

The Perfections of God

Part 1

By Phil Johnson

Just a few years ago, *U.S. News and World Report* ran an article about the state of religion in America. The article was attempting to paint a very optimistic picture of the spiritual state of our nation. It cited statistics from opinion polls that seemed to indicate more Americans than ever before claim to believe in a supreme being. But the disturbing fact that became crystal-clear from reading the article was that fewer Americans—certainly a smaller percentage than ever—believe in the God of the Bible.

Unfortunately, even in the visible church, among those who profess to be Christians, there are now multitudes who reject the Bible as the Word of God and by doing so have rejected the God of Scripture. Although they would call themselves Christians, they clearly do not believe in the God of Scripture, but instead, they have substituted a god who is more to their own liking. And some of them even freely admit this.

One of the more interesting personal vignettes in this article was a sidebar about a woman named Cindy Still. According to the article, she is a minister in a Baptist church in Mississippi. She works 12 or 13 hours every day for the church, "directing Sunday School, planning revivals and outreach efforts, counseling families in crisis, and traveling as far as Alaska and Singapore on evangelistic missions." She says that doing the Lord's work can be the very thing that distances her from God. When she is totally drained, "she seeks God out along the beach of the Gulf coast." She

told *U.S. News and World Report*, "Sometimes I see [God] as a man with a white beard. Other times he's a pair of open arms or just a spirit." The article adds this: "Usually He is beside her, once in a while she feels his touch."

Cindy Still is one of those who explicitly states that she believes the Bible is the literally Word of God. Yet the article describes her as someone with "one foot in a strict religious community and the other in the modern secular world." She often goes to R-rated movies—though she says she leaves when she gets offended. She says her religious work is all motivated by her fear that she might be to blame if someone ends up in hell. Here's what she said: "I know that on Judgment Day, I'll be called to task for all the souls I could have saved but didn't. I imagine that I'll see all their faces, as if on a huge video screen, wailing and moaning and calling out to me from hell."¹

I had two responses to this article. First, I don't doubt that religion in America is at an all-time high. But that is not to say truth is more believed than ever. Second, anyone who simply looks around can see a dramatic decline in society's moral climate. And the worst of it has happened in less than one generation—in our lifetimes: the steady decline in morality and personal responsibility, combined with high rates of crime, drug abuse, divorce, abortion, child abuse, juvenile delinquency, drunkenness, homosexuality, prostitution, other forms of sexual perversion, pornography, rape, incest, murder, gang activity, and even satanic ritual crimes. All of that proves that *human* religion itself has no positive moral effect whatsoever on society. Religion is more often false than true.

1. p. 57.

False religion can be more destructive than pure atheism. False religion is idolatry—the worst sin of all. All false religions point to the wrong god. They lead people away from truth. So an increase in religion is by no means a positive sign for our society.

But I want to turn our attention this morning on biblical Christianity. And I want to suggest to you that it is not enough to affirm the basic tenets of sound doctrine if you divorce your doctrine from a right concept of God.

In other words, a *truly* sound faith depends on a right concept of God. You can say you believe the Bible is God's Word, but if you don't let it form your concept of God, you will fall into all sorts of spiritual confusion. You can call yourself a Christian, but if you imagine God as a white-bearded old gentleman, an impersonal spirit, or just a pair of open arms—your Christianity will be weak, insipid, and powerless. Above all, if your concept of God is that He sits helplessly watching what happens in the human world, hoping for the best, wishing we would do more to save lost souls for Him—then what you believe is not biblical Christianity at all.

A. W. Tozer wrote this: "*What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.*" In His book, *Knowledge of the Holy*, Tozer wrote,

That our idea of God correspond as nearly as possible to the true being of God is of immense importance to us. Compared with our actual thoughts about Him, our creedal statements are of little consequence. . . .

A right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well. It is to worship what the foundation is to the temple; where it is inadequate or out of plumb the whole structure must sooner or later collapse. I believe there is scarcely an

error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God.

[Tozer was writing in 1960 or '61, so he made these observations *before* society began its serious moral unravelling in the sixties. He said,] It is my opinion that the Christian conception of God current in these middle years of the twentieth century is so decadent as to be utterly beneath the dignity of the Most High God and actually to constitute for professed believers something amounting to a moral calamity.

.....
Among the sins to which the human heart is prone, hardly any other is more hateful to God than idolatry, for idolatry is at bottom a libel on His character. The idolatrous heart assumes that God is other than He is—in itself a monstrous sin—and substitutes for the true God one made after its own likeness. Always this God will conform to the image of the one who created it and will be base or pure, cruel or kind, according to the moral state of the mind from which it emerges.

A god begotten in the shadows of a fallen heart will quite naturally be no true likeness of the true God. "[You thought]," said the Lord to the wicked man in the psalm, "that I was [just like you]." Surely this must be a serious affront to the Most High God before whom [angels] continually do cry "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of [hosts]."

. . . The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him. It begins in the mind and may be present where no overt act of worship has taken place. . . .

. . . Wrong ideas about God are not only the fountain from which the polluted waters of idolatry flow; they are

themselves idolatrous. The idolater simply imagines things about God and acts as if they were true. Perverted notions about God soon rot the religion in which they appear. The long career of Israel demonstrates this clearly enough, and the history of the Church confirms it. So necessary to the Church is a lofty concept of God that when that concept in any measure declines, the Church with her worship and her moral standards declines along with it. The first step down for any church is taken when it surrenders its high opinion of God.²

So as we work through this brief survey of the attributes of God, remember that this area of truth has intensely practical implications.

It's quite common these days to hear people contrast doctrinal truth with practical truth. Occasionally someone will tell me they think my preaching would be better if I would just be more practical and less doctrinal.

Here's my response to that: If you're telling me that I need to do more to make the practical application of this or that doctrine clear, I'll accept that criticism. I don't ever want to get so caught up in the academic aspect of doctrine that we miss the point of how it applies to our lives. Practical application is crucial.

On the other hand, without sound doctrine, you don't have anything trustworthy you can apply practically. In other words, it's the wrong formula to suggest that you can be *more* practical and *less* doctrinal. Our doctrine is the whole basis for our practice. Get rid of doctrine and there's no legitimate way to be "more practical." Unless you establish

2. A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 9-12.

what is solid biblical doctrine, there's nothing to be practical with; you don't have anything you can apply. Be wary of teachers who tell you what to do in practical terms without giving you any biblical or doctrinal basis for it.

Here's the other side of it: No self-help or how-to advice in the world can possibly have the far-reaching practical impact on you that your conception of God will inevitably have. No "felt need" I could ever talk about could possibly be more crucial to your practical life than a right concept of who God is and what He is like. So the most *practical* study we could possibly do is a study on what God is really like.

And that is exactly where we are going to spend our time.

I have four main points, all loosely drawn from the first epistle of John. All of these are statements about who God is, and we can use them as headings under which to categorize all the attributes of God:

- God is Light: 1 Jn. 1:5: "**This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.**"²
- God is Lord: This is implied throughout, but never explicitly stated in 1 John. For example, 1 John 2:1 says, "**If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father.**" The fact that we need an Advocate implies that God reigns over us as Lord. Then in chapter 2, verse 3, John writes, "**By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.**" The fact that He commands us speaks of His lordship. In 1 John 3:20, the apostle writes, "**God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.**" That, too, speaks of His absolute lordship even over the secrets of our hearts. And then in chapter 4, verse, 4, John writes, "**Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the**

world." That too speaks of God as Lord of all. So John is clearly teaching that *God is Lord*.

- God is Love: First John 4:8 makes this profound comment, "**The one who does not love does not know God, for *God is love*.**"
- God is Life: At the end of the epistle, in 1 John 5:20, John writes, "**We know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true**"—in other words, Jesus Christ embodied what we may know about the attributes of God—"and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. ***This is the true God and eternal life.***" So God is life.

Now, with those four categories in place—God is Light; God is Lord; God is Love; and God is Life—we are ready to look at the specific attributes of God. Now, be ready to write, because I'm planning to move rather quickly through these. This will be just a survey of the major attributes, not an exhaustive study of theology proper. Some of the familiar attributes we're just barely going to take time to list, because I want to get through all this material in just two weeks. So stay with me,

I. GOD IS LIGHT

This statement in 1 John 1:5—"God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all"—is a rich statement about God and his attributes. Let me just list and briefly describe six attributes that help explain what that statement means: "**God is Light.**" We'll begin with the one attribute that sums up the very essence of what God is like; His—

1. Holiness. Isaiah described in his vision of God how angels called seraphim hovered around the throne of God, saying, "**Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.**"

The apostle John described a similar scene, with four living creatures around the throne, who day and night do not cease to say, "**Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty**" (Rev. 4:8).

The formula we find in both Isaiah and Revelation (where the word *holy* is repeated three times) is unique to this attribute. God is never said to be "love, love, love"; or "omnipotent, omnipotent, omnipotent."

Holiness is the primary moral attribute of God, His supreme perfection. Charles Hodge says holiness "is a general term for the moral excellence of God."³ Thomas Watson wrote, "Holiness is the most sparkling jewel of his crown; it is the name by which he is known. Psa. [61:9] 'Holy and reverend is his name.' He is 'the holy One.' Job [6:10]."⁴

The Hebrew word for "Holy" is *quadash*, which means "distinct, separate, or different." It refers to God's "otherness." It suggests that God is absolutely distinct from His creatures, exalted above them in infinite majesty. But more important, it speaks of His utter separateness from sin and evil. He is completely set apart from evil, infinitely above it, perfectly antithetical to it. He is totally pure, completely separate from sin. Here are two key verses that make the point:

3. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:413.

4. Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1992 reprint), 82.

- Habakkuk 1:13: "Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil, and Thou canst not look on wickedness with favor."
- Job 34:10 (the words of Elihu): "Far be it from God to do wickedness, And from the Almighty to do wrong."

So when Peter writes, "Like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Pet. 1:15-16)—he is calling us to be different, set apart, holy unto God.

Holiness so sums up what God is like that many books dealing with God's attributes save it to the last. R.L. Dabney states, "Holiness is to be regarded, not as a distinct attribute, but as the resultant of all God's moral attributes together."⁵ In other words, if you could sum up who God is in verbal shorthand, you might simply state with the seraphim that He is "**Holy, holy, holy.**"

Or to say the same thing in a different way, if we really understood all that is comprised in the meaning of the word *holiness* we would see that it encompasses everything you can possibly say that is true about God.

However, if you tried to list everything that is true about God, you could never do it. And that's because of the second attribute I have on my list:

2. Incomprehensibility. To say that God is light and in him is no darkness also implies that God is incomprehensible. First Timothy 6:16 says God "**dwells in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen or can see.**" The very idea of God as light is a reminder to me that God is incomprehensible to us.

To say that God is incomprehensible is not to suggest that it is impossible to know God, or to know anything *about*

5. Dabney, *Systematic Theology*, 172-73.

Him. It simply means that we cannot possibly *comprehend* Him. Although you can know Him personally, and know true things *about* him, you can never even begin to wrap your mind around *everything* that is true about Him.

Here's another way to say the same thing: God cannot be *defined*. To define something is to circumscribe it with categorical boundaries; to delineate the thing with a clear outline or form; to fix or establish the extent or the essence of a thing in a way that makes it distinct. You cannot do that with God. He is too vast and inscrutable to be defined exhaustively.

Several years ago, I taught Fundamentals of the Faith here at Grace Church. Before they edited the FOF material, it had a section on the attributes of God that began with the statement, "You cannot put God in a box." But halfway down the page was a table that listed all the major attributes of God, with each attribute in it's own little compartment, the whole table forming one big box labeled "attributes of God." It was an unfortunate and unintentional discrepancy.

You *cannot* put God in a box. You can list attributes of God and place them in a box, but when you have said everything the human mind can possibly fathom that is true about God, you still will not have said everything that is true about God. He is incomprehensible.

Or to state it in very simple terms, since all God's attributes are infinitely perfect, He cannot be comprehended by imperfect, finite minds. Paul wrote, "**Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!**" (Rom. 11:33).

That is what we mean by incomprehensibility. Now here's another attribute that at first glance may sound like the exact opposite:

3. Simplicity. Here's an attribute that may surprise you: the *simplicity of God*. This speaks of the impossibility of dividing Him into parts. God is not a composite Being. He is not made up of anything. Turretin stated it like this: "In God there is nothing which needs to be made perfect or can receive perfection from any other, but he is whatever can be and cannot be other than what He is. [For that reason] he is usually described not only by concrete but by abstract names—life light, truth, etc."⁶

Biblical proof for the simplicity of God is deduced from such passages as Romans 11:36: "**For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.**" He is also said to be "**the Father of Spirits**" (Heb. 12:9). "**He is before all things, and by Him all things consist**" (Col. 1:17). Therefore He cannot be an aggregate or composition of any substances, ideas, or properties external to himself. He is perfectly indivisible, existing in and of Himself eternally and in perfect simplicity. He is not the composite of other things.

The doctrine of the Trinity does not alter or challenge this truth, because it teaches that although God exists in three Persons, He also exists in perfect unity. The three Persons are one (Jn. 10:30). Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct and distinguishable as unique Persons, but they are nonetheless incapable of being divided. They exist in a perfect unity that is beyond our ability to fathom. And here we get into a mystery that we simply cannot take time to plumb the depths of.

We have to get on to the next attribute in our list—

6. Turretin 1:191-92.

4. Immutability. Here's another attribute of God that is suggested by the imagery of light: immutability. James 1:17 says God is "**the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.**" He radiates the purest light—no variableness, no shadow. He does not change. His attributes, His character, His principles, His will, and His purposes are eternal and remain the same from eternity to eternity. We refer to this as the *immutability* of God. He does not change.

Louis Berkhof writes, "[God] is devoid of all change, not only in His Being, but also in His perfections, and in his purposes and promises. In virtue of this attribute He is exalted above all becoming, and is free from all accession or diminution and from all growth or decay in His Being or perfections. His knowledge and plans, His moral principles and volitions remain forever the same."⁷

Think about it like this: because God is infinitely perfect, He cannot change for the better and will not change for the worse. Dabney says, "Scarcely any attribute is more clearly manifested to [human] reason than God's immutability."⁸ In other words, even though this is a difficult truth for us to fathom, if you think about this truth, it *must* be true of God, for if He changes in any way, He is not the God who reveals himself in Scripture.

Dozens of Scripture passages affirm this:

- First of all, notice that immutability is implied in the name by which God revealed Himself to Moses in Exodus 3:14: "**God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.'**" There's a note of abiding constancy in the name itself.

7. Berkhof, 59.

8. Dabney, *Systematic Theology*, 45.

But other Scriptures expressly affirm that God does not change—and *cannot* change—His mind, His character, or His eternal purposes.

- Numbers 23:19: "**God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a 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?**"
- Psalm 102:25-27: "**Of old Thou didst found the earth; And the heavens are the work of Thy hands. Even they will perish, but Thou dost endure; And all of them will wear out like a garment; Like clothing Thou wilt change them, and they will be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.**" That text is quoted in Hebrews 1 and applied to Christ, by the way.
- Psalm 33:11: "**The counsel of the Lord stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation.**"
- Psalm 110:4: "**The Lord . . . will not change His mind.**"
- Isaiah 41:4: "**Who has performed and accomplished it, Calling forth the generations from the beginning? 'I, the Lord, am the first, and with the last. I am He.'**"
- Isaiah 46:9: "**Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure.'**"
- Malachi 3:6: "**For I, the Lord, do not change.**"
- Romans 1:23 calls God "**the incorruptible God.**"
- Hebrews 13:8: "**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever.**"

This is a crucial truth about God. It also implies His omniscience of everything future, because if you think about it, if God does not have perfect and exhaustive foreknowledge of the future, then He's constantly learning

new things, and that means He is changing, increasing in knowledge.

That is what some today teach. It's a heresy known as "open Theism"—based on the false notion that the future is open and undetermined, so that even God does not perfectly know the future. And one thing you'll notice about those who advocate Open Theism is that they invariably attack the doctrine of divine immutability. Because, frankly, they know that a God who does not change is incompatible with their heretical notion of God.

I did a message on this subject several months ago, you may remember, and we explored the question of whether God really changes his mood. When the Bible says God became angry or displeased, or when it says he rejoices or delights in something, does that signify an actual change of temper in the mind of God?

And we concluded that Scripture actually teaches that God is *not* subject to any fits and mood swings, but His all his dispositions—his love of righteousness and His hatred of evil—are as fixed and immutable as every other aspect of his mind. It's a difficult subject, but if you want to delve into it further, you can get a recording of that message. Right now we have to move on, so we'll just underscore what Scripture makes most clear: that God never changes His mind. He is completely immutable. And with that we'll move on to the next attributes on our list. If you're taking notes, this time we'll combine two words:

5. *Glory and Majesty.* When John says God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all, he is also making a statement about God's glory.

The glory and majesty of God are rarely treated in lists of His attributes. Usually we think of God's glory as the grandeur of all His attributes combined.

But I want to mention God's glory as one of his perfections. God is inherently and intrinsically a God of infinite majesty and glory who dwells in unapproachable light. This is so crucial in a day when people tend to think of God as a kindly, white-bearded old man. We are not to think of God as like ourselves. He is utterly a God of Glory who as we have seen dwells in unapproachable light.

J. I. Packer has written,
This [understanding of God's glory and majesty] is knowledge which Christians today largely lack: and that is one reason why our faith is so feeble and our worship so flabby. We are modern people, and modern people, though they cherish great thoughts of themselves, have as a rule small thoughts of God. When the person in the street uses the word *God*, the thought is rarely of divine *majesty*.

A well-known book is called *Your God Is Too Small*; it is a timely title. We are poles apart from our evangelical forefathers at this point, even when we confess our faith in their words. When you start reading Luther, or Edwards, or Whitefield, though your doctrine may be theirs, you soon find yourself wondering whether you have any acquaintance at all with the mighty God whom they knew so intimately.⁹

Amen to that. And so that we don't run out of time, let's move immediately on to attribute number 6 on our list—

9. J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973), 83.

6. Wisdom. I've listed God's wisdom under the heading "God is light," because that's where it seemed to fit. One of the qualities of light is that it illuminates, and that also applies to the wisdom of God.

Louis Berkhof defines divine wisdom as "that perfection of God whereby He applies His knowledge to the attainment of His ends in a way which glorifies Him most."

No one who has read Scripture would deny that wisdom is an attribute of God. Here are some verses you can write down and look up later that show God as infinitely wise: Psalm 19:1-7; 33: 10-11; Romans 8:28; 11:33; 1 Cor. 2:7.

Now, let's quickly move on to our second heading. Again, these are all statements about God suggested by 1 John, and I've used them simply because they seemed handy categories for arranging the major attributes of God. Our first heading was "**God is Light**"—**borrowed from 1 John 1:5: "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all."**

II. GOD IS LORD

We move to the second major truth about God found in 1 John: God is Lord. Under this category, we would include God's omniscience, His omnipotence, His omnipresence, His justice, His wrath, and His sovereignty. We could spend hours on any one of those, but they're already at least familiar to most of you. So let me simply give you the list, along with some biblical texts that demonstrate each of those attributes, and then we'll wrap up for this week.

First, a familiar attribute that you're no doubt already somewhat familiar with:

1. Omniscience. Job 37:16 says God is "perfect in knowledge." First Samuel 16:7 says "God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." He knows our thoughts (Psalm 94:11). Jesus said God knows about every sparrow, and He even knows the number of hairs on our heads (Luke 12:7).

Usually at this point someone will make a joke about how much easier it is to count some people's hairs than others. But that misses the point. God doesn't *count* the hairs on our heads. He knows the number without counting.

He knows everything. That means He doesn't *learn* anything. Romans 11:34: "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" God doesn't need counselors or instructors; He knows everything that can be known, past, present, and future. Hebrews 4:13: "All things are naked and opened unto [His] eyes." Psalm 147:5: "His understanding is infinite."

Here's another familiar one:

2. Omnipotence. One of the most commonly used names of God in Scripture is "The Almighty" It is the name by which God introduced Himself to Abram when He made His covenant (Gen. 17:1).

Omnipotent literally means, "all powerful." In Romans 1:20, Paul says God's eternal power is evident in nature itself. But Scripture also explicitly attributes all power to God. Here are some texts to look up and ponder: Psalm 33:8-9; 62:11. Matthew 19:26 says, "With God all things are possible," and Luke 1:37 also states, "Nothing will be impossible with God." We affirm God's absolute omnipotence each time we pray as our Lord instructed us, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever" (Matt. 6:13).

So we don't need to belabor that. Here's another one:

3. Omnipresence. The classic text on God's omnipresence is Psalm 139. That psalm exalts God's omniscience and His omnipotence as well. Other verses on omnipresence are Acts 17:27-28; Jeremiah 23:24; and Hebrews 1:3. Here's another one:

4. Justice. That God is perfectly just is emphasized from the beginning of Scripture to the end. Here are a few verses:

- Deuteronomy 32:4: **"The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He."**
- Isaiah 30:18: **"The Lord is a God of justice."**
- Psalm 7:11: **"God is a righteous judge, and a God who has indignation every day."**

I've listed God's justice under the broad category of His lordship, because justice defines how He carries out His rule. Psalm 96:10: **"Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously."**

Everything God does is just. The next attribute on my list is a necessary corollary of divine justice—

5. Wrath. Because God is just and righteous, He *must* hate sin. Sin displeases Him. Scripture says it makes Him angry. Now, as I hinted at earlier, God's anger is not just a bad mood. His wrath against sin is as fixed and immutable as every other attribute of God.

Psalm 7:11 is translated like this in the King James Version: **"God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day."** Wrath is th most neglected attribute of

God in this generation. I wish we had time to delve into it in detail (and if I'm not mistaken, we did at least once in the past). But if you have a concept of God that excludes His utter hatred of sin and His anger at sinners, then you have a sinful concept of God—and He is angry at you for it.

God's unchanging wrath against sinners is affirmed in dozens of Bible verses, with expressions like "**fierce wrath**," "**burning wrath**," "**the fury of His wrath**," "**the pouring out of God's indignation**," "**fierce anger**," "**consuming fury**," and "**the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God**." Here are some texts to look up, if you want to study it further: Exod. 32:11; Deut. 9:7; 2 Chron. 24:18; 29:10; 30:8; 36:16 Ezra 5:12; 10:14; Job 20:23 Ps. 59:13; 78:31; Ezek. 22:31; Jn. 3:36; Rom. 1:18; 2:5; 9:22 Eph. 5:6; and Col. 3:6.

Most of the book of Revelation is about God pouring out His wrath on sinful humanity. This is a very crucial aspect of the God we worship.

Let me close with one more attribute that is already very familiar to you:

6. Sovereignty. You know I could dwell for hours on the sovereignty of God, and I wish we had time to do that. This is an incredibly rich truth about God, and yet it is the most difficult of all these attributes for most people to swallow. Yet if you can get this truth into your mind and heart, it will take you light years ahead in your relationship with God.

This goes to the very heart of the idea of Lordship. God is simply in charge of and in control of everything. That is what we mean when we say He is sovereign. It may seem at times as if things in this world are out of control, but we know from Scripture that everything that nothing ever takes God by surprise; nothing thwarts His eternal purpose; nothing threatens Him; nothing frustrates Him; and nothing

can derail any aspect of His plan. On the contrary, Scripture says (Romans 8:28) He makes all things work together for good.

That's the gist of what we mean when we say God is sovereign. I'm going to leave it at that for this week, and that's where we'll take up when we return next week.

I began with a quotation from Tozer, and I want to close with another one. Tozer wrote,

The man who comes to a right belief about God is relieved of ten thousand temporal problems, for he sees at once that these have to do with matters which at the most cannot concern him for very long; but even if the multiple burdens of time may be lifted from him, the one mighty single burden of eternity begins to press down upon him with a weight more crushing than all the woes of the world piled one upon another. That mighty burden is his obligation to God. It includes an instant and lifelong duty to love God with every power of mind and soul, to obey Him perfectly, and to worship Him acceptably. And when the man's laboring conscience tells him that he has done none of these things, but has from childhood been guilty of foul revolt against the Majesty in the heavens, the inner pressure of self-accusation may become too heavy to bear.

The gospel can lift this destroying burden from the mind, give beauty for ashes, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. But unless the weight of the burden is felt the gospel can mean nothing to the man; and until he sees a vision of God high and lifted up, there will be no woe and no burden. Low views of God destroy the gospel for all who hold them.¹⁰

10. Tozer, 10-11.

