

Attributes of God Part 2

He may be your Father, but He is not your old man. The attributes of God. Now we have already seen that an attribute is not something that is part of God. See this is critical. It is something that is true of God in His basic nature. When we say God is love, it doesn't mean that over here, a certain part of God is love and a certain part is justice and a certain part is patience. What it means is: each one of these things is something that is true of God in His very nature and character.

Now we've seen that God is omnipotent – meaning He can do it. We've seen that God is omnipresent – He is here. We have seen that God is omniscient – He knows it. We have seen that God is immutable – He never changes.

Now the next attribute and the way God has revealed himself in the scriptures, is that he is infinite. Let me use three words. Even though technically each word is different, I think if I put the three together they will help us understand. He is infinite, eternal, limitless. The three really tie together when we look at the character of God. Now in Psalm 90, the word of God says, "Everlasting to everlasting" In Psalm 147:5 it says, "Great is our Lord and abundant in strength." He is limitless. He is infinite. He is eternal.

How does this apply to us knowing that God is so great? One, it turns me from my limitations...to a God who knows no limitations. I am going to wait, in the third part of this series in the Attributes of God, I want to take the last part and share a story with you that I trust you will never forget and it will be used in your life to trust God in a greater way. I am going to hold that off for a little while in that it causes us to turn from our limitations to a God that has none.

Comment [PSD1]: We don't have a Part 3 for this series.

God is not only infinite, the word of God says He is also justice. God is just. When the Bible talks about God being just, when it says in Romans 1:8, "He will exercise his justice," and when it says in Romans 12:19, "Leave room for the wrath or the justice of God," what it means is this – justice is the application of equity to a moral situation. Now think that through. Justice is the application of equity to a moral situation. In other words, morally, it is balancing the scales. That is what justice means, to balance the scales.

When God balances the scales morally, it is not some standard outside Himself He looks at and then determines whether this is right or wrong. But rather it's His very nature, it is His very character and nature that is the standard by which He judges. For example: Why is lying wrong? Because God is truth. Why is killing wrong? Because God is life. Right or wrong is based on the very person and character and nature of God. The standard is His character. It's not something outside himself. In other words, God is totally fair and impartial in all of his dealings with men. When sometimes I'll see God do something for someone and I don't see any benefit, often I will say, "That's unfair." But I have got to come back and realize, wait a minute, God knows more than I do and He's always impartial... in his dealings with men. Then, all that God does, agrees with all that God is. When he deals with us morally, He's simply being himself and this is why one of my prayers has been, "God I want my life in

relationships with others to reflect your character, your nature, your attributes. As you are just with me, I want to be just with others.”

In Romans 12:19, it says, “Never take your own revenge.” Oh, I know it’s not true of any of you, but so often I want to take my own revenge. I want to balance the scale and I want to pick up the club and do my part. God says don’t. He says leave the revenge to me. Leave room for my wrath for it is written “Vengeance is mine, I will repay says the Lord.” If I do the vengeance it’s usually wrong. Why? I don’t have the knowledge that God has. I am biased. I am prejudiced. I don’t see the whole story and so when I act to balance the scale, so often it’s unjust. But it says leave room, turn it over for God to deal with and He will balance the scale.

I believe this is probably one of several reasons why, like in Matthew 7:1 it says “Judge not unless you be judged.” Now what it’s saying in there is not that we shouldn’t judge – what it’s saying, judge not, what it’s meaning is don’t judge anyone according to your standard, your limited perspective, because if you do, you’re going to turn right around and be judged the same way. I’ll tell you this; I sure don’t want to be judged the way I’ve judged others. What it’s saying is whenever you do judge, the only basis of judgment is not your own perspective or anything else, it’s the very character and nature of God and that’s why we are to allow Him to exercise His justice, where I personally want to take it upon myself.

And then another aspect of God that is something that is true of God, the Bible says that God is truth. You might call it veracity. God is truth. He conforms to the God-head, and His knowledge and His word conforms to reality. He is truth. You say, well what do you mean by that? I have learned over the years the truest thing is what God says. The truest thing is what God says. Now how do you define truth? Truth to me is that which coincides with reality. For example, I make the statement, it is raining out. You could go outside, there is no water falling from the heavens or anything. That’s a false statement. Why? The statement I made does not coincide with reality. Well, if there’s any one thing that coincides with reality it’s the word of God. God is truth. He is all knowing and everything that He says coincides with reality and this is why there are sometimes scholars and others who will say something and the word of God seems to contradict it. Boy, have I learned over the years, to trust the word of God. Except in a rare situation, I’ve come to understand why that His word was truth, whatever He says; He must act according to truth. And this is why the word of God says, “God is not a man that He should lie”, Numbers 23, verse 19. God can’t lie. Why? He’s truth. That’s why I can trust Him in whatever He says. He cannot perform any reality inconsistent with His basic nature. Therefore, God cannot lie.

And the word of God goes on and says, “Now the son of man that he should repent, has He said and will He not do it or has He spoken and will He not make it good?” If you and I could know all truth whenever we have questioned something that God has done, trust me, if we were in “His shoes” we would do the same thing. He knows truth in a way that we don’t. This is why I’ve had to tell myself, the truest thing about life is what God says, not what my feelings tell me, not some of the things I learned in the university or anything else. If what I learned in the university is true, it will coincide with the word of God and much of it does. And when it conflicts with it, oh, I’ve learned one thing. I can trust this a lot more than I can man. It is true. God is truth. We don’t have to depend upon feelings or anything to know the truth. God has already revealed it. God is truth.

Another aspect of God, another perspective of who God is, something that's true about God, it says that God is good. God is good. Psalm 119:68 talks about God exercising his goodness. Let me show you how this affects me. When I see God's greatness, when I study that in the scriptures and I see his holiness, I'll tell you, it'll engender a little bit of fear in me, no – it engenders a lot of fear in me. But then when I see His goodness, it's like I'm fearful here but a hand is stretching out and says be at ease, I love you. It's like when I study the nature of God, it's almost like to fear but not be afraid. Does that make sense? To fear, and yet not be afraid. And that's what happens, how the goodness of God balances some of the other things that are true of God.

There are two manifestations of His goodness. One is in mercy which is an active compassion toward people. Being actively compassionate toward human suffering in His mercy, then in His grace, compassion toward our guilt and our human demerit. Where it says in the word of God, "Bestows benefits upon the undeserving." It's manifested in His mercy and His grace – that very truth that God is goodness.

How does this apply to us? Just in our daily life, the way we walk with Christ? One, it becomes a pattern for me. There is probably no area that I have seen of God where I've cried out more, "God I want this to be true in my life." I want to be a person who exercises goodness, who exercises mercy and grace and so often I do the other thing, but I believe when we see that God is goodness it becomes a pattern for us to follow. If there's anything that has provoked praise on my part to God it's when I came to understand that God is good, and it just caused my heart to just praise Him for it.

In the book of Galatians Paul wrote and said, "Do not grow weary in doing good." You know so often you want to, because you do something that's not appreciated or anything else. Pretty soon you just want to say well I don't care and give up. The thing that keeps me going, one of the things, is realizing that God has never given up. No matter how we respond, He keeps exercising His goodness and sometimes I just want to take and choke somebody, I'm reminded, mercy and grace. God is good.

One aspect of God, an attribute, now not a part of God, something true of God that most people talk about is, God is love. God has revealed himself as a God of love. 1 Corinthians 13, God is love, God is love, God is love. Not simply does God love, but here is the key, God is love. And when God loves, He is simply being himself. That's what took me a while to understand, He is just simply being himself. Normally when I've been in the position where I've felt little love for God, it's because I haven't understood how much He loves me. The more I understand how much He loves me, I mean it's unbelievable, it's almost parallel the more I come to love Him, that's been my response.

So many people think that I came to Christ intellectually because of the books that I've written and my own testimony. I set out to write my first book, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* against Christianity, to refute it. I thought most Christians had two brains, one was lost and the other was out looking for it. I truly believed that Christians were walking idiots. So I set out to write the book against Christianity and I ended up coming to Christ. Most people think it was the evidence; it was the intellectual route that I came to Christ. You know, it might appear to be that but that's not the true reason. What truly brought me to Christ was not the evidence. All the evidence that I've documented in my books by thousands of

documentations, is not what brought me to Christ. All the evidence for the Deity of Christ, the resurrection, the reliability of the Bible, all that evidence was simply God getting my attention. That is all it was. We say in America, God put his foot in the doorway, stopped the door from going all the way closed. What truly brought me to Christ was God's love.

From Jeremiah, "I have loved you in an everlasting love; with tender kindness I have drawn you." Once I became convinced that the Bible is the word of God, intellectually as a non-believer, that it was true, that I have what was written down two thousand years ago and what was written down was true, then and only then did I ever consider it's message. Once I became convinced this Bible was historically accurate and reliable, then I started to consider its message, that's what brought me to Christ, it was the love of God. Narrow it down to this, when I realized as a non-Christian that if I were the only person alive, Jesus still would have died for me, is what brought me to Christ. It humbled me and I thank God to this day that phrase still affects me. To this day, I realize God loves me so much that there still would have been a Christmas and an Easter. He still would have been born, He would have died through His Son and would have been raised again the third day if there was no one else alive but me. Oh, this was really brought home to me when a young lady at a university said, "Well Josh if that is true, then I would've had to pound the spikes into his hands to crucify Him." Oh, as many young people say, "That's heavy." That is what brought me to Christ, His love.

First of all Christ's love is uninfluenced. You say, what do you mean by that? There is nothing in our lives that triggered God's love for us. It was initiated on His behalf. He loved the unlovely. He loved the ungodly. While I was still a sinner, He loved me. Oh, sometimes I wish that weren't true, because there were some people that I didn't love. I just simply wanted to despise them and I couldn't. Because Christ is my model and when I was in that position, He still loved me. And oh, there are some people that I just wish that I didn't have to love, but I do. Except God said you don't have to like everyone but you have to love them. There are a lot of people I don't like but I don't know one person alive that I don't love in Jesus Christ.

God's love is eternal. Jeremiah 31, verse 3, as I said before, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; with tender kindness I have drawn you". That's what brought me to Christ, His everlasting love.

His love is omnipotent – in other words, He can do it. His love is all powerful. There's no barrier greater than the love of God that can be broken down.

God's love is infinite. In other words, it's inexhaustible. You cannot exhaust God's love. Sometimes the way I've acted, I've sure tried to. But you can't exhaust God's love.

God's love is immutable. In John 13, verse 1 it says, "Having loved his own who were in the world, He loved them to the end," to the end – it's immutable.

God's love is holy. God's love never conflicts with His holiness. A lot of people say, well how can a loving God send anyone to hell? First of all God doesn't send anyone to hell. If we go to hell, it's by our own choice. But when somebody says to me, how can a loving God allow anyone to go to hell, I'll turn around and say, "Well how can a holy, just, righteous God allow sin into His presence?"

You see God cannot express any one of His attributes at the preclusion of another. He cannot exercise His justice without exercising His love. He cannot exercise His love without exercising His justice. That's the uniqueness of what Jesus Christ did on the cross. His very nature of justice demanded the wage of sin is death. His very love demanded I love you; I want to draw you to myself. And what He did, He went to the cross, took our sin upon Himself. When Jesus said, "It is finished," the holy, just, righteous nature of God was expressed upon His Son, so it wasn't overlooked and then in His love brought us to himself. That is the uniqueness of the story of Christianity. What we could not do for ourselves, God did for us through His Son Jesus Christ. He exercised his justice, He exercised His holiness, He exercised His love, His righteousness, everything and it was all satisfied in the cross. He didn't say, well I overlooked my justice and just loved you. No. The justice took His Son to the cross; love took Him out of the grave. Wow, that's quite a story.

God is patient, the Bible says. Exodus 34:6, "The Lord, the Lord God is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger." Boy, am I fast to anger. I am one of the most impatient people. I will stand at a microwave and say hurry up. I'm a very impatient person. Yet it says God is compassionate, gracious and slow to anger. God's patience causes Him to sustain great hurt without immediately avenging himself. That's a lesson I need even more in my own life, is to be patient, to be forbearing, long suffering and I want to bring the hammer down right away and God says, back off. I mean Romans 15, verse 5 says, "The God of patience." Colossians 3, verse 12 says, "The longsuffering God." Probably the biggest thing that knowing that God is patient does for me is that I need to be patient.

Then it says God is faithful. Wow, that's not part of God; it's something true of God in every area. In Psalm 119:90 it says, "Thy faithfulness continues throughout all generations" Deuteronomy 7:9 says, "He is God the faithful God." He never forgets, He never falters and He never fails. In Lamentations 3:22-23 it says, "Great is thy faithfulness." That would make a great title for a song and I think somebody stole that years ago. Great is thy faithfulness. Knowing that God is faithful, it really helps me to not be captivated by worry. But knowing that He will do what He has said, He will cause it to happen, whatever He has promised, and then it causes me to be less involved in worrying about a situation.

I often say, I never worry because that's a sin, I'm just deeply concerned. We try to explain it away – but knowing that God is faithful, it causes me to trust Him even more. And then knowing that God is faithful, it keeps me from those spurts of criticism or murmuring or being uneasy about God. Give it time; He will cause it to happen if He has promised it. And then I truly believe, knowing that God is faithful; it's increased my confidence in Him in so many ways.

We've covered a lot of things that are true about God. Now an attribute is not a part of God, it is something that is true of God in His basic nature. Somebody says, is there anything that God can't do? Yes, there are many things God can't do. What? Yeah. Here's the phrase. God cannot perform any reality inconsistent with His basic nature. You say what? That's right. God cannot perform any reality inconsistent with His basic nature. In other words, He cannot act unlovingly. He cannot act unjustly. Whenever He expresses one thing that is true about Him, He must express the other. He can't say well I am going to be angry over here and set aside my love. His anger must always be expressed in the context of His love, because that's what is true of Him. He cannot exercise His justice to the preclusion of His love, or He can't

exercise His love to the preclusion of His holiness. That's why there had to be the cross, for every single attribute of God was met at the cross. And that set a holy God free to accept a simple individual into His presence. The cross of Christ is the only thing that has ever explained how a holy, just, righteous, loving God can do that. Yes, there are many things God cannot do. He cannot perform any reality inconsistent with His basic nature.

But the more I see who God is; those that know their God should do great exploits. And I truly believe the greater knowledge, true knowledge of the God that we have, the greater He will be glorified through each one of our lives.