

Wheelersburg Baptist Church

Life Application Sunday School Class

The Attributes of God Series

Session 7 – "The Love of God"

July 28, 2002

God's attributes are various aspects of who He is. In this series of lessons, we are considering the attributes of God to gain a true concept and knowledge of God by considering His self revelation in His Word. It is only by God's Spirit applying His Word to our hearts that we can know Him. When the true God is revealed to our hearts, it will produce a reverential fear and worship in our hearts. Such true worship is expressed in a confidence and faith in God, and in holy living.

In our second session, we examined the uniqueness of God. God is solitary, self existent, stands alone, needs nothing, is complete within Himself, superior to all, and has created all for Himself and for His good pleasure, and not out of necessity. God is self-sufficient.

In our third session, we contemplated the sovereignty of God, which is the exercise of His supremacy over all. God's sovereignty is an expression of His uniqueness, for He alone is supreme and holds absolute control over creation. He answers to none, does as He pleases and always as He pleases. None of His will is frustrated, and He brings all things to pass in accordance with His sovereign plan.

In our fourth session, we surveyed the holiness of God. TP Simmons states *"The holiness of God is His perfect moral and spiritual excellence. God is perfectly pure, sinless, and righteous in Himself. Holiness is the ground of all other moral attributes in God."*

We learned in our fifth session that God is unchangeable in His nature and purposes. The immutability of God is clearly stated and established in the Scriptures. Not only is God unchanging, the Scriptures affirm that His plan is immutable.

Where does God live? What does God know? What can God do? Last week in our sixth session we explored the wonders of God's omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence. He lives everywhere, He knows everything, and He can do anything.

Today, as our final teaching in this series, we are going to examine an attribute that is a bit more well known, or at least talked about more often. Many who think of God think of His love. Again, man has his ideas about such matters, but God has declared His truth about Himself in His word.

It is true that God loves everybody? I think most would say yes. But an even more revealing question is "Does God love everybody the same?" Let's start by looking at some of the verses that teach us about the love that God shows to everyone. God expresses love (as demonstrated in patience, forbearance, longsuffering, and goodness) to all, even to the unregenerate. One way He expresses that love is in meeting the needs of humanity. Turn to [Psalms 145:8-9; 15-16](#)

8 *The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.*

15 *The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time.* 16 *You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.* 17 *The LORD is righteous in all his ways*

and loving toward all he has made.

Just stop and ponder all of the good things in life. The beauty of a sunset; the refreshing fragrance in the air after a thunder shower, the rain that is life giving water from heaven to bring growth to plants that provide food for us. How about the joy and laughter in many lives, the enjoyment and blessing of loving and being loved? The gift of life itself. Every breath we breathe is a divine favor and blessing. The strength and ability to work and earn a living, to have a family and posterity. And for us as Americans, the liberties and freedom that we enjoy. All of this is an expression of God's love and mercy. It certainly is not what anyone deserves.

Listen to the words of Paul and Barnabas in [Acts 14:14-17](#)

Acts 14: 14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: 15 "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. 16 In the past, he let all nations go their own way. 17 Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy."

The happiness and joy that people experience in this life is a gift from God and an expression of His kindness and love. This expression of God's goodness and kindness to all is the basis that Jesus uses to tell us to love our enemies. Turn to [Matthew 5:43-48](#)

Mt 5: 43: 43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

This common love of God that we are speaking of is continually expressed to all men, despite their response. This love is also expressed by the active presence of God's people in the world. Consider the compassion, kindness, and goodness comes to this world through the love and concern of God's people. And this is as it should be. When we meet the practical needs of even our enemies, we are expressing the loving, merciful nature of God our Father. The sharing of the gospel is also an expression and proclamation of the love of God. Listen to these familiar verses:

John 3:16-17: 16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

So God is love, and He loves all. But what is man's response to the kindness and patience of God? It is indifference, rebellion and rejection of God. Because man is depraved and wicked, He despises and turns from God's love and goes his own way. Romans 1:21 says it this way:

Rom 1: 21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

And in Romans 2:4-6

Rom 2: ⁴ *Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?* ⁵ *But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.* ⁶ *God "will give to each person according to what he has done."*

Again, in Romans, chapter 3:10-12

Romans 3: ¹⁰ *As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹ there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. ¹² All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."*

So here is the picture. We are born into this world, and God gives us the gift of life. He pours out His mercy and compassion and goodness into our lives. But what is our response? Apart from a gracious working of His Spirit in our hearts, as wicked sinners, we don't thank Him and seek Him and give our lives to Him. No, we do our own thing, and take the very gifts that God gives us and use them purely for ourselves and our selfish desires.

Ephesians 2:1-3 states it this way:

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

Because God is love, He takes no pleasure in the judgment of the wicked, but His love for His holiness demands justice be served. God's judgment and hatred of evil doers is an ultimate expression of His love for His holiness. The paradox is that God shows love and kindness to those He will ultimately hate.

Again, in Romans 2: ⁵ *But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.* ⁶ *God "will give to each person according to what he has done."* ⁷ *To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. ⁸ But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. ⁹ There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; ¹⁰ but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. ¹¹ For God does not show favoritism.*

We could end the story here and declare that God could send all of us to eternal destruction and still be considered loving, and even merciful based on His goodness to us in this life. He does not immediately destroy the wicked as they turn against Him and refuse to submit to His law and Lordship. If it was His purpose, He could justly destroy and punish every human being for their sin and rejection of His love and kindness.

Yet our amazing God, in His great eternal plan, chooses to display His grace and glory in an even more astounding way. From this mass of sinful depraved humanity, He chooses and separates a people for His own, a people called to display His eternal grace and glory, called to be filled with His nature and to do good works for His honor. God bestows His saving love and grace on this chosen people, not on the basis of anything that they do or are, but on the basis of the good pleasure of His will and grace. These chosen

respond to His love because God brings life to their deadened heart so that they are able to respond to His effectual call to repentance and faith through believing the gospel. He opens their eyes so that they might recognize their utter hopeless condition and desperate need for a Savior. They turn from their sin flee to Christ as their only hope of protection against the judgment and wrath they deserve. God enables them to see and understand that Christ has borne their sin and punishment on the cross, and that He alone has satisfied the righteous requirement of the law that demands a holy sacrifice to satisfy God's holiness. Now this chosen seed, an elect from every people and nation, is brought into an intimate fellowship with this holy God. They experience not just His temporal blessing, but are now heirs of His eternal favor and mercy.

Ephesians 2:3-10

3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Titus 3:3-7

3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. ⁴ But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

We now love Him because He first loved us. He loved us while we were yet sinners. And this eternal, everlasting, saving love, that is based on God's own plan and desire, rescues us from eternal flames of destruction and transforms us into heirs of the kingdom of God.

Listen to II Timothy 1:8-10

8 So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, ⁹ who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, ¹⁰ but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

This saving love is eternal. It transcends time. The apostle Paul declares in Romans 8 that nothing can separate us from this love. If God has purposed to save us and has set His eternal love upon us, we are secure in that love, and it will protect us from all harm.

It was this divine love that was expressed in eternity past when He chose a people to give to His Son. The great love expressed within the trinity and given to us is expounded clearly in John 17. Jesus is in the last hours before His death, and He calls on His Father on behalf of His disciples.

"Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you

The cross was for the purpose of the Son bringing glory to the Father in the redemption of the Father's chosen.

² For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.

³ Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Jesus imparts an intimate relationship with the Father to those that the Father has chosen to give to His Son. This knowing of the Father through the Son is eternal life.

4 I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.

What was that work? It was to save and keep the Father's chosen by revealing the Father to them.

5 And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. 6 "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. 8 For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.

Notice that the evidence of being one of the Father's chosen is obedience to and acceptance of His word . Acceptance of the Word of God is the same as believing on Jesus Christ. To believe Christ is to believe and obey His Word.

9 I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. 10 All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.

Notice that as we obey the word, we bring glory to Christ, and that glory is an expression of the Father's love for His Son. This is an amazing truth. The Father uses us to bring glory to His Son as an expression of love towards His Son.

11 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

It is clear that Jesus is specifically speaking of His disciples. Again notice how those that belong to the Father have been given to the Son. We are His possessions. He has stamped us with His label of ownership, the Spirit of God, stating the we forever belong to Him.

13 "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. 14 I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. 15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. 17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. 19 For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

Notice what the Father uses to separate His chosen from the world – His Word, which is His truth. We are in the world, but we are distinct from it, just as Jesus was separate. Because Christ was fully separate from sinners, that is in His nature and actions, He was holy and therefore able to be the acceptable sacrifice for our sins that we might be separated from the world unto God. Notice the relationship of election and sanctification.

20 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: 23 I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Notice here that the love that we express for one another in the body of Christ is the same love that the Father has for the Son, and the Son has for the Father, and that same love that the Father has for us. And this great love of God is what makes us one with God and one with each other. This is why there is such severe chastisement and discipline in the scriptures for sins committed against the unity of the church.

24 "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

25 "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. 26 I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

Look closely at verse 26. Jesus has made the Father known to us so that the love the Father has for Christ will be in us and so that we might have Christ in us.

If the Father has saved you, it is for His purpose, which is to use you to display His love for His Son in our redemption. And Christ displayed His love for His Father by dying to redeem and keep those who the Father had given Him. This is the love of God. This is the love that the Apostle Paul wanted to know more and more. This is the love that Paul wanted the believers to know. This is the love that will draw men to Christ, and that will set them free from their sins. This is the love that is expressed in the message of the gospel.

The application is apparent. This is our motivation to serve Him, to live for Him, to enjoy Him, to praise Him. As we love those outside the kingdom, we express the nature and character of God, for He does the same. And even more so, as we love one another, we are being used by the Father to express His eternal love for the Son. The glory that we bring to Jesus Christ by our response and actions is an expression of the Father's love for His Son. When we love one another, we are loving those who Christ purchased with His life blood for the Father.

Here is an analogy. One of the best ways to show appreciation and love for a person is to be kind to and love their children. We show our love for God by loving His children. And how can we express God's love for the world? Certainly by showing kindness by meeting practical needs. But we also have the great joy and blessing of proclaiming the gospel, that good news that Christ came and died for sinners, to purchase the chosen people for His Father.

This understanding of the love of God raises our obedience from mere duty to a higher purpose, that of being used by the Father to express His love for the Son, and as a means for the Son to bring glory to His Father. There is no greater joy. Why do we forgive others? It is because we have been forgiven. When we forgive, we are expressing to others the love and mercy that the Father has shown us. It is only because of the love of God that is shed abroad in our hearts that we are able to show such love towards even our enemies. And if we don't find it within ourselves to show mercy, and love others, even sacrificially, then according to I John, we don't have this redemptive love of God within us.

So the next time you are wronged, and tempted to yield to hurt feelings and resentment, consider that you have before you an opportunity to instead be an expression of the Father's love, the very love that He has for His Son. The love that you show is evidence that you have been chosen by God to be a vessel of His love. Instead of yielding to those selfish desires, allow the purpose of your salvation to be fulfilled. You will find that there is no greater place of joy and contentment in walking in love. Because Christ died for our sins, we have been set free from our selfishness and now have the capacity, privilege, and joy of living a life full of love for Him and others. And this is the fulfillment of the righteousness of God in our lives, loving God with our whole being, and others as ourselves.