

## ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

### PART2: JUSTICE AND MERCY

Online Sermon: [http://www.mckeefamily.com/?page\\_id=3567](http://www.mckeefamily.com/?page_id=3567)

While comprehending the ineffable is a task beyond human ability, through the Spirit of God our soul's yearning to know God can be satisfied. What God has revealed concerning Himself is called His attributes. In Part I we reviewed three of these attributes. First, God is infinite and by this, I mean that He is without limits, boundaries, beginning or ending. He who laid the foundations of this universe is not limited to time, matter, motion or energy. Second, God is immanent and by this, I mean He is above all things, beneath all things, outside all things and inside all things. God is indivisibly present everywhere and infinitely larger than this entire universe. Third, God is good and by this, I mean kind-hearted, gracious, good natured and benevolent in his intention. While the Fallen deserve Hell, God's goodness can be found in His offering of salvation of all who believe in the atoning sacrifice of His Son! This week's sermon is going to focus on two more attributes of God: justice and mercy.

#### ATTRIBUTE 4: GOD'S JUSTICE

**<sup>5</sup> Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: "You are just in these judgments, O Holy One, you who are and who were; <sup>6</sup> for they have shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve." <sup>7</sup> And I heard the altar respond: "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments."**

#### Revelation 16:5-7



When one looks out upon the atrocities of this Fallen world one cannot help but question if there truly is any justice. What does one say to the 43 % of our children who are being cyber-bullied<sup>1</sup> with little or no recourse available because the means to detect these high-tech crimes have not yet been sufficiently developed? Or what does one say to the approximately 800,000 women, children and men who are sold into sex trade every year?<sup>2</sup> What does one say to the

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from the following website: <https://www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-cyber-bullying>

families with victims of genocide such as the Holocaust and ethnic cleansings of Rwanda that left more than six million Jewish people<sup>3</sup> and 800,00 Hutus dead merely because of their race?<sup>4</sup> To the person who is murdered every minute<sup>5</sup> and the person sexually assaulted every 98 seconds, what do you say to them about justice especially when only 6 out of every 1,000 people who commits these crimes are ever punished?<sup>6</sup> With the depravity of the human race almost limitless, does that mean that justice is truly nothing more than a fantasy of those who forever must drown in their own sorrows while the perpetrators of this world walk around free? How does one tell this world that God is sovereign and His justice perfect when to the world, it appears that God is overlooking such atrocities?

It is not just non-Christians who wrestle with this issue but Christians do as well. Psalms 73 describes how Asaph wrestled with God's justice. He starts off the passage by making a statement that he doubts but wants to prove as being true: "surely God is good to Israel, to those



who are pure in heart?" (1). Asaph then states that he almost lost his faith in God because he became envious of the prosperity of the wicked (2-3). Why is it that those with callous hearts and evil imaginations (7) with no limits can wear pride like a necklace, cloth themselves in violence (6), scoff, speak with malice and constantly threaten to oppress others (8); and yet they themselves have no struggles, their bodies are healthy and strong and have riches beyond imagination? Asaph then asks a rhetorical question in which he is almost fearful to answer: "surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and have washed my hands in

innocence" (13)? After all, Asaph did not receive prosperity like the wicked had but instead received afflictions and new punishments every morning as his apparent reward for following God's commands (14)! It was only through a proper understanding of the unity of God and a balanced perspective of the passion of Christ and God's unchanging attitude towards holding people accountable that Asaph was able to find God's justice as being truly perfect!

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<sup>2</sup> Taken from the following website: <http://arkofhopeforchildren.org/child-trafficking/child-trafficking-statistics>

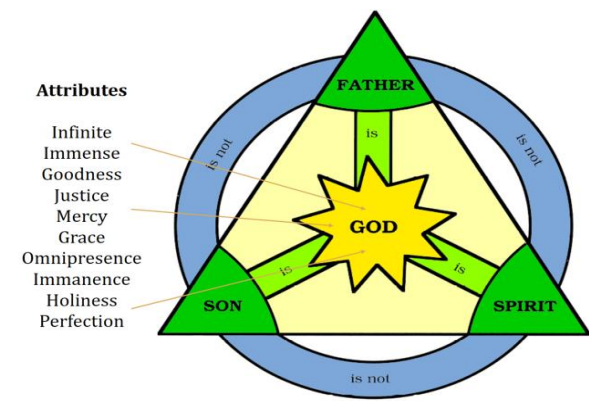
<sup>3</sup> Taken from the following website: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1481975/The-Holocaust-death-toll.html>

<sup>4</sup> Taken from the following website: <http://www.history.com/topics/rwandan-genocide>

<sup>5</sup> Taken from the following website: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/a-murder-a-minute/>

<sup>6</sup> Taken from the following website: <https://www.rainn.org/statistics>

**Unity of God.** Unlike humanity who are composed of many parts such as spirit, soul and body; God is not created and is unitary in His being. The Jews taught the unitary being of God in Deuteronomy 6:4: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord” and so did the early church



as seen in the Athanasius Creed: “we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons; nor dividing the Essence.”<sup>7</sup> Since God is one, Tozer argues that “everything that God does harmonizes with everything else that God does perfectly because there are no parts to get out of joint and no attributes to face each other and fight it out. All God’s attributes are one, and together.”<sup>8</sup> This means that God’s infinity, immensity, goodness, justice and mercy and so on are always emphasized perfectly and never in conflict with

one another. For example, there will never be a time in which God mercy wants to pardon a person but cannot because God’s justice demands otherwise. Given this is true then how can God “overlook” evil and yet remain a perfect judge?

**Passion of Christ.** No matter how kind, considerate, compassionate and obedient to God’s word one might be, we have all been judged and found guilty of sin that deserves nothing less than a death sentence (Romans 3:23, 6:23). Scripture states that while we were yet enemies



of God Christ died for us (Romans 5:8-10). His passion on the cross was a “deep, terrible suffering”<sup>9</sup> beyond words or comprehension for His act of atonement for the sins of humanity truly was infinite, almighty and perfect. How can God sparing the rapist, murderers, bullies, and evil dictators of this world be just? After all, when evil happens does not justice demand that someone should pay dearly? The answer is yes ... and someone did pay for the atrocities of the world, Jesus Christ! The sinless lamb (1 Peter 1:19) took on all of God’s righteous wrath upon His

shoulders (Isaiah 53) and in infinite agony beyond our imaginations; forever changed our moral situation. Those who have faith in the atoning death of Jesus are born again of water and Spirit (John 3:5) and become part of God’s family (Galatians 3:26). Not only that but each time a

<sup>7</sup> Taken from the following website: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athanasian\\_Creed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athanasian_Creed)

<sup>8</sup> A. W. Tozer and David E. Fessenden, *The Attributes of God: A Journey into the Father’s Heart*, vol. 1 (Camp Hill, PA: WingSpread, 2003–), 65.

<sup>9</sup> A. W. Tozer and David E. Fessenden, *The Attributes of God: A Journey into the Father’s Heart*, vol. 1 (Camp Hill, PA: WingSpread, 2003–), 67.

rapist, murderer or anyone who does evil sins and confesses that sin, Jesus forgives and cleanses them (1 John 1:9). No punishment is demanded by God (this does not mean that God does not discipline those He loves) for Christ was truly a once and for all sacrifice (Hebrews 10:10) for sin!

**Unchanging Attitude Towards Sin.** For those who do not believe in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, does not God's justice demand they be severely punished for their sins? This brings us back to Asaph's question: why do those who obey God receive financial and physical



burdens in life while those who clothe themselves with violence and have evil imaginations are healthy and filthy rich? After pondering the appearance of these kinds of injustices Asaph states that his feet almost slipped (2) for he had begun to think that the results of obeying God were nothing more than mere fantasy (13). This troubled him so deeply that he entered the sanctuary of God and asked how His actions could be seen as just (17)? In response God told him to look at each person's final destiny and then see if I am not just. In the

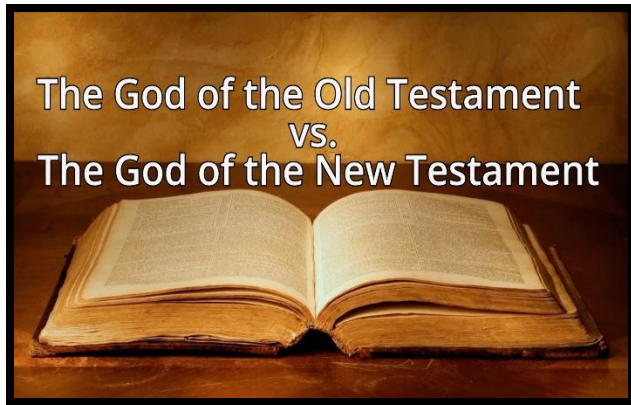
moment of their last heart beat God reminds Asaph and us today that those who reject God in this lifetime will be swept away by terrors of God's wrath that will forever consume them in the pits of hell, whereas those who believe in the atoning sacrifice of Christ and obey Him will receive salvation and eternal crowns of righteousness! Keeping this in mind then, is not God just? YES, He certainly is!

#### ATTRIBUTE 5: GOD'S MERCY

**<sup>8</sup> The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. <sup>9</sup> He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; <sup>10</sup> he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. <sup>11</sup> For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; <sup>12</sup> as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. <sup>13</sup> As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; <sup>14</sup> for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. <sup>15</sup> The life of mortals is like grass, they flourish like a flower of the field; <sup>16</sup> the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. <sup>17</sup> But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children—**

**Psalms 103:8-17**

There is a lot of bad teaching out there that implies God had different levels of mercy in the Old versus the New Testament. For example, Marcion of Sinope in 144 A.D. created a Bible that excluded the OT because these books portrayed God as wrathful, vengeful, and a lower



entity than that of the all forgiving God full of grace portrayed in the NT.<sup>10</sup> This of course is far from the truth! Like all other attributes of God, mercy is not something that God has more of less of depending on an epic of time or circumstance. Mercy is something that God is from infinity past to the infinite future!<sup>11</sup> When God disciplined those living in Old and New Testament times, Scripture states the He took no pleasure in the suffering or death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11). When God struck down the evil people of the Flood (Genesis

7), Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1) and Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19) He first showed them mercy by giving them a lifetime of opportunities to repent. It was only after they refused to turn from their wicked ways that God judged them guilty and eternally destroyed them in the lake of fire! The God of the Old and New Testament are the same God, full of both judgment and mercy!

God's mercy towards humanity has always been one in which He has actively demonstrated great compassion! While we might feel compassionate towards those who are starving in this world, lost loved ones or have terminal illnesses; we do not always act upon these



feelings. How many times have we read in the newspaper or saw on television tragedies that wrench the heart but never to the point to where we are willing to do something about it? Unlike us, God does not feel compassion at a distance, He acts! In response to the groans and cries of Israel who were suffering intensely at the hands of Pharaoh (Exodus 2:23-25), God demonstrated His active compassion by sending Moses with a profound message: "let my people go (Exodus 9:1)!" Jesus also demonstrated active compassion in the NT. When Jesus saw the people without a

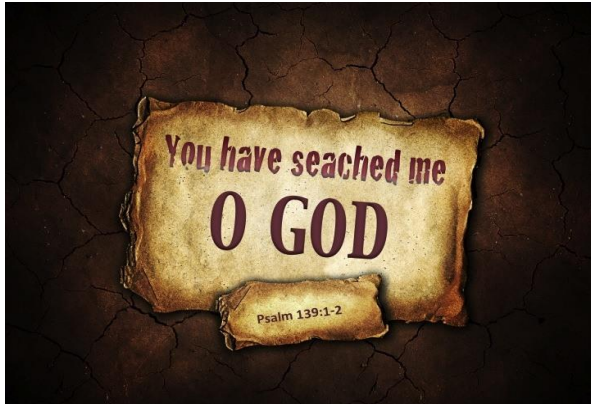
shepherd, He demonstrated His active compassion by telling the disciples to give them something to eat (Mark 6:34-37). And let us never forget that Christ upon seeing that we were slaves to sin, chose to die in our place so that we might be freed from sin (Romans 6:18) and the

<sup>10</sup> Taken from the following website: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcionism>

<sup>11</sup> A. W. Tozer and David E. Fessenden, *The Attributes of God: A Journey into the Father's Heart*, vol. 1 (Camp Hill, PA: WingSpread, 2003–), 77.

fear of death (Hebrews 2:15)— now that is active compassion! Fear not for the Lord our God is always willing to take us by the right hand and show us compassion (Isaiah 41:13)!

The mercy of God is an ocean divine, a boundless and fathomless flood.<sup>12</sup> In my Bible study at work we talked about king David and some of the Psalms that were attributed to him. Those who sing and believe that “nobody knows the troubles I have seen” certainly have not read about the life of David! David, the youngest of Jesse, was anointed by the prophet Samuel to be



king at a tender age of 15. While David’s acts of killing Goliath and tens of thousands of Israel’s enemies was clear proof that God was with him, David spent about 14 years fleeing from king Saul who wanted him dead! It is in his “dark night of the soul” that David writes some of the most honest poetry of personal pain found in Scripture. Since God knew everything about him (Psalms 139), David believed there was no reason to not tell God how he was feeling! For example, when his enemies “sharpened their tongues like swords,” “hid snares” and “dug pits”

for him to fall into, David complained to God and asked Him to strike down his enemies (Psalms 64, 142). In the NT we find that our sympathetic high priest, Jesus has not forgotten us, and He hasn’t forgotten the nails in His hands, the tears, the agonies and cries.<sup>13</sup> He is always ready to demonstrate His mercy by either helping us persevere through pain so that we might mature our faith (James 1:2-8) or by removing the pain altogether. He is truly good to those who love Him (Romans 8:28)!

## CONCLUSION

What God has revealed about Himself is called His attributes. In today’s sermon, we reviewed just two of these attributes: justice and mercy. By justice I mean that God giving humanity a lifetime to change their evil ways does not violate His unchanging desire to hold people accountable in this lifetime or the next. While forgiveness without consequences might appear to violate justice, it does not because Christ paid the price for our sins, once and for all. By mercy I mean that God is actively compassionate. Our high priest Jesus is sympathetic towards our suffering for He has not forgotten the agony He endured on the cross! While God may not remove suffering, He mercifully provides the means for us to endure it and mature in the faith. Next week’s sermon is going to focus on three more attributes of God: grace, omnipresence and immanence.

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<sup>12</sup> A. W. Tozer and David E. Fessenden, [\*The Attributes of God: A Journey into the Father’s Heart\*](#), vol. 1 (Camp Hill, PA: WingSpread, 2003–), 95.

<sup>13</sup> A. W. Tozer and David E. Fessenden, [\*The Attributes of God: A Journey into the Father’s Heart\*](#), vol. 1 (Camp Hill, PA: WingSpread, 2003–), 94.