



An undenominational publication devoted
to the teachings of Jesus and His apostles,
and dedicated to those who seek the truth.

Volume 8, Number 3

May & June 2012

Theme: *What You Need To Know About God*

God Is Love!

From the day that we're born we want to be loved, but as time passes we often discover that love isn't so easy to obtain. Even if we grow up in a loving home, we still find the world of children to be rough and tumble in more ways than mere physical spills and scrapes — we begin taking a constant barrage of disrespect and abuse by others — other children, impatient adults, and other meanies. And as we make mistakes, we ourselves sometimes join in with internal, critical remarks to self — often learning to not love ourselves (and if I can't love me, who can?). As we grow older, we sin and begin to believe that not even God could love us.



But because we crave to be loved, we work pretty hard at being loved, doing all manner of things (some crazy, some immoral) so that someone will love us. Even so, we find our efforts are mostly just temporary. I'll leave it to your own honesty to back me up on this. You didn't think you were alone to think this way, did you?

But the Gospel is good news! You are loved. You are not beyond God's great love. And it's not a love like you've known in other areas of life. It's unearned. It's not turned away by our mistakes or imperfections; it has our best interests at heart. "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." (John 3:16) This love is one that is so great that we must stretch our imagination to grasp it: "... so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ." (Ephesians 3:17-19) Here's the love we've always wanted — deep, full, sacrificial and steadfast. It is a love so big that it compels us and motivates us to change our lives. Tell people about God's love: "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. . . . Great is Your faithfulness." (Lamentations 3:22-24) Now, isn't that good news?

— Park Linscomb, Minister, *Church of Christ, Manchester, New Hampshire*

The Holiness of God

In scripture God's description of Himself is that He is "holy". (Leviticus 11:44; 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15) From a root word meaning "pure" or "devoted," holy as referring to God is found commonly in the Old Testament. He is called "the Holy One of Israel," and "the Holy God". The Bible says that "His Name is Holy."

"Your ways, O God, are holy. What god is so great as our God?"

Psalm 77:14

"Exalt the Lord our God and worship at His holy mountain, for the Lord our God is holy."

Psalm 99:9

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory"

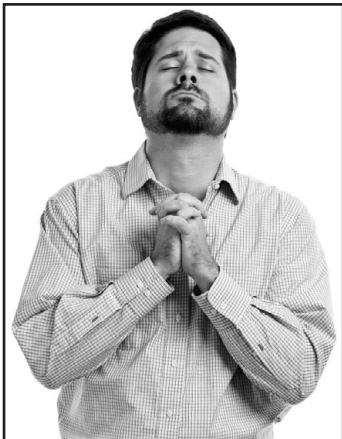
Isaiah 6:3

"Your eyes are too pure to look on evil"

Habakkuk 1:13

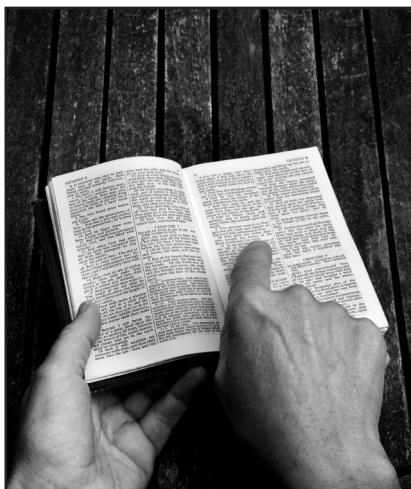
God truly manifests all the attributes of holiness. He is pure – sinless in word and action. He lives in unapproachable light. (1 Timothy 6:16) He is devoted – He sustains humanity providing a place for us in eternity with Him. (John 14:1,2) God is holy in His intentions – He operates from a heart of love, so His actions are always fair and just, even if we don't perceive that justice in our time.

But what good is the holiness of God if He cannot share it with humanity? Is it possible for Him to transfer that holy quality to others? In Christ, God has designed the way to allow men to be assimilated into His holiness. Scripture declares: "God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness" (Hebrews 12:11). God has provided the cleansing through Christ that will make us holy. We can share the holiness of God! God Himself calls men and women to His pure and devoted service. We don't have to clean ourselves up, but God is able to do this. Through obedience to the Gospel - repentance, (turning away from sin), immersion in water for forgiveness of sin (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38-39) and a heart tuned to obey God, each of us may be transformed by God to become His holy people. (1 Peter 2:4-5) Remember: "Without holiness no one will see the Lord." (Hebrews 12:14)



— Andre' King, Minister, *South Rd Church of Christ,*
Farmington, Connecticut

The Justice of God



Justice is a fairly simple concept. It is receiving just punishment for crimes committed or an earned reward for a job well done.

In the case of mankind, sin is the greatest crime. God is holy. He cannot have a relationship with sin. Isaiah 59:1-2 states, “Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.” It is our sin that separates us from God. Justice demands payment for sin. Judgment can only be satisfied when the penalty for the crime is paid. Romans 3:23 tells us that “. . . all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God,” and that “. . . the wages of sin is death...” (Romans 6:23) God has set a date for judgment: “For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the Man He has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising Him from the dead.” (Acts 17:31)

I am thankful that Paul finishes the thought in Romans 6:23 with, “...but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 3:25-26 states, “God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood. He did this to demonstrate His justice. . . at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.” 1 John 2:3 reminds us that, “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.” Thanks be to God that Jesus paid that price and opens the way to God. He fulfills the demands of God’s justice for those who choose to follow Him.

— Jay Repecko, Minister, *Church of Christ, Caribou, Maine*

The Coming Wrath of God

As long as ministers and authors continue to proclaim a God of fluff and gentility, they ignore the holy and loving God revealed in Scripture. The Bible reveals that creation was placed under God's judgment and curse when sin entered the world (Genesis 3:12-19). The curse is one of God's ways to reveal His wrath concerning the sinfulness of fallen humanity. We may protest and complain that the curse is an overkill, but we need to remember that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all (I John 1:5). Our Creator cannot have fellowship with us in our sin.

God isn't interested in fine tuning our lives; He is interested in forgiving our sins. Jesus wants to rescue us from the coming wrath of God (1 Thessalonians 1:10). However, everyone must be willing to personally receive this wonderful gift; otherwise they will experience the ultimate wrath of God that will be poured out when Jesus returns. II Thessalonians 1:7-9 states it clearly: "This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with His powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power." Our heavenly Father loves us and wants us to be saved. "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." (II Peter 3:9)

Please contact us to learn how you can have assurance that you can avoid the ultimate display of God's wrath when His Son returns.

—Jim Crisp, Minister, *Church of Christ*, Waterbury, Connecticut

Faith That Saves Is Faith That Obeys

Obedience is an essential requirement of all who would follow Christ. And not just afterward, as if we are called first to believe and then to obey. *Obedience is the very essence of believing.* It is what belief is all about.

When I am teaching about faith, I usually say that faith has three elements: (1) an **intellectual** element (we must believe in something; this is the gospel); (2) an **emotional** element (the content of that gospel must touch us personally); and (3) **commitment** (we must give ourselves to Jesus in personal and often costly discipleship). It is in this last area that obedience is so critical. For, *if obedience is not present we have not committed ourselves to Christ*, even though we may believe in Him in some sense. And without that commitment we are not saved; we are not true Christians.

— James Montgomery Boice, Romans. Volume 2 p. 695. Baker Book House, 1997.

The Forgiveness of God



“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” – Psalm 103:12

In reading the Gospels, one cannot help being awed by the miracles of Jesus Christ. As was reported to John the Baptist, we see on every page that, “The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.” (Matthew 11:5) There is, however, one miracle that stands above them all—the divine act of the forgiveness of our sins.

Forgiveness is not normal. As human beings, our natural reaction to hurt or pain is retaliation, revenge and a grudge. Storied feuds like the Hatfield’s and McCoy’s have played out between neighbors, coworkers and nations since Cain and Abel (Genesis 4). Forgiveness is not the hallmark of fallen man, but of the divine nature of Jehovah, which is why the forgiveness of God takes hold of our hearts. We know that we are seeing acts of divine love (Exodus 34:6-7).

We are utterly incapable of undoing our sin. In the age of reset buttons, reboots and the ability to hit “refresh” when things go wrong, we are used to finding quick fixes to our mistakes and glitches. But what about matters of the soul? There is no way to unspeak a harsh word, to untell a lie, or to pretend an abuse, a war or a theft did not really happen. As Shakespeare’s Hamlet reminds us, we cannot simply wash our hands of the stains of sin. In our sin, we need divine intervention.

This is where God works His greatest miracle. What we could not remove, God washes away (Hebrews 10:19-22). What we could not pay for, He paid for by divine redemption (Ephesians 1:7). When we could not turn away God’s wrath, He made atonement through the death of His Son (Romans 3:21-26). Perhaps most astounding of all, He loved us before we loved Him and worked for our forgiveness while we were still holding grudges (Romans 5:6-8). Praise God!

Have you done what you need to do to accept God’s invitation to forgive your sins? Find out what to do. Ask for the free materials on the back page of this issue of “*Christ for Today*”.

— James Glascock, Minister, *Church of Christ*, Troy, New York

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The Grace of God

We can talk about grace with all kinds of definitions and examples but we don't really understand it until we are the recipients of a true act of grace. Somebody does something for us that is unexpected, costly perhaps, and perfectly suited to our need. We are immediately humbled, crushingly humbled, and our feeling of gratitude is truly beyond words.

The meaning of grace overlaps the meaning of words like generosity, mercy, and forgiveness. Grace, however, has an element implicit in it that those words don't necessarily carry: *love*. I can extend mercy from an indifferent heart; I can forgive merely as a way of "cleaning house." But in those instances, nobody would have characterized me as extending grace or being gracious.

God's great love for us means His grace reaches out to us in a multitude of ways.

The design of this world and our universe is so much more than it needed to be, but it reflects His nature and is beautifully grand for our appreciation. God didn't have to put immortal souls in us, but because of His grace we can share in His nature, for we are made in His image. God didn't have to provide such a costly remedy for our sin (the death of His Son Jesus), but His justice required a full payment for sins. Grace paid the price for us so we could live with Him in heaven.

A nuance of grace that we can't leave out is related to words like beauty, loveliness, charm or winsomeness. Gracefulness is inherently attractive, and is indicative of orderliness, purpose and self-control. God is certainly One to display those attributes, and in calling us to Himself, He asks us to develop His traits in our daily lives.

Perhaps the most illustrative example of grace is found in the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15. In spite of his son's disrespect and failures, the father welcomed the prodigal son back with celebration. It was a merciful, beautiful thing.

Grace does that. God does that, too.



***It is by grace
you have been
saved, through
faith — and
this not from
yourselves, it is
the gift of God***

Ephesians 2:8

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