

The Attributes of God
Attention All Theologians
Psalm 8: He is Mindful of Us

Eugene Peterson – A Long Obedience in the Same Direction.

One of the afflictions of pastoral work has been to listen, with a straight face, to all the reasons people give for not going to church: There was a time when I responded, but if I showed the inadequacy of one excuse, three more popped up in its place. Now I simply listen (with a straight face) and go home and pray that person will one day find the one sufficient reason for going to church, which is God.

Why a series on the Attributes of God???

Because God is the ultimate reason for our being here, in church, this morning. He is the ultimate reason for us to wake up each morning.

TOZER – often quoted by others...

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God....Were we able to extract from any person a complete answer to the question, "What comes into your mind when you think about God?" we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that woman, man, or child.

Do you believe that? It may sound odd, or it may not be something that you've ever even considered, but I agree with it 100%.

Life and ministry experience has shown me that Tozer is right. What we think about God shapes every area of our lives, whether we know it or not. Our thoughts about God are like the rudder of our soul. They are the default GPS for our lives – they tell us where we are and can indicate where we will end up.

This means that what we believe about God, i.e. our THEOLOGY, is important.

How many of you consider yourself to be a theologian?

Get your hands up because you are ALL theologians, and you are doing theology all day long.

EX: when you complain about the weather, you are doing theology

When you worry, you are doing theology – it's bad theology, but it is theology

What is THEOLOGY – "God talk"

Why STUDY THEOLOGY?? Why study the nature and character of God?

Just listen to Joni Erickson Tada as she shares of her journey following a diving accident at age 17. It left her a quadriplegic.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/reflections-on-50th-anniversary-of-my-diving-accident/>

Throughout my 20s, I became immersed in Bible study with these same friends—mostly character studies about God, especially his sovereignty. When it came to my accident, I had to know whether the buck stopped with him, and if it did, why didn't he prevent my accident? Around my big farmhouse table in Maryland, we'd tackle books like Loraine Boettner's *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* and others by Martyn Lloyd-Jones, J. Gresham Machen, and J. I. Packer.

I now laugh as I picture myself with these books on my music stand, flipping pages this way and that with my mouth stick. But decades of study, paralysis, pain, and cancer have taught me to say, "It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees" (Ps. 119:71). I won't rehearse all of suffering's benefits here. Many of you know them by heart. Like the way God uses it to shape Christ's character in us (Rom. 8:28-29). Or how it produces patience (Rom. 5:4). Or how it refines our faith like gold (1 Pet. 1:7). Or gives us a livelier hope of heaven (James 1:12). And on and on.

My friends, If Joni found solace and a foundation for her life through the study of the character of God, then it seems to me that we would do well to follow her example.

You may think that “theology” is dull and dry. Who needs it? Just ask Joni

You may think theology is irrelevant and doesn’t deal with real life problems – Just ask Joni

Don’t fall for the lie that assumes that a study of the nature and character of God will be impractical and irrelevant for life. It is the most practical project anyone can engage in.

Packer:

Knowing about God is crucially important for the living of our lives. As it would be cruel to an Amazonian tribesman to fly him to London, put him down without explanation in Trafalgar Square and leave him, as one who knew nothing of English or England, to fend for himself, so we are cruel to ourselves if we try to live in this world without knowing about the God whose world it is and who runs it. The world becomes a strange, mad, painful place, and life in it a disappointing and unpleasant business, for those who do not know about God. **Disregard the study of God, and you sentence yourself to stumble and blunder through life blindfolded, as it were, with no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you. This way you can waste your life and lose your soul.**

<http://bootsandbible.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Knowing-God-JI-Packer.pdf>

Let me tell you right now that in this series you’ll be getting large doses of J.I. Packer and A.W. Tozer.

Two of my most well-worn books over the years have been KNOWING God – Packer and THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY – Tozer. I HIGHLY RECOMMEND BOTH OF THEM

PREFACE (1993) KNOWING God - Packer

Packer was shocked at how his book, released in 1973, became such a best seller.

Preface 1973 edition

The conviction behind the book is that ignorance of God- ignorance both of his ways and of the practice of communion with him-lies at the root of much of the church’s weakness today. Two unhappy trends seem to have produced this state of affairs.

Trend one is that Christian minds have been conformed to the modern spirit: the spirit, that is, that spawns great thoughts of man and leaves room for only small thoughts of God. The modern way with God is to set him at a distance, if not to deny him altogether; and the irony is that modern Christians, preoccupied with maintaining religious practices in an irreligious world, have themselves allowed God to become remote....

Trend two is that Christian minds have been confused by the modern skepticism. Nor is this all. Skepticism about both divine revelation and Christian origins has bred a wider skepticism which abandons all idea of a unity of truth, and with it any hope of unified human knowledge;

Ideas have consequences and bad ideas have victims. There are too many victims of the so called “wisdom” of our sophisticated age, and it’s really sad.

<https://albertmohler.com/2018/09/20/briefing-9-20-18/>

(from Knowing God...)

On January 7, 1855, the minister of New Park Street Chapel, Southwark, England, opened his morning sermon as follows:

It has been said by someone that “the proper study of mankind is man.” I will not oppose the idea, but **I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God’s elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead.** The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father.

Those words were preached by a 20 year old C.H. Spurgeon. (What were your lofty thoughts at age 20?)

That was 1855, today is 2018. How do we even approach a conversation or study of the attributes of God in our day and age?

By plunging into the wisdom that has guided people for thousands of years – the scripture of the Old and New Testament.

Here's a maxim I learned years ago and it applies especially to the area of theology: **If it's true it ain't new; If it's new it ain't true.**

There is much about life, technology and areas of science where there are new and true discoveries, but when it comes to the basic nature of God and His creatures – male and female- the basic principles are true and NOT new. The core understandings of God, man, and eternity are eternal and unchanging.

So, to get a good grasp of the foundational issue of the nature and character of God, we need to spend less time listening to the voices of this age and listen to the Voice of scripture.

Five basic truths, five foundation principles of the knowledge about God which Christians have, will determine our course throughout. They are as follows: PACKER

1. **God has spoken to man, and the Bible is his Word, given to us to make us wise unto salvation. 2 Tim 3:15**
2. **God is Lord and King over his world; he rules all things for his own glory, displaying his perfections in all that he does, in order that men and angels may worship and adore him.**
3. **God is Savior, active in sovereign love through the Lord Jesus Christ to rescue believers from the guilt and power of sin, to adopt them as his children and to bless them accordingly. Eph 1-2**
4. **God is triune; there are within the Godhead three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and the work of salvation is one in which all three act together, the Father purposing redemption, the Son securing it and the Spirit applying it. Eph 1-2**

5. Godliness means responding to God's revelation in trust and obedience, faith and worship, prayer and praise, submission and service. Life must be seen and lived in the light of God's Word. This, and nothing else, is true religion. Titus 2:11-3:5

If we are those who have an interest in spiritual things, then we need to be grounded in a right knowledge of God.

In A Preface to Christian Theology, John Mackay illustrated two kinds of interest in Christian things by picturing persons sitting on the high front balcony of a Spanish house watching travelers go by on the road below. The "balconees" can overhear the travelers' talk and chat with them; they may comment critically on the way that the travelers walk; or they may discuss questions about the road, how it can exist at all or lead anywhere, what might be seen from different points along it, and so forth; but they are onlookers, and their problems are theoretical only. The travelers, by contrast, face problems which, though they have their theoretical angle, are essentially practical-problems of the "which-way-to-go" and "how-to-make-it" type, problems which call not merely for comprehension but for decision and action too.

When it comes to the Person of God and Attributes of God we are not called to be balconees, but travelers.

Psalm 34:1-8 – O taste and see that the Lord is good

Packer p 36 And this must be our attitude too. Our aim in studying the Godhead must be to know God himself better. Our concern must be to enlarge our acquaintance, not simply with the doctrine of God's attributes, but with the living God whose attributes they are. As he is the subject of our study, and our helper in it, so he must

himself be the end of it. We must seek, in studying God, to be led to God. It was for this purpose that revelation was given, and it is to this use that we must put it.

HOW?? It is that we turn each truth that we learn about God into matter for meditation before God, leading to prayer and praise to God. We have some idea, perhaps, what prayer is, but what is meditation?

Meditation is the activity of calling to mind, and thinking over, and dwelling on, and applying to oneself, the various things that one knows about the works and ways and purposes and promises of God. It is an activity of holy thought, consciously performed in the presence of God, under the eye of God, by the help of God, as a means of communion with God.

So far I haven't listed any of the attributes that we'll be discussing, but I want to conclude with one that may not be so obvious.

God IS MINDFUL OF US and He hasn't snuffed us out yet. (He is patient) Psalm 8:3-4

That is amazing. Have you ever had a Psalm 8 moment as you were gazing at the stars? WHAT IS MAN??

God's weakness for mankind is the only eccentricity of our great God, and I say that with a great deal of reverence. I can understand why God did most everything that I know He did. It is easy to see why He might do some things, but it is extremely difficult to understand why God should love mankind and why man should be such a fixture in God's mind. It is one of the strangest phenomena in the universe. – Tozer : A Disruptive Faith.

You should expect God to disrupt your life. He doesn't make himself known to be an accessory.

He's not just mindful in an intellectual way, but in a visceral way. There is something about mankind that moves God. (Tozer)

He is mindful of us as a mother is mindful of a child.

EX: HAVE YOU BEEN AROUND A NEW MOTHER WITH HER NEWBORN BABY? I visited Joni and Blake last week. We've had 6 kids and 15 grandkids. I know what that mindfulness is like.

He is mindful of our frailty and He still loves us.

He is mindful of our ignorance and he still loves us.

He is mindful of our iniquity and He still loves us.

AMAZING LOVE, HOW CAN IT BE, that thou my God shouldst die for me?

The heaviest obligation lying upon the Christian Church today is to purify and elevate her concept of God until it is once more worthy of Him - and of her. Tozer

When it comes to God, Jesus is the exact representation of his nature. Heb 1.

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. **3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature and upholds all things by the word of His power.**

GOD IS SO MINDFUL OF US THAT HE CAME TO DWELL AMONG US.

God didn't simply send prophets or teachers; He sent His Son.

He is so mindful of us that He gave us tangible reminders of His grace and love...

Come to the table..... If you discern Jesus and His work through the gospel and elements presented here. Don't come if you don't know Christ or are fighting against His revealed will in your life.

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