or mercy. The scriptures speak more of the wrath, anger and fury of God than they do of His love, goodness and tenderness. We are so humanistic that we view things from man's angle and not from God's. If we cannot appreciate the wrath of God, we have not yet grasped the attribute of His Holiness. The very nature of God makes hell a necessity, eternal punishment imperative. The Wrath of God is simply the Holiness of God stirred into action. Divine wrath is not a malignant, malicious retaliation, just inflicting injury for injury's sake - NO. But, the almighty God vindicating His supreme authority and dominion as the Sovereign Creator and Supreme Holy Governor of the Universe. We must guard against devising an image of God in our minds which is patterned after our own thoughts, the Lord's complaint of Israel was "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself". We should rejoice in ALL the perfections of God (PS. 97 v 12) If we cannot rejoice in all the attributes then we have not grown in grace and in the KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. DEUT. 32 v 43. REV. 19 v 1-3. These two scriptures give us the rejoicing of the saints in both old and new testaments at the Lord vindicating His majesty and magnifying His justice.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD, (1 CHRON. 29 v 10-13)

This is the attribute controlling all the dealings of God at all times, in all ages. He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. Various attributes are brought into prominence at differing points of history, but all this is according to, and regulated by, Divine Sovereignty.

Divine Sovereignty means that God is God. He is on the throne of the universe, unrivalled in majesty, unlimited in power, unaffected by anything outside of Himself. (PS. 115 v 3) (PS. 135 v 6) The God of Scripture is actuated by principle never swayed by sentiment, and never affected, restricted or retarded by any decision or action of man. His will and purpose is never frustrated, thwarted, or check-mated. His will is supreme (II CHRON. 20 v 6) Before our God, Kings, Presidents, Popes, Dictators, Emperors, are less than grasshoppers. (JOB 23 v 13 PROV. 21 v 30) The God of Holy Scripture is no make-believe monarch, no mere imaginary sovereign, but King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

So we conclude our studies on some of the Wondrous and lovely perfections of the Divine Character. What a God is ours! Through Sovereign Grace and Sovereign Grace alone. This majestic, Thrice Holy, almighty God, is our Heavenly Father, who loves with a Father's love, who is Faithful and Covenant keeping. Whatever may be our condition, or position at this moment dear fellow Christian, "Our times are in HIS hands" (PS. 31 v 15). Let us then "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him". (PS. 37 v 7).

ALLELUIA FOR THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH (REV 19 v 6)

W.H.M.

"Pause, my soul! adore, and wonder!
Ask, oh why such love to me?
Grace hath put me in the number
Of the Saviour's family:
Hallelujah!
Thanks, eternal thanks, to Thee!"

The moment a Church shall despise the pulpit, God will despise her. It is through the ministry that the Lord has always been pleased to revive and bless His Churches.

C.H.SPURGEON

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INFORMATION

At the time of writing this, we have held two "Drive-in" church services. As was the case last year for the commencement, the weather has been very chilly. However, folk have driven in, and we have been encouraged, and the presence and power of God has been felt. It is indeed a great joy to engage in this type of witness, which one feels to be so in accordance with our Lord's commission, and to apostolic practice. More people must be confronted with the truth of God's Word at the "Drive-in" church than we should touch in many years of indoor services. The need is tremendous, the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore... (MATT. 9 v 37-38).

We are thankful to God for the ministry through His servants both on Sundays and Thursdays, - so faithful and profitable. At the time of making this report, Mr Harris of Bow is in the midst of a very helpful study. Having on the Sunday night spoken on the Gospels, followed with an address on the first Thursday on the Acts of the Apostles, continuing next week with the Epistles, and concluding on June 20th with the book of the Revelation.

As will be seen in the church calendar, Mr H.G.Bedford will be with us for four Thursdays in August.

Sunday 15th Sept. Mr Lovegrave of Tiverton will be the Chairman and Preacher. This Sunday will also bring us to the concluding "Drive-in" church. And so another summer season will have ended, its opportunities gone for ever. Are we all doing our utmost? Is REV. 2 v 3 true of us?

"If you cannot pray as you would, nor as you should,
pray as well as you can."