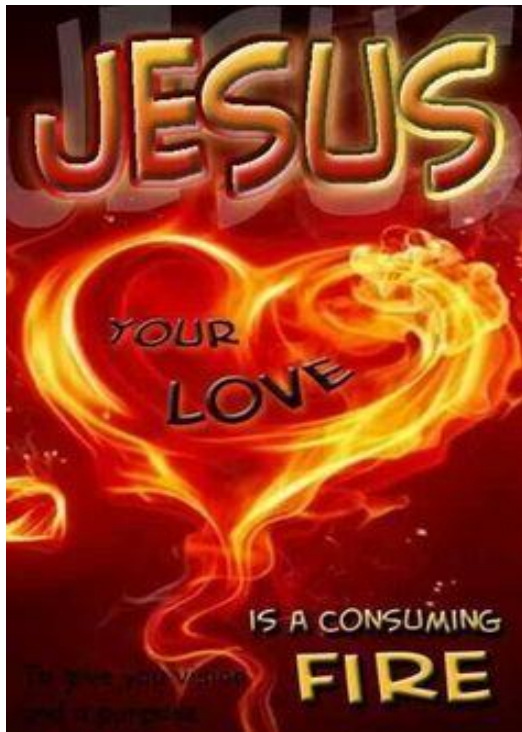


GOD IS LOVE...BUT ...A CONSUMING FIRE

By Pastor Mike Taylor



7 “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:7-10)

Most people agree that for salvation a Christian needs more than just a theoretical knowledge of God. Over the course of our lives, we increase our knowledge of Him through life's varied experiences. We also come to greater understanding by studying God's Word. In both areas we can be snared by a major problem that traps many religious people in this world: emphasizing one of His attributes at the expense of others.

I have a Roman Catholic friend who lives in France, who is focused on this one attribute of God, that God is love, and since God is a loving God, all is good, and I fear that he believes that a loving God will not send anyone to a burning hell. He hasn't come right and said it that I can recall, but he definitely “hung up” on this

one attribute and cannot see other attributes of the God we serve.

God is not one dimensional. Though we should study each of His attributes and think on them separately, we should not separate them from the complete personality that God is. Why? It distorts the model we are to imitate and grow into, and it can radically alter our expectations of what He will do. If He does not do what we expect, we are liable to become grieved because God “let us down.”

For instance, the Bible emphasizes that God is merciful and full of grace. We are very thankful that God is a merciful and loving God, but God is much more than one or two dimension of His character. We should not make the mistake besides all of the many attributes that are what our God is, we should not overlook the fact the God is also just. If we do, His mercy can become a justification for failure to overcome besetting sins. Neither God's mercy nor justice can be separated from all that He is. Both are harmoniously applied to each situation and person He judges.

SOME OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

God is also a God of compassion. Some see God as so compassionate that He disregards the causes of some horrible problems and trials we endure in this life. If God acted in such a manner, flaws with painful results would go uncorrected.

Make no mistake about it, God will discipline those He loves.

5 “And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.” (Hebrews 12:5-

Some so erroneously believe that God created His creation and then just walked away. God is very much involved with the plan to redeem mankind and nothing escapes His gaze or His knowledge.

Still others construe God's sovereignty so that it is greatly diminished His goodness and portrays Him as rigid and inflexible. This kind of person lives with a guilt-ridden, fearful and discouraged life, thinking he will never please Him.

6 “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6)

But probably the most familiar of God's attributes is found in the scripture used to open this message in 1John 4:8 “God is love”. John states a fact, not a definition of God's essential nature. If John had declared that love is what God is, we would be forced to conclude that God is what love is. Literally, if God is love, then literally, love is God and we are forced to worship love as the only True God. This would mean that God and love are identical. Fortunately for mankind, the Bible reveals that God is a multidimensional personality and not only just love. If we eliminate the idea of God's complex personality, denying all of His other attributes, save one, the remaining attribute becomes God, and is a very subtle form of idolatry. This is NOT what God the Father is, or our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE WHOLENESS OF GOD

The wholeness of God is a concept that we must come to understand, that God is more than one or two attributes. It's an important subject because some have become enslaved to words. We must give greater weight to meanings. The Bible speaks that God is love and light.

3 “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” (1st John 1:3-5)

The Bible also speaks of our Jesus as being the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

6 “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.” (John 14:6-7)

We understand the words in the same sense as when we say of a man, "He is kindness itself." Of course, we do not suggest that kindness and the man are identical, and no one misunderstands our intention. Because any man is more than just kindness, even the best man. So it is even more so with a infinite God we serve.

The words "God is love" mean that love is an essential attribute of God. Love is something true of God, but it is not all of God. He has many other attributes. He is self-existent, eternal, merciful, full of grace, immutable, just, omnipotent, omniscient and many more things besides, but the greatest of all, is God is Holy.. Because God is Holy and immutable, He always acts as God, and because He is a whole and perfect personality, He never suspends one of His attributes to exercise another.

God is not man, with all of his imperfections. God is truth and never acts out of irritation, resentment, suddenly moody, or acts on a whim. He always acts in light of all the facts. King David declared in the Psalms:

7 “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

8 The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.” (Psalm 19:7-11)

David also proclaimed further in another chapter in the Psalms :

5 “Remember his marvelous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;

7 He is the Lord our God: his judgments are in all the earth.” (Psalm 105:5,7)

The beauty, harmony, balance and providence evident throughout the earth are witnesses of the wisdom, unity, harmony, and yes, the love in which He always acts.

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God proclaims:

23 “Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches:

24 But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.” (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

HOW DO WE COME TO KNOW GOD AND HOW IMPORTANT IS IT?

“These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” (John 17:1-3)

So how important is it to know God? As mentioned here, eternal life is knowing God.

It implies an intimate relationship with God that matures over a lifetime. Each party knows each other well, as familiarly as marriage partners.

1 “Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.

2 After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

3 Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.” (Hosea 6:1-3)

So what of our God? Can we know Him. Yes, through His only begotten Son, can we come to know a loving, but fearfully powerful God.

6 “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” (Romans 5:6-10)

God loved us so much, that He sent His only Son, to die in our place....

“For God so loved the world that HE GAVE His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.

17, God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but the world through Him might be saved.

18, He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:16-18) “caps my emphasis”

The question was, “how can we come to know God?” The Apostle John gave a quick and concise way we can know God and know Him intimately...through His Son..

“Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.” (1st John 2:23)

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” (Romans 5:1-9)

GOD IS JUST AND WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE

With all the attributes spoke briefly about an all power God, and our soon coming King, God is not some grandfatherly type living in the sky who is nothing but love, love, love. Although He embodies this attributes, the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.

8 “Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.

9 Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.

10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.” (Proverbs 9:8-10)

One might wonder why fear is included. It is because fear represents the specific attitude required to make the best use of God's law and bring the sinner to conviction through the Holy Spirit. Know this, reader. We don't come to God because we love God..we come to Him because we love ourselves. Love for Him comes later when we realize what He has done for us.

10 “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

11, There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

12, They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” (Roman 3:10-12)

There is an element of fear to realize that we are in rebellion against God because of our sinful nature. Fear brings Godly conviction and I've seen men shake with the power of God upon them, as they are under God's conviction of their sins. The choice of life or death, darkness or light, eternity in heaven or in hell, drives those under this conviction to a Godly realization of their vulnerability to a Holy God who will judge them, even though He loves them. Paul speaks of this along with the Apostle Peter:

5 “But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)

6 God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world? (Roman 3:5-6)

And Peter wrote:

5 “Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

6 For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.” (1st Peter 4:5-6)

In addition, remember that wisdom is right application of knowledge and understanding. If fear is not present, we will not even start to build towards faith, hope, and love. Godly fear gets us jump-started, gets us going to do what is right.

GOD IS LONG SUFFERING, BUT....

Although God is a loving God, He is patient and not willing that any of His creation perish.

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)

But even a long suffering King of the Universe, patience does eventually run out. We have many instances found in your Bible of a longsuffering God. Like when God gave the inhabitants in Canaan 400 years to change and repent, but sent Israel into the Promise Land and commanded them during their Exodus to destroy them:

“These are the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the Lord God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth.

2 Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree:

3 And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place” (Deuteronomy 12:2-3)

Just showing the fear of God and what God has done to bring His wrath on unrepentant mankind should give anyone pause and have reverence, and a Godly fear of an Almighty God who when He has finally run out of patience, will utterly destroy those who in rebellion against Him. I know this will upset my Catholic friend who I debate on a local forum, but God is not only a God of love, He is also a God of judgment in His righteous indignation. But let us speak of the coming wrath that God will unleash on mankind in the near future.

THE WRATH OF A LOVING GOD

23 “ To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:

26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

27 And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

29 For our God is a consuming fire.”

There are a huge amount of verses in your Bible that speaks of the attributes of a Holy God. Yes, God is love, but He is also greatly to be feared. God will pass judgment on the whole of mankind and destroy all rebellion on this earth what is called the coming Tribulation. The final book of your Bible speaks of the wrath of God. You know that God of love? Although He is not willing any should perish, God gives you a choice. It's called your own freewill. God does not coerce anyone into loving Him or obeying Him...He gives us a choice of heaven or hell. He doesn't send anybody to hell...you do.

John sees the ultimate fate of all who refuse the free offer of grace and mercy through our Lord Jesus Christ:

11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:11-15)

GOD IS LOVE, YES, BUT HE IS SO MUCH MORE

We admire good qualities in others and wish we had them. But we realize that the same people who have these good qualities lack others. Our God, though, has every good quality to the ultimate degree, and every attribute works in perfect and faithful harmony.

Studying God in His wholeness should teach us humility, caution in speech and action and a deep reverence of Him. Too often God's superiority overwhelms us when we compare it to our own state. Though we are imperfect and limited in this life, we should not undervalue our current level of growth. Don't allow God's incomparable perfection to derail your progress. Growth in godly character and personality is our calling—we are to be like Him!

Human life is a beginning: God made us in His image and is transforming us into the image of His Son. This process requires our cooperation in striving to "put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" ([Colossians 3:10](#)). This is His will. And in bringing us to His perfection, He reveals His whole nature so we can know it and allow Him to reproduce it in us.

To my friend, the Catholic online, God is love, that is true...BUT our God is a consuming FIRE. May we possess a Godly fear and reverence and not reject so great a salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This is pastor Mike Taylor, praying you know the REAL God in Spirit and in Truth. If you need prayer, counseling, or just a listening ear, email me at realteam1999@sbcglobal.net...God bless you all.

TILL WE MEET AT JESUS FEET