

THE WRATH OF GOD

Psalm 7

Intro: Two weeks from today in our Sunday School lessons we are going to begin the study of *the Doctrines of Grace*. This is the title given to the doctrines which help us to understand the nature of salvation. We will begin with *the doctrine of Total Depravity*, which shows the nature of man in his sin. Once we understand that doctrine, then we see why salvation has to be the way that it is: *a work of God from start to finish!* And one thing that always impresses people when they begin to understand the salvation which we have in Christ, is that there is a marvelous harmony among the truths--election, the purpose of Christ's death, the work of the Spirit in drawing us to Christ, and then the perseverance with which every true believer pursues the Lord in his salvation. It all fits together in a marvelous way.

The same can said about the attributes of God which we are presently considering each Sunday morning. They all fit together. There is a wonderful harmony among the characteristics of God's nature. Sin has wrought havoc with us, but God is without sin, absolutely holy in every sense of the word, and so there is a perfection about His nature that you will not find in any of us human beings who have suffered, and are suffering the effects of sin. And it is important for us to understand this about God's nature, that it is harmonious in every part, absolutely perfect in every way.

I say this because my subject for today is, *The Wrath of God*. Many who claim to be Christians have trouble with this attribute of God. They say that it is inconceivable that a God of love and grace and mercy, could also be a God of wrath. But they apparently have not stopped to recognize that it is the wrath of God that enables Him to express His love and grace and mercy. Those characteristics in God are the reason that all of us are not facing the awfulness of God's wrath.

Furthermore, in the past two Sunday mornings we have learned that God is righteous and holy. Is it then not to be expected that a righteous God would be angry about all unrighteousness in this universe which He has created? How could He be righteous, perfectly righteous (as He is), if He were not angry about sin? Can a holy God look with only mercy upon sin? Will He not, by the very fact that He is holy, be angry about sin, and be determined to punish it, all sin? God is the Judge of all men, and it is a source of great comfort to us all that, being holy, He will always do what

is right. That was the basis of Abraham's prayer for Sodom in Genesis 18. It was that He would not destroy Sodom if only ten righteous people were there. God is a God Who cannot tolerate sin. And the Bible makes it very clear that He intends to have a "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." That is what the Apostle Peter said in 2 Peter 3:13. The full verse says this:

Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

And then Peter followed it with this in verse 14:

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless (2 Pet. 3:14).

The whole Bible is a story of a righteous God dealing with the unrighteousness of men.

But I don't want to get ahead of myself in this, and so I am going to turn you to the Word of God because the Bible is our ultimate authority for what we are to believe about God. The Bible has not only been given to us by God, but it is a revelation of God. Do we want to know God? We turn to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to see how He is described there.

So the first question that we need to ask is, Does the Bible teach that there is such an attribute, such a characteristic in God, which can be described as *wrath*? Does God get angry? Is anger a part of the nature of God?

First of all, let us define what the Scriptures mean when they speak of the wrath, or anger, of the Lord.

I. THE MEANING OF WRATH, OR ANGER.

It speaks of indignation which arouses a person to action because of wrong and disgraceful things that are done. This can be very capricious with man, but not so with God. God's indignation is always righteous, and being the Judge of heaven and earth, His indignation always prompts Him to action. But usually it is only after exercising the most amazing patience. And when wickedness continues in defiance of what is right in God's sight, this is when we see God's judgment

One writer has described the wrath of God in the following words:

The divine wrath is to be regarded as the...expression of the divine nature, which is absolute holiness, manifesting itself against the

willful, high-handed, deliberate, inexcusable sin and iniquity of mankind. God's wrath is always regarded in the Scripture as the just and proper...expression of His holiness and righteousness which must always, under all circumstances, and at all costs, be maintained. It is therefore a righteous indignation and compatible with the holy and righteous nature of God (from ISBE, Electronic Database Copyright (C) 1996 by Biblesoft).

Wayne Grudem, in his *Systematic Theology*, p. 206, says that "God's wrath means that he intensely hates all sin." In the light of this definition we can see why the Father found such delight in His incarnate Son because it is written that our Lord "loved righteousness, and hated iniquity." And so it is also written, "Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Heb. 1:9).

We need to realize that sin does not have to be an outward, overt thing in order to provoke the judgment of the Lord. That is the reason we have prayers like those found in Psa. 19:14 and Psa. 139:23-24. God not only knows what we do, but He hears what we say, and even knows all of our thoughts. We as Christians often try to hide disobedience by a hypocritical performance, but God is never deceived by such behavior. God knows our hearts.

II. THE TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE AS TO THE WRATH OF GOD.

In many ways this is one of the easiest questions to answer from Scripture. Let us look first at:

A. Historical incidents in which we see the wrath of God.

What did God do when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden? He put them out and placed angelic beings there with a flaming sword so that they could not get back in again. They were shut out from the tree of life.

Why did the Lord destroy all but Noah, Noah's wife, their three sons and their wives with a flood that covered the whole earth. It was because He saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. That was surely evidence of the wrath of God.

Why did God destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah? Was it not because of the widespread practice in those cities of the sin which still

bears the name of Sodom? God said to Abraham that the sin of sodomy was “very grievous” to Him, and so He destroyed those cities. Fire and brimstone came from God out of heaven.

— Was it not because of the wrath of the Lord that the plagues were brought upon Egypt? And so we not see evidence of the wrath of God many times over as they journeyed from Egypt to Canaan? One example is when the children of Israel made and worshiped the golden calf while Moses was up on Mt. Sinai getting the Law. God, speaking to Moses, called them “a stiffnecked people,” and then He added,

Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation (Ex. 32:9-10).

And was it not because of God’s wrath that the whole generation of people who came out of Egypt never got into Canaan? God made them wander in the desert for forty years until that whole generation died. It was even because of the wrath of God that Moses did not get to lead the children of Israel into the promised land.

When Moses was delivering his last messages before he died, he reminded the people of what they had done:

7 Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the LORD thy God to wrath in the wilderness: from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the LORD.

8 Also in Horeb ye provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry with you to have destroyed you (Deut. 9:7-8).

The captivity of Israel by the Assyrians and the captivity of Judah by the Babylonians were evidences of the wrath of God. Those nations had become so idolatrous and disobedient in every way, even to killing the prophets who were sent to them, that God in His wrath brought their enemies into the land to take them away.

With all of these illustrations of the wrath of God, only in the matter of the captivities have I gotten beyond the book of Deuteronomy, and yet I haven’t included all of the illustrations of God’s wrath that are there. There are many, many more that could be mentioned.

— But now let us go on to:

B. Specific passages which speak of God's wrath.

Let me take a verse from our Scripture reading:

1. Psalm 7:11.

This is what David wrote in that Psalm:

11 God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.

And then David followed this verse with what we find in the next two verses.

12 If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready.

13 He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors (Psa. 7:12-13).

One reason I chose this Psalm was because of the comprehensive way that David was led by the Holy Spirit to speak of God's wrath. It is not the case that God is just angry when He brings judgment in some way. No, He is angry all of the time with *the wicked*. It is sin which continually displeases God. And when His patience has been exhausted because of man's persistence in sin, then judgment follows.

But we need to understand that God's wrath is not a theme that is limited to the OT. We find many references in the NT as well.

2. John 3:36.

We have another emphasis in the NT where the wrath of God is emphasized. For example, in the latter part of John 3 we have words which were spoken by John the Baptist. And this is what he said:

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:36).

It is the knowledge of the wrath of God against sin which is intended to make us realize our need of salvation. I doubt if we can really comprehend the doctrine of eternal punishment unless we understand the holiness of God and His hatred of sin.

3. Romans 1:18.

The same idea is found in Romans where the Apostle Paul had much to

say about the wrath of God. E.g., Rom. 1:18,

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

4. Ephesians 5:6-7.

In Eph. 5 Paul mentioned many sin from verse 3 through verse 5, and then he added,

6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them (Eph 5:6-7).

5. Revelation 6:12-17.

Many more verses could be added, and more incidents in Scripture cited, to show what the Scriptures teach about the wrath of God. The other day I was reading in the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, and came to the closing verses of that chapter which tell of the opening of the sixth seal. And this is what the Apostle John recorded for us. The event is still future, and is very ominous indeed. Listen to what the Apostle wrote:

12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? (Rev. 6:12-17).

How would you answer that question? This is the question of all ques-

tions. I know that most of you know the answer, but I would not want a single person to leave this service today without knowing how any of us can stand in that day of judgment when God will judge sinners for their sins. Don't be a part of the world's crowd who scoff at sin. If you do, you will regret it eternally. Sin is what is wrong with this world, sin in all of its forms. What is the answer that we all need?

This brings me to my last point:

III. JESUS CHRIST AND THE WRATH OF GOD.

How do you explain the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, and why was it that He died?

Let me give you the answer of Scripture, and let me warn you about taking any other answer which does not agree with the answer that is given in the Bible. This is the only true answer.

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 (Rom. 5:7-10).

How can we escape from the wrath of God, the judgment we are under because we are sinners. We escape by trusting in the One Who died in the place of sinners. He took our judgment that we might be declared righteous before a holy God. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24; Isa. 53:6.

Concl: I can't begin to tell you what it means that Christ was "made sin for us," but I do know that a part of what it means is that my sins were placed on Jesus Christ, and that He suffered all that I should have suffered if I had remained under the wrath of God. He became all that was hateful and despicable in God's sight in order to save sinners from the judgement of God. But through His death, my sins were paid for, and I was cleansed and forgiven and declared righteous before our holy God. I didn't deserve it. I could never have paid for it. It was because of His amazing love for me and His grace which rescued me from hell. And so now, "being justified by faith, I have peace with God through our Lord

Jesus Christ.” Many of you do, too. We have learned that only by trusting in what Christ did on the Cross can we escape the wrath of God, and be assured that some day we will be in heaven. This is the only way of escape. I pray that God will enable you to understand this truth, and that in His marvelous grace He will bring you to Christ today--if He is not already your Savior. Remember if you face God without Christ as your Savior, you will learn what the writer of Hebrews meant when he said, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31).

For those of us who know the Lord, let us pray that the Lord will cause us to hate sin, and to love righteousness, that we may live each day to do that which will please God, and not grieve Him. If we have been compromising with sin in any way, let us seek God’s forgiveness and cleansing, and His grace to live in obedience to the Word of God.

Closing verse: John 5:24.

“GOD IS LOVE”

1 John 4:7-21

— **Intro:** Love is a characteristic that we are all familiar with, we talk about it all of the time, and express it in various ways, but it may be that we have trouble defining just what love is. Let me attempt a definition, and perhaps it will help us to understand more about the statement which the Apostle John has given us twice in our text, the truth that “God is love.” See 1 John 4:8 and 16. Since “God is love,” as He is “good,” then it is God who defines love. In fact, the Apostle John has told us in 1 John 4:7 that “love is of God,” and that only on this basis is it possible for us to love each other as believers the way that we should--which is the way God wants us to love each other.

So in giving any definition of love, it is in understanding the love of God that we have our definition. And so let me attempt a definition of love.

I. THE DEFINITION OF LOVE.

Let me suggest that there are three essential parts to the definition of love.

— First, to love a person is to delight in that person. We truly love a person when love someone for what he or she is in himself or herself, not because of what they can do for us or what they might give to us.

We can see this in the way the Father expressed His love for His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. When the Lord Jesus came up out of the Jordan River after John the Baptist had baptized Him, He said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). And the Father said the same thing, speaking again from heaven, when the Lord was with Peter, James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration. See Matt. 17:5.

This means that God loved His Son and delighted in Him.

I have a perfect, or near perfect, illustration of this which I have used before. I trust that those of you who have heard it will excuse me for repeating it, but possibly it will be a fresh blessing to you to hear it again.

— Lucille and I had the privilege while we were at Baylor University of being under the teaching of Dr. J. B. Tidwell. He was a very godly man, and a great Bible teacher. In one of his classes he was explaining what it meant to delight ourselves in the Lord as we are told to do in Psa. 37:4.

— And he told this experience with one of his small children. On a Saturday morning, Dr. Tidwell was in his study at home preparing a message which he was to give at a church the next morning. He had had a particularly busy week, and so was hard at work getting his message ready. All of a sudden he heard a faint knock at the door, and he knew it was his little pre-school son. He wanted to ignore it, but the knock continued. And so finally he said rather impatiently, "Well, what do you want?" He watched as the door knob turned and his little boy opened the door, and walked across the room where his Daddy was seated at his desk. Dr. Tidwell asked again, "What do you want?" His little boy climbed up in his lap, put his arms around his Daddy's neck, and then said very gently, "I don't want anything, Daddy; I just want you."

That is what it means to delight in a person. This is the basis of true love. If this is missing, then it is not love. You see this between husbands and wives. You see this between parents and children. You see this between siblings in a family. You see this between two friends. When two young people fall in love, this always is present. When we love someone, we delight ourselves in them. We want to be with them.

— The second part of our definition of love is that if you love a person, you are going to actively and intensely seek their highest good and happiness. You are going to want to do anything that you can to make that person happy. True love has to find expression. It cannot be passive.

And the third part of true love is that it cannot be satisfied until the love that one person feels for another person, is returned by that other person. There is nothing harder for a child to bear than rejection by either one or both of his parents. And there is nothing that is harder for a parent to bear than to be rejected by a child. This is one reason why divorce is so terrible for the one who is still in love, and why the consequences are so bad for everyone concerned.

There is a lot of false love in our world today which ought to be called by its true name, LUST. It is selfish gratification, not true love. It has no similarity to the love of God. Our society desperately needs to get back to what true love is.

— Now let us apply this definition to the Apostle John's statement, "God is love."

II. THE LOVE OF GOD.

The Bible speaks of God's love for His Son, and we have seen how God even spoke from heaven to declare that He delighted in His Son. But the Bible also speaks of His love for those of us who are His people. Do we find the first and basic requirement of true love in His love for us?

Back in 1866 a man by the name of James Small wrote a hymn the first verse of which goes like this:

I've found a Friend, O such a Friend!
He loved me ere I knew Him;
He drew me with the cords of love,
And thus He bound me to Him;
And round my heart still closely twine
Those ties which naught can sever,
For I am His, and He is mine,
For ever and for ever.

Are those words true of you and me? Did God love us, did the Lord Jesus love us, and did the Holy Spirit love us, before we knew them? And has He drawn us to Himself, and bound us with those cords of love so that we can never really get away from Him?

This is a most astounding truth, isn't it? And yet it is true. The Lord led the Spirit of God to have Jeremiah write those words which have been a blessing to the people of God in every generation since that time. These are the words to which I am referring:

The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee (Jer. 31:3).

The Lord was speaking about a backslidden people, a people whom He had loved "with an everlasting love." There wasn't anything lovely about those people, and neither is there anything lovely about you and me. But the truth of Scripture is that He loves us, He delights Himself in us, *and He always has*. We know that this always has been true about the Father's love for the Son, but amazingly it is true about us too.

Let me give you some verses in Ephesians 1 which prove this. Please turn to Eph. 1, and I will begin reading with verse 3:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (Note: Many Greek scholars feel that the two word,

“in love belong to verse 5, not to verse 4.)

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved (Eph. 1:3-6).

In 2 Samuel 22 you will find a Psalm which is repeated as Psalm 18 in the book of Psalms. It was written by David after David had been delivered from all of his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. And this is what you find in 2 Sam. 22:20 and Psal. 18:19: “He,” speaking of God, “delivered me, because He delighted in me.”

One more verse: Isa. 43:1,

But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.

How wonderful it is that the Lord actually *delights* in us! And what a change it would make in our lives if we could only learn this.

Now all of that has to do with the first part of our definition of love; what about the second part--*that true love seeks, actively and intensely seeks, the highest good and happiness of the one who is loved.* We know that is true in our own hearts as we think about those we love, but, again, *what about God? Is this true of Him?*

Perhaps the passage of Scripture which answers that for us as much as any other is Romans 8, and especially our dear friend, Romans 8:28. Let me read to you those very familiar verses beginning with verse 28 and going on down to verse 32:

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? (Rom.

8:28-32).
(Comment.)

— Cf. Phil. 4:19. God has not promised to give us everything that we want, but He has promised to meet all of our needs.

However, a word of warning is needed here. Sometimes God withholds His blessings from us because things are not right in our lives. It is amazing how He blesses us even when our hearts are not right. God kept giving manna and quail to the children of Israel even when they were disobedient. But if we persist in being disobedient, then the Lord not only withholds blessing, but He may have to judge us. How careful we need to be about our fellowship with the Lord. Listen to these good words from the Psalmist, found in Psa. 84:11-12:

11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

12 O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee. How the Lord loves to bless us! And how He loves to give all things to us! But this leads me to my final point in the definition of love.

— The third point is that love yearns for a loving response. The young man who is in love is not satisfied until the one he loves agrees to marry him. We have just been through Father's Day, and last month, Mother's Day. Would any parent here today deny that one of the greatest joys in life is to have your children, unsolicited, tell you that they love you? The same is true of husbands and wives. A wife likes for her husband to tell her that he loves her, and a husband likes to hear the same from his wife. Love looks for ways to express itself, but love also delights when there is a loving response.

Would you question me if I were to say that the Lord is just like us in this. Actually it is because He is like this that we are like this. He delights in being told that we love Him, especially if by our lives we are saying the same thing. How do we tell the Lord by our lives that we love Him? The Lord answered that question in John 14:21:

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

— I am sure that the Pharisee who asked our Lord what was the greatest commandment in the Law, was astounded with the Lord's answer. The

Pharisees did not think in terms of love. But this was the Lord's answer which is found in Matt. 22:37-38:

37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is the first and great commandment.

Recently we have gone through the Gospel of John in our SS lessons. And you probably remember that the last chapter gives us one of the heart-moving incidents in all of the earthly life of our Lord. And I am referring to the way in which the Lord ministered to Peter following Peter's tragic denial of our Lord. Basically, and without going into details, the Lord asked Peter one question: "Simon, son of Jonas (John), lovest thou Me?" And each time our Lord followed it with, "Feed my lambs," or, "Feed my sheep."

Instead of being a weak way of dealing with Peter's sin, it was the most powerful way, and our infinitely wise Lord know what He was doing. If the Lord had Peter's love, there was no need to worry about Peter in the days to come. Love is strength. Before his fall, Peter obviously had too much confidence in Himself. After his fall, he knew how weak He was, and so his confession of love meant a renewed sense of how much he needed the Lord to keep him and to enable him to be faithful to the Lord.

Concl: The Apostle of love, the Apostle John, said, We love *Him*, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). The word "Him" is not in the original text, but I believe that the translators have been right in adding the pronoun "him" which refers to God. The Apostle Paul has taught us that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5). And so the love that we have for God is given by Him, and it is exercised by the power of the Holy Spirit.

How can we tell that we really love the Lord? Because we find ourselves delighting in Him and our relationship with Him. Because it is our chief purpose in life to do what pleases the Lord, and this means being obedient to the Word of God. And finally, because we rejoice in the realization and the enjoyment of His love even though we realize how totally unworthy we are of His love.

Through time and eternity with all of the evidences we have of God's love for us, the greatest evidence will always be that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3). And Paul added this testimony as well when he said, "But God commendeth (gave proof of) His love

toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

— The love of God is a subject which we can never exhaust. It is so wonderful that we probably will be learning more about it all through eternity. But let me close by saying that it is one thing to have certain details about God’s love in our minds, but it is quite another thing to be living in the enjoyment of His love.

One of the best books I ever read is J. I. Packer’s book, *Knowing God*. He has a chapter in that book on the love of God, and he concluded the chapter with four important questions. I pass those questions on to you and to myself today, and I hope all of us will give serious thought to the answers we must give in the light of the way we respond to God’s love. Here are the questions:

Why do I ever grumble and show discontent and resentment at the circumstances in which God has placed me?

Why am I ever distrustful, fearful, or depressed?

Why do I ever allow myself to grow cool, formal, and half-hearted in the service of the God who loves me so?

Why do I ever allow my loyalties to be divided, so that God has not all my heart? (p. 115).

— And then in a following paragraph Dr. Packer added,

Could an observer learn from the quality and degree of love that I show to others—my wife? my husband? my family? my neighbours? people at church? people at work?—anything at all about the greatness of God’s love to me? (*Ibid.*).

Dr. Packer was responding to the Apostle John’s words where he said, “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another” (1 John 4:11). This is not just a good suggestion, but an obligation that we owe to God and to His people because of the great love that God has for us.

THE GOD OF ALL GRACE

1 Peter 5:10-11

Intro: My text for today as we look at God's attribute of *grace*, is 1 Peter 5, verses 10 and 11. (Read.)

The words "all grace" describe God. Why "all grace" instead of simply *grace*? Perhaps 1 Peter 4:10 will help us because there the Apostle Paul said that those who minister are to minister "as stewards of the manifold grace of God." The word "manifold" means *of different sorts*, according to one grammarian (Thayer, p. 527). And so we can say that "all grace" means *all kinds of grace*. We are saved by grace. We are kept by grace. We live by grace, and grow in grace.

From the time people are born until they die they experience the grace of God. And I say this about those who do not know God as well as those of us who do know Him. It is by the grace of God that we are here on the earth, alive, enjoying the blessing which God so graciously lavishes upon all of us--the just and the unjust. God's grace is often expressed in His mercy, and so we can say that

22 It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed,
because his compassions fail not.

23 They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness
(Lam. 3:22-23).

You see, the attributes of God do not function independently of each other. We can see God's mercies and His compassions and His faithfulness all as the expression of His grace.

The grace of God means the favor of God. But His grace toward us as sinful creatures is always undeserved. We deserve His wrath, but by His grace He pours out His blessings upon us.

A couple of weeks ago when we were considering *the wrath of God*, I mentioned that you can see evidence of the wrath of God all through the Scriptures. Judgment often followed judgment because of the sinful behavior of people. Well, I can say the same thing today about the grace of God. You see it everywhere in Scripture. God's grace was evident in creation. God's grace was seen in what He did to and with Adam and Eve after they sinned. God's grace is evident wherever you see God doing good things for people when they deserve just the opposite--and that goes on all of the time, day after day, year after year, generation after generation. It was only by the grace of God that He did not destroy the whole

world at the time of the flood. And I say that because of what we are told about Noah in Gen. 6:8, “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”

Grace is given by God even though it is not deserved, but also when just the opposite is deserved. All people are deserving of eternal judgment and are under the wrath of God, but God in His grace determined that there would be salvation for guilty sinners. At the same time we need to recognize that what God does in grace He does freely of His own will. He is not under obligation to anyone. In fact, the exercise of God’s grace toward sinners is in itself a manifestation of God’s glory. When Moses prayed that he might see the glory of the Lord, the Lord responded by saying,

I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy (Ex. 33:19).

So our salvation is a sovereign work of a gracious God toward unworthy sinners. It is not by the exercise of our wills that we are saved, nor it is because of anything worthy that God sees in us (because we are all unworthy). This is why Paul could say, as he did in Rom. 9:16,

So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

Grace is a word of hope and consolation. Grace is a word which glorifies God, and humbles man. Grace gives us security in our relationship with God. It is grace that gives meaning to the ways of the Lord with us--in all of our testings and trials. God is a God “of all grace,” meaning that His grace is what we depend on not only to save us, but to keep us, and to guarantee that some day we will be presented “faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24b).

Now let us look briefly at what Peter must have had in mind when he spoke of God as being “the God of all grace,” or of what seems to be an identical expression in 1 Pet. 4:10, “the manifold grace of God.” And I will begin with what Paul called in Acts 20:32,

I. “THE WORD OF HIS GRACE” (Acts 20:32).

Paul was leaving the Ephesian elders, and he never expected to see them again in this life. And among other things that he said was this in Acts 20:32:

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his

grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

For my purpose today I just want to direct your attention to those words which describe the Book which God has given us. The Apostle Paul called it, “the word of his grace.” What does this mean?

It means that it is because of the grace of God that we have it. It means that it is a book which is a revelation of His grace. It means that if we want to understand the grace of God, this is the place where we need to go to learn about it. This could well be a title that is stamped upon the outside cover of our Bibles: “The Word of His Grace.”

We would suffer an irreplaceable loss if we did not have our Bibles. God did not have to give us this Book, but He did! Of His own will, not because we deserved it, nor did anyone ask for it, He gave it to us. And it has been a continuing act of His grace that it has been preserved for us, and that it has been translated into so many languages around the world. And its message is one of grace from start to finish. The truth we read on every page is evidence of the grace of God. Paul could not stay with the Ephesian elders, but there was one precious treasure he could leave with them even though what they had then was not yet complete. He left them with “The Word of His Grace.” Parting from them was a very trying experience for the Apostle Paul, and for the elders he was leaving. But the one consolation that Paul had was that he was leaving them with the God of grace and “The Word of His Grace.” There should not be a day we live but what we lift our hearts to God for all that He has done to give us “The Word of His Grace.”

But let us think of another way in which the grace of God has been revealed--although for none of this can we leave “The Word of His Grace.” It is all there. Right now I am speaking of:

II. “THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST” (2 Cor. 8:9).

Do you remember these words?

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich (2 Cor. 8:9).

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ”--How thankful we should be for that expression!

I hope that by now in our consideration of the attributes of God that we know that the same attributes belong to our Lord Jesus Christ, and also to the Holy Spirit. So there is no need to re-define *grace* when we speak of “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is one and the same *grace*.

But how did Paul describe “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He described it in terms of His preincarnate state, that is, what He was before He became Man. And then His incarnation and all that it meant for Him to become “poor.” It meant not only that He took on the likeness of our sinful flesh, but that He was made an offering for our sins. It was our sins that He had placed upon Him at Calvary. But that is not the end of the story. The purpose was that through His poverty we might be rich--spiritually rich, eternally rich!

Now all of this is due to “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We didn’t deserve it. We couldn’t earn it. We didn’t even ask for it--and neither did anyone else! But Jesus Christ came, not just because the Father sent Him, but because He wanted to come. He personally laid down His life for us that we might live through Him. The forgiveness of our sins is all because of grace. The life we have is ours by grace. Our justification and all that goes with it, priceless beyond all computation, is our now and forever by “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Don’t ever let two verses like Ephesians 2:8 and 9 become commonplace with you. Listen to them again:

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:8-9).

It was unsought and undeserved, yet God has given us this greatest of all gifts, the gift of salvation. What we could never have done for ourselves, our Lord Jesus did for us, and we call this salvation “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

But I want to take you to still another statement of Scripture (although time will not permit us to go to them all). It is this: In Hebrews 10:29 the Holy Spirit is called

III. “THE SPIRIT OF GRACE” (Heb. 10:29).

Reading verse 28 with it, this is what we learn:

28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? (Heb. 10:28-29).

Also we read this in Zech. 12:10 of the time when the Lord will return to the earth:

And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

The word “spirit” is not capitalized in the KJV, but it should be! It is a reference to the Holy Spirit.

Why is He called “the Spirit of grace”? Because He has been given to us in grace. Because He has ministered the grace of God to us, and awakened us to our need of His grace. And it is He Who leads us on in our understanding of the grace of God, enabling us to appropriate it as the needs arise in our lives. Call Him the Holy Spirit. Call Him the Spirit of God. He has different titles in Scripture, such as “the Comforter.” *But don't forget that He is the Spirit of grace*, a gift of the grace of God to you and to me and to all who know our blessed Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

Let me give you two more points before I close. The Apostle Paul taught that:

IV. THE GRACE OF GOD IS OUR TEACHER (Titus 2:11-14).

Listen to that passage although I am sure many of you could even quote it:

11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (Titus 2:11-14).

On criticism that is often leveled against those who teach the grace of

God, is that it contributes to loose and ungodly living. Now there may be those who teach the grace of God that way, but if they do, they are in violation of what the Scriptures teach. Paul taught Timothy that “the grace of God” teaches us “that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world” [age].

Furthermore, the grace of God teaches us that we should be “looking for that blessed hope...” And finally (as far as this passage is concerned) the grace of God teaches us Christ’s purpose in giving Himself for us was that “He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people [a people for His own possession], zealous of good works.”

All of this is what the grace of God teaches us. So the more we know about the grace of God, the more godly we will be, and the more we will be looking expectantly every day for the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

What a marvelous curriculum the grace of God has! And the more we know about the grace of God, the godlier we will be. And so this takes us right up to the time when we will see our Lord and be forever like Him. This is what the grace of God does for us.

But we won’t be finished with the grace of God when the Lord comes, and my support for saying that is found in Eph. 2:7. Let me call my last point,

V. THE GRACE OF GOD IN THE AGES TO COME (Eph. 2:4-7).

Let me read this passage to you.

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:4-7).

I doubt if any of us will ever exhaust what the Old and New Testaments reveal to us about the grace of God. In fact, I know we won’t. No one ever has! But what we don’t learn before we get to heaven, we will learn when we get there, and much, much more! It couldn’t all be contained

within the covers of our Bibles. God has given us what we need for this present earthly pilgrimage that we are on, but there is more to come.

This ought to do two things to us now:

- 1) It ought to make us more interested in learning all that we can about the grace of God now.
- 2) It ought to make us look forward to being with the Lord where we will be able to learn all that there is yet to learn.

But notice that this is not all going to happen at once, no “instant knowledge.” I don’t know how long it will take but the Apostle Paul spoke of “the ages to come.” So it will take us a while, but we can be sure that we will have the best of teaching. And we can be sure that since understanding the grace of God here as imperfectly as we know it, that which is to come in “the ages to come” will be even better.

Concl: But now I will close by going back to my text: 1 Pet. 5:10-11.

God has called us to His eternal glory. This means that He has called us to be partakers of the divine nature. He has called us to be like our Lord Jesus Christ, as other passages teach us. And in preparation for that, “the God of all grace is doing for things for us *by His grace*:

- 1) He is perfecting us.
- 2) He is establishing us.
- 3) He is strengthening us.
- 4) He is settling us.

The first means that we are maturing by grace. The second means that we are being made steadfast so that nothing will shake us. The third means that we are being made strong so as to stand against every foe who might come against us. The last also means to establish, much like the second word.

Here we see the sufficiency of the grace of God, and why Peter was directed by the Holy Spirit to call God, “the God of all grace.” With Him, we need no one else. What God has called us to become, He will accomplish in us--and as Peter said in verse 11, when we are speaking about grace, we are speaking about that characteristic of God which brings all of the glory and lays it at His feet.

THE GOD OF PATIENCE

Romans 15:4-5

Intro: Romans 15:5 speaks of God as “the God of patience and consolation.” In the preceding verse, verse 4, we are told that what was written in OT times was written “for our learning that through patience and comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope.” The words “consolation” and “comfort” are translations of identically the same word in the original Greek. It is too bad the translators did not use “consolation” in both verses, or “comfort” in both verses, so we would quickly see the connection. It is through learning from the Scriptures that God, who is “the God of patience and consolation” ministers to us the “patience and comfort,” or *consolation*, which we need to have hope. So God works through His Word to give us both of these necessary characteristics.

But let me add another word or two of explanation. Those of you who have attended Trinity Bible Church, or those who have listened to our radio broadcast, have probably heard me say more than once that the word “comfort,” or “consolation,” carries with it the idea of *encouragement*. God is called in 2 Cor. 1:3, “the God of all comfort,” which we could translate, *the God of all encouragement*. We all should know that to be comforted is to be encouraged. And encouragement is one thing that most of us need every day we live, and, sometimes, many times a day!

One other thing that we need to know about this word *comfort*, or *consolation*, is that it is not just like sending someone a greeting card, or a letter, or trying to find encouraging words to speak to that person. Those acts are very important, and I wouldn’t minimize how comforting they can be, but we all know how inadequate we feel when we are seeking to comfort someone else. *When this word is used of God, it indicates that He really helps us!* This word which the Apostle Paul used is the basis of the word *Comforter*, which you know is a title of the Holy Spirit, but also a title of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is what the Lord Jesus said about the Holy Spirit. His words are found in John 14:16-17a):

16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

17 Even the Spirit of truth...

When the Lord said “another Comforter,” He used the Greek word for “another” which means *another of the same kind*. So this would mean that the Lord Jesus is a Comforter, too.

And so God is our Comforter (according to my text for today), and the

Lord Jesus is a Comforter, and the Holy Spirit is our Comforter. They all are concerned about our encouragement. Our encouragement comes directly from Them, and, according to Rom. 15:5, it comes from God as “the God of patience and consolation.”

So it is very important for us to understand what it means that God is a “God of patience.”

Let me give you some other words which are sometimes used in Scripture in place of *patience*, but which mean the same.

I. OTHER BIBLICAL TERMS FOR PATIENCE.

I am thinking of a word like *longsuffering*. Or verses which speak of God *waiting*. Some verses speak of God being “slow to anger.” *Forbearance* is another word we need to pay attention to. Let me give you some of those verses.

We have this verse when Moses went up into the mount to get the Law from God for the second time:

5 And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.

6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth (Ex. 34:5-6).

“Longsuffering” is so much a part of the character of God that the Lord Himself said that it is a part of His Name! In other words, if it were possible for us to take the patience, the longsuffering, of God, out of His character, He would not be the same God we see Him to be when we read about Him in the Scriptures.

Or take the verse we find in Isa. 30:18:

And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him.

Going into the NT we find these verses in Rom. 2:3-4:

3 And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbear-

ance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

I will give you one more: 2 Pet. 3:9:

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

There are many other verses we could read, but these will give us a sample of the many passages which speak of *the patience of God*.

But now let me turn to some examples of the patience of God which we find in Scripture.

II. EXAMPLES OF THE PATIENCE OF GOD.

We don't have to go very far in Scripture before we find the first example.

A. The Garden of Eden (Gen. 3).

God had told Adam that "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). We know that Adam's sin brought spiritual death immediately, but think of what God did not do. He did not strike Adam dead on the spot as He might have. Instead, we read in Gen. 5:5 that "all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years." He did not afflict him with some terrible disease which would have caused years of suffering, a slow death. Adam was going to have to deal with the ground that had been cursed for his sake, but the Lord continued to meet his needs day by day even after he had sinned. God even provided clothing for Adam and Eve before He put them out of the Garden. The patience and self-restraint of God are amazing when you stop to think of what God did not do to Adam and Eve when they sinned.

Think also about:

B. The days of Noah (Gen. 6:1-8).

The whole human family on earth had corrupted itself so that what the Lord saw was this: "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). The Lord told them ahead of time that they had 120 years before His patience would turn to wrath. He sent Noah to them as "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet. 2:5). This means he was a

preacher of the Gospel. But what kind of a response did the Lord get from the people? This is what our Lord said:

37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark (Matt. 24:37-38).

Noah was preaching, but the people kept right on with their sinning. What an example of the patience of God! And we know that the same attitude has prevailed throughout the history of the world because the Lord Jesus said that when He returned to the earth it would be just like it was in “the days of Noah.” Again, how we must marvel at the patience of God!

There are numerous examples of God’s patience in Scripture, but surely one of the greatest was in:

C. The time of the Exodus.

The history of Israel during this time was a history of disobedience and rebellion against the Lord. And yet, even though the Lord condemned that first generation to die in the wilderness, yet God continued to feed them, and to protect them, and to guide them. We can’t read that record in Scripture without wondering again and again how God could possibly put up with such people. But He did, and it was because He was (and is) “a God of patience.”

I only have time to be very selective in picking out examples of the patience of the Lord, but remember with me

D. The period of the judges.

The way the people lived is described in the book of Judges as one in which “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6; 21:25). And this was in spite of the fact that God gave them judges. It seems that when the judges lived, the people were more inclined to be obedient to the Lord, but as soon as a judge died, they went back to their own ways, and to their sins. In reading through that book, you can’t help but wonder how God could put up with such flagrant rebellion. It was not a case where the people did not know what was right. They knew what God wanted them to do, but they disobeyed Him anyway. You and I could not have tolerated such rebellion.

I could go on to talk about Saul, and about the grievous sins of David for which he should have been put to death. And the period of the kings was the same. We are told that kings both in Israel and Judah did that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord. And why did God raise up prophets in Israel and Judah. It was always to point out the sins of the people and to call them back to the Lord. But in spite of all of this the people persisted in their sins. The Lord Jesus summed up the history of His people in these words which are found in Matt 23:37-38:

37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

Jerusalem was the scene of the death of so many prophets that our Lord said that He had to go to Jerusalem because “it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem” (Luke 13:33).

And so the greatest example we have of the patience of God is in:

E. The suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

How could God stand to see His Son treated as He was at the hands of His enemies? And yet we read that our Lord said as He was dying, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). And it seems that on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, that many who were jeering at Christ when He died, were among the 3,000 who were drawn to Christ and saved after Peter preached the Gospel to them. There can be no explanation for such restraint on God’s part except for the fact that He is a “God of patience,” amazing patience!

Now let me bring it down to:

F. The present day.

Whether you look at the world, or at the church, the professing church, you and I again can see many examples of the patience of God.

Take our own country as an example. After the way God has blessed us with the Gospel and great Bible teaching from the beginning of our nation, we have as a nation turned our backs on all that which is holy and good in the sight of God, and we continue in an ever-increasing way to violate the sovereign will of our holy God. I don’t need to go over the whole sorry

mess because we all are aware of what it going on. And in spite of all of the problems we face, and the judgments that God has already brought upon us, we are continuing as a nation to go deeper and deeper into sin. And churches today which once stood for the true Gospel of the grace of God, now are set about to destroy the very truth of God.

But let me bring this even closer home:

G. God's patience with you and with me.

Don't we all have our reasons to be thankful for the words which King David wrote in Psa. 103:10, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities"? And do we not have to say with the writer of Psalm 130, "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (Psa. 130:3). We may not be guilty of adultery, but how would we have reacted to our Lord's words when He said to the Pharisees, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone" (John 8:7).

Whatever our sins may have been, is it not true that we have all been "repeaters"? Have we not had to come to the Lord confessing often the very sins which we have confessed before? And have we not in our hearts had to admit that the Lord is amazing in His patience with us? How it should humble us to remember how many, many times God has exercised His loving patience toward us when we have been deserving of His judgment.

But a message like this should not be concluded without:

III. A WORD OF WARNING.

Although God's patience is most astounding, yet there is an end to His patience in any situation. The day came when the rains started and the people of the earth were destroyed by the flood. Even before the Lord closed the door on that whole generation so that they could not enter the land, there were other judgments the Lord brought upon them. Both Israel and Judah were finally carried away into captivity. There are many instances of sin unto death in Scripture. Warnings are often issued before the judgment falls.

One final point is necessary. This is a subject of such great magnitude that it is difficult to deal with all aspects in a single message, but we need to

consider in closing:

IV. REASONS FOR GOD'S PATIENCE.

— God's patience is an expression of His goodness and it is

A. The goodness of God which leads to repentance.

Cf. Romans 2:4. This applies both to those who are saved, and to those who are not saved. In either case God patiently delays judgment that the hearts of people may be turned toward him. Cf. 2 Pet. 3:9, "The Lord is not slack..."

B. The patience of God keeps us from making mistakes and opens the way for greater blessings than we would have had otherwise.

Cf. Isa. 30:18:

And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him.

C. Waiting is spiritually good for us.

Cf. Jas. 1:2-4:

2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;
3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.
4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

And even when there has been no sin involved, we have experienced again and again the patience of God, when our prayers have not been answered.

There is a hymn I love very much which is not in our hymnal, and I wish it were. Its first line begins, "Spirit of God, descend upon my heart."

Perhaps you remember the verse which goes like this:

— Teach me to feel that Thou art Always nigh;
Teach me the struggles of the soul to bear,
To check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh;

Teach me the patience of unanswered prayer.

Concl: There is so much more that can be said about this great subject of the patience of God, but let us be thankful for it, and be sensitive to what the Lord is teaching us when we are forced to wait for Him, and to wait upon Him. God's ways are not our ways. His thoughts and our thoughts are altogether different. And it is always to our advantage to remember that when He is silent, it does not mean that He approves of what we are doing. We need to do His will, and always seek to please Him whatever our circumstances might be.

THE ALMIGHTY GOD

Genesis 17:1-8

Intro: In our Scripture reading for the morning we have the first reference in the Bible to God as “the Almighty God,” and it was used by God in reference to Himself. And, as you might expect, there was a very good reason for the Lord to say this to Abraham. Let me give you just a brief word of background.

Abraham was born and raised in Ur of the Chaldees. One day the Lord appeared to him and told him to leave his country, his relatives, and his father’s house, to go to a land which the Lord would show him later. There from Abraham’s descendants the Lord would make a mighty nation, and eventually he would have a seed, a son, through Whom all of the families of the earth would be blessed, i.e., blessed with salvation. We read about this in the first part of Genesis 12.

The last few verses of Genesis 11 tell us that Abraham’s father led in the journey, but they only got as far as Haran. And Gen. 11:31 tells that they “dwelt there”—how long, we do not know. Eventually Terah, Abraham’s father died, and then Abraham moved with his wife, Sarah, and their nephew, Lot, into the land of Canaan. *The point that I want to make is that when Abraham entered Canaan he was seventy-five years old!* We are told this in Gen. 12:4. To my knowledge we have no way of knowing how old Abraham was when was first called by God in Ur, but it could have been a matter of several years before he got to Canaan. How many years, would only be a guess for me to make, or for anyone else.

Our text for today in Gen. 17:1 tells us that at that point in Abraham’s life he was ninety-nine years old. This means that from the time that Abraham got to Canaan until the Lord appeared to him in Gen. 17, he had been waiting for twenty-four years! Add to that the years after his call until he got to Canaan, and you can see that he could have been waiting thirty, or thirty-five years, or even longer since he received his call from the Lord.

But you say to me, “Waiting for what?” And I would answer, “Waiting for God to give him a son which was absolutely necessary before he could have any descendants, and then become that “great nation” that the Lord had spoken to him about in his call. See Gen. 12:2.

Now many of you will remember that between what we read about in Gen. 12, and what we have here in our text, Abraham and Sarah had run ahead

of the Lord when Sarah gave her handmaiden to Abraham so that they could have a son by her. The handmaiden's name was Hagar, and Abraham had a son by her whom they named Ishmael. From that point on Abraham assumed that Ishmael would be his heir.

But if you read on in Gen. 17, down to verses 15 and 16, you will see that God told Abraham that his wife, who was ten years younger than he was, would have a son, and that Sarah's son, who was to be named Isaac, not Ishmael, would be the heir.

All of this made Abraham laugh. He laughed saying, "Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear," that is, have a child? See Gen. 17:17. Then Abraham prayed that Ishmael might be the promised seed, but God said that it would be Sarah's child, and that his name was to be Isaac.

In chapter 18 then the Lord came to tell Sarah the same thing, that she was to have a child, she laughed too. You see, *they both had given up any hope that they would have a child that would be theirs. The years had rolled on, thirty or thirty-five, or maybe more, and yet Sarah did not have a child.*

What was God doing? He had waited all of that time until Abraham and Sarah had given up having a child of their own so that He could reveal Himself to them as "the Almighty God"!

It was not unusual for a couple to have children when they were as old as Abraham and Sarah were. God gave them only one son, but after Sarah died, Abraham married a second time, and had *six sons* by her. See Gen. 25:1-2. So for people to have children when they were over a hundred in those days was not unusual. But the problem which Abraham and Sarah had was that if God had not given them a son by the time he was 99 and she 89, they assumed, as we might have if we had been in their position, that He was not going to give them a child.

What a mistake they made, and it is a mistake that we often make, when we put time limits on God. God purposely waited until they had given up, and until it seemed that they would never have a son, to show them that He was indeed "the Almighty God."

You know the end of the story. God did give them a son, and he was named Isaac, and he became the one through whom not only the nation of

Israel came into existence, but through whom our Lord Jesus Christ was eventually born. God is faithful to His promises, and one reason He is faithful is because He is “the Almighty God.” No person, no nations, nor any alliance of nations, can withstand “the Almighty God.” Later the Apostle Paul gave this testimony by the Holy Spirit to Abraham:

20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness (Rom. 4:20-22).

But now let us think more specifically about:

I. POWER AS AN ATTRIBUTE OF GOD.

The word, or words, translated, “the Almighty God,” are El Shaddai. It speaks of God as being *omnipotent*, all powerful. Even El alone, as well as Elohim, give the suggestion of power. There is none greater than God. He is responsible to no one, and no one can call Him to given an account of Himself. And it is because of His mighty power that we can speak of *the providence of God*. And it is because God is Almighty that we can speak of *the sovereignty of God*.

This could be a very terrifying subject if it were not for the fact that the power of God operates in conjunction with all of His other attributes. God is powerful, but He is good. God is powerful, but He is gracious and merciful. God is powerful, but He is love. God is powerful, but He is patient. But we also need to remember that He is powerful, and He is also holy and righteous. He is powerful, but He is a God of wrath. So the only people who need to be terrified by this doctrine are those who are living in disobedience to His will.

Therefore, for the people of God, faced with constant needs of many kinds, this is a most comforting doctrine. How wonderful it is to know that we have a God Who is “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph. 3:20). Who of us has not been comforted to read in Luke 18:27 that “the things which are impossible with men are possible with God.”?

But in order that we might have a truer picture of God’s use of this attribute, it is important for us to know that:

II. THERE ARE SOME THINGS WHICH GOD CANNOT DO.

A. He cannot sin.

We read this in Num. 23:19:

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

When Samuel was announcing God's judgment upon Saul, he said this:

28 And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou.

29 And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent (1 Sam 15:28-29).

Hebrews 6:17-18 says essentially the same thing:

17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.

B. He cannot change.

Malachi had this to say about God:

For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed (Mal. 3:6).

If anything, James said it in an even stronger way:

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning (James 1:17).

The Weymouth translation renders the latter part of the verse this way: "In Him there is no variation nor the shadow of change."

In Hebrews chapter 1 the writer was speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, but we have learned that the attributes of God are the attributes of Christ, and vice versa. So listen to these words spoken about our Lord Jesus:

10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:

11 They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;

12 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be

changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail (Heb 1:10-12).

And we all should remember those assuring words in Heb. 13:8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." And the unchangeable character of our Lord is certainly declared in Rev. 1:8:

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

C. He cannot deny Himself.

This is the statement that the Apostle Paul made in 2 Tim. 2:13: "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." This is very similar to saying that God cannot lie, or that He cannot sin. But it also means that He cannot go back on His Word. Nor can He ever act contrary to His nature, His holy attributes.

John 10:35 "The scriptures cannot be broken."

D. He cannot die.

This is evident in His name, Jehovah, which means that He is the ever-living One, without beginning and without ending. God is eternal. He cannot cease to be God.

Who can forget those wonderful words at the beginning of Psalm 90?

1 LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.

2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God (Psa. 90:1-2).

Isa. 57:15 tells us that God inhabits eternity. Jeremiah called God "the true God, ...the living God, and an everlasting king" (Jer. 10:10).

In a letter I read to our men yesterday at our prayer meeting, a missionary from Hong Kong wrote to tell about how well things were going for the Lord's people so far in Hong Kong. But he told of a very revealing incident which took place in the city. About 50,000 Buddhist went to a celebration of the new regime, and they prayed for Buddha's protection and prosperity for Hong Kong. The next day they had more than three feet of rain which closed one of the main Buddhist temples, and toppled one of the main idols. One of the Chinese newspapers came out with the headline, referring to Buddha, "He can't even save himself."

Our God is the mighty God Who is working all things out according to His own will, and He will never fail to accomplish any of His eternal purposes. How thankful we can be that our God is like He is.

Now let me take a few minutes to point out areas where we can see evidences of the almighty power of our living God.

III. EVIDENCES OF THE SOVEREIGN POWER OF GOD.

There is no area of life where the power of God is not evident. Nebuchadnezzar had to learn that the hard way. These were his words when his mind was given back to him:

34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation:

35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? (Dan. 4:34-35).

At this very moment, in the life of every person on the face of the whole earth God is working “all things after the counsel of his own will” (Eph. 1:11). We have an excellent statement of this in Psalm 135. Let me read it to you:

5 For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods.

6 Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.

7 He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of his treasures.

8 Who smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast.

9 Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.

10 Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings;

11 Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan:

12 And gave their land for an heritage, an heritage unto Israel his people.

13 Thy name, O LORD, endureth for ever; and thy memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations (Psa. 135:5-13).

But let me close by just mentioning three major areas where the almighty power of God is evident. I have touched upon some of these, but let me underline them as I close.

A. In creation.

I have reference here not only to the origin of creation, but to the way creation is sustained day after day. This is a great area which testifies to the sovereign, almighty power of our God. Our “scientists” get off on the wrong foundation when they try to calculate the origin of the universe without taking into consideration the mighty power of God.

In Psalm 33 we have it clearly stated, although it is evident from the account of creation in Genesis 1 and 2. Listen to what one of the Psalmists wrote under the direction of the Spirit of God:

6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses.

8 Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.

9 For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast (Psa. 33:6-9).

It didn't take millions and billions and trillions of years for this world to come into being. The almighty God simply spoke the word, and the work was completed in six days. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork” (Psa. 19:1).

And what began by the power of God, continues by the power of God. Cf. Col. 1:16-17:

16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. That says it all. God is the Creator, and God is the Sustainer of the whole universe.

But let me mention a second area which takes us into:

B. The providence of God.

This is the history of the world from eternity to eternity, or from creation to the new heaven and the new earth. Isaiah has given us this statement through the Holy Spirit:

9 Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,

10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure (Isa. 46:9-10).

After Peter and John had been delivered from prison, they went back to the other believers, and prayed that prayer which expressed their absolute faith in the providence of God, working out His will in all that had happened to our Lord Jesus Christ. This is what they said:

27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done (Acts 4:27-28).

We have the same emphasis in that great statement made by the Apostle Paul at the end of Romans 11:

33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen (Rom. 11:33-36).

Let me give you one more area:

C. Salvation.

This is a subject which could fill a book, and I only have time to mention it. I could talk about the new birth. I could talk about becoming a new creature in Christ. But let me take just one, very familiar passage of Scripture. We have looked at it before in this series on The Fundamentals of the Christian Faith. It is Eph. 1:3-6:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places

in Christ:

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

None of this would be possible if it were not that our God is almighty and absolutely sovereign.

Concl: What shall we say to all of these things? What can we say? What can we possibly say that would do proper honor to the God we know and love and serve? And who is sufficient for these things? Only an almighty God! May we all spend the rest of our lives praising our sovereign God for all that He has been pleased to reveal about Himself and His ways in this precious Book which He has given to us. And let us live out to His glory in obedience to His Word the gratitude we feel in our hearts for all that He has done for us in His Son.

And should there be any here who do not know our Lord Jesus Christ, let me urge you to seek the Lord and submit yourself to Him by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. There is only one Savior, no more! Come to Him today and be saved.

THE EVERLASTING GOD

Isaiah 40:28-31

— **Intro:** For many weeks we have been considering *the communicable attributes of God*, such as His goodness, His mercy, His faithfulness, His wisdom, His righteousness and holiness, His wrath, His love, His grace, His patience, and His power. *Communicable* is a term which theologians have used to express characteristics which God has which He imparts to us. For example, God is love, and God certainly loves, but His love is also “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5). Also, God is infinitely wise. James 1:5 says that if we lack wisdom we are to ask of God and He will give it to us. We do not have *infinite* wisdom like God has, but what He gives us is His wisdom. So what God gives us of Himself is never perfect, but it is divine nevertheless. And as we grow in the Lord, we manifest, we express, the attributes of God in a more perfect way.

But God also has *incommunicable attributes*. These God does not impart to us. We can say that He *cannot* impart them to us because they are a unique part of His divine nature. In being made like Christ (which is the purpose of our redemption), we will not be made *totally* like Him. We will never be Deity even though there will be many, many ways in which we will be like our Lord Jesus Christ. God is eternal! He had no beginning, but we did have a beginning. God is unchangeable. We, hopefully, are being changed every day more and more into the likeness of our dear Savior. God is omnipresent. We are limited to one place at a time. These are some of the ways that we will always be different from God. He has characteristics as God that we will never have.

So today I want to turn our attention to *God’s incommunicable attributes*. And we will begin with His eternity.

Let us remember that, as is true of us, God’s characteristics do not manifest themselves independently of each other. God’s love is one of His communicable attributes, but Jeremiah spoke of it as “an everlasting love.” And so here we have two of God’s attributes brought together. God’s love has to be eternal because He is eternal. But in imparting His love to us, we see it growing in its manifestation within us. This accounts for the difference which you see when we see the love of God in God, and when we see the love of God in us.

I. THE FIRST MENTION OF GOD AS ETERNAL (Gen. 21:33).

— This comes in Gen. 21:33. Of course, it is implied in the very first verse of the Bible: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” However, like every truth in Scripture, it begins with a statement, and then the revelation gets more extensive and much clearer as we move through the Word of God. It would be interesting to know how men first began to understand the greatness of God, and, in particular, that He was and is not just *an* eternal God (as though He was One among many), but “the eternal God,” *the one and only God Who is eternal!* Perhaps it was following the first time that God was known as *Jehovah Elohim*. This combination is first used in Gen. 2:4.

However it may have been, we read this in Gen. 21:33,
And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on
the name of the LORD, the everlasting God.
This means that He has been God *forever*. It means that He has *always* been God. It means that from the immeasurable past to the unending future He has been God, and He always will be God.

— I am sure that you will agree with me when I say that this is beyond our ability to comprehend. We are so attached to time in our thinking that it is really impossible for us to conceive of eternity, and then to speak of a God Who had no beginning, and will never have an end. He was never born. He is an uncreated Being. And He will never die. It is easier for us to think of God as living for eternity in the future (because that will also be true of us), but to think of One Who had no beginning, and who existed eternally where time is no factor, only by the grace of God can we say with Moses, and believe it,

- 1 LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.
- 2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God (Psa. 90:1-2).

— The expression which is used of Abraham in Gen. 21:33, that “he called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God,” comes out of Gen. 12:8, and then Gen. 13:4, where Abraham called upon the name of the Lord, but before those verses we read in Gen. 4:6 where after Enos was born to Seth, “then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.”

— It was the realization that God was “the Lord, the everlasting God,” that prompted Abraham once again to call out to God in worship, and to call out also in utter dependence upon Him for the faithfulness of “the everlasting God to fulfill His purposes as expressed in the covenant which God had made with Him. *We must conclude that this is very important truth to learn about God. It provokes worship, and encourages faith.*

Keil and Delitzsch said in their commentary that the word “grove” in Gen. 21:33 actually means *a tamarisk tree*, and they describe it as “this long-lived tree, with its hard wood, and its long, narrow, thickly clustered, evergreen leaves, was to be a type of the ever-enduring grace of the faithful covenant God.” See Vol. I of the Pentateuch, p. 247.

Now let us look at another passage where we see:

II. THE ETERNAL GOD IN THE BLESSING OF MOSES (Deut. 33:26-29).

— It would seem that it is very significant that the last recorded words of Moses have to do with “the eternal God.” After conferring blessing upon all of the tribes of Israel, we read these words, the last four verses of Deut. 33. (Read.)

“Jeshurun” is considered to be a symbolic name for Israel. It is used only four times in all of the Old Testament. See Deut. 32:15; 33:5, 26; Isa. 44:22. It means *one who is upright*, or *righteous*. It speaks of what Israel was positionally before God. But unfortunately Israel did not always live up to this name in a practical sense. Moses wanted Israel to remember that her was superior to all other gods, He Who was exalted in the heavens, and Who stood ready constantly and momentarily to help her. Who was He? “The eternal God.” He was Israel’s “refuge.” In the words of one commentator, “The figure not only implies that God grants protection and a refuge to His people in the storms of life (Ps. xci. 1, 2, cf. Isa. iv. 6), but also that He supplies His people with everything that can afford a safe abode” (K & D, III, 512).

— Although God rides upon the heaven, yet His “everlasting arms” which have proven to be so sufficient for all of Israel’s needs in the past, will find that God Who is also “underneath,” will never fail them nor forsake them. The God Who brought His people out of Egypt, and Who had cared

for them all through their years of journeying, was still the same, just as sufficient as He had ever been, making them truly a “happy” people. See verse 29.

The term, “the eternal God,” always forces us to look back at the past, not only during our lives, but to the beginning of time, and even before when God established His decrees. And we can know that as we look ahead to the future, this same “eternal God” will be just as faithful in whatever may come as He has been in the past.

Final words, if they are known to be final, can be very significant. And they certainly were in Moses’ case because he was speaking under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Surely no words could have been more encouraging to Joshua, nor did the Israelites need any other word as they faced all of the human difficulties and uncertainties of the days which were immediately before them.

But let us go on to the Psalms.

III. THE EVERLASTING GOD IN THE PSALMS.

There are two Psalms which end with practically the same words of praise. They are Psalm 41 and 106. The book of Psalms has been divided into five books. Psalm 41 is at the end of Book 1; Psalm 106 concludes Book 4.

Psalm 41 speaks of a most grievous time in David’s life. He experienced a very serious disease which many expected to be fatal. Even those who had been the closest to him, had turned against him. Really, the only One he had was the Lord. And in faith he confidently turned to the Lord to exercise His mercy on his behalf. And the Psalm closed with a doxology of praise:

Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen (Psa. 41:13).

We can’t praise “the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting,” unless He is everlasting. And He is! Psalm 41 is meant to encourage us in the certainty that God Who worthy of praise from eternity to eternity will be worthy of our praise in all of the circumstances of our lives.

Psalm 106 has to do with an earlier period than Psalm 40, involving more

people, and extending over a much longer season of time. But the divine record is just as perfect even though the circumstances were very different. There were at least five hundred years between the events mentioned in the two Psalms, but the God Who was faithful to those mentioned in Psalm 106, as numerous as they were, was the same eternal God Who was faithful to David in his own personal circumstances. Neither deserved what God did, but God was faithful to them anyway. And so Psalm 106 ends with these words which are similar to what we read in Psalm 41:

Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD (Psa. 106:48).

Look at any period of time from eternity to eternity, and our everlasting God is worthy of praise, and to Him all of the praise belongs!

But now let us go to our Scripture reading in the prophecy of Isaiah. And I will call this:

IV. THE EVERLASTING GOD IN THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH (Isa. 40:28-31).

Chapter 40 begins the last part of Isaiah's prophecy. The first thirty-five chapters had to do with judgment. Chapters 36-39 are historical. From chapter 40 to the end of the book the emphasis is upon redemption. And, as verse 1 of chapter 40 indicates, the latter part of the book was intended to convey great comfort for the people of God in Judah.

Notice that verse 28 in this chapter begins the same way as verse 21. (Read.) You see, the people of Judah had the same problem that the people of God in every generation seem to have. It is the problem of failing to remember what they should remember. We are always inclined to remember what we ought to forget, and to forget what we ought to remember. And what we forget is that we have as our God "the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth."

Any situation looks different depending upon whether we are looking just at the situation, or whether we also have our eyes and minds and hearts upon the Lord.

Notice that in each one of the last four verses you have the word *faint*. In

Spurgeon's book, *Lectures to My Students*, he has a chapter called, *The Minister's Fainting Fits*. In that chapter Spurgeon pointed out how easy it is for the Lord's servants to get depressed, to be cast down, to become unhappy. And this is not just a problem that pastors have, but it is very common among all of the Lord's people. You can see numerous examples of this in Scripture. Abraham had it. Sarah had it. Joseph must have had it. Moses certainly had it. The children of Israel seem to have lived with it. And we can go on and on through Scripture and then throughout the history of the church, and we see it everywhere.

In these days a downcast spirit is caused by not being taught at all. There is a tragic lack of Bible teaching today, and the people of God are suffering because of it. *But many times it is due to the fact that we are not applying what we have been taught to what we are experiencing.* Fainting fits are to be seen everywhere among those of us who claim to know the Lord. What is the remedy?

Isaiah mentioned the remedy earlier in his prophecy when he wrote,

3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

4 Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength (Isa. 26:3-4).

To have your mind "stayed" upon the Lord is to make it take hold of the Lord, and to keep it looking at Him. The Lord has designed our lives so that we will be constantly reminded of how much we need Him. But we seem to want to persist in having our way. I know I'm guilty, and perhaps you would admit that you are too.

What do we need to remember? What do we need to grasp with our minds and our hearts? *It is that while we are always fainting, God never is! He is "the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He never faints. He never gets weary.*

More than that, verse 29 tells us that He gives power to the faint, and that when we have "no might He increaseth strength."

Verse 30 tells us that this is not an aging problem. Young people who are at their peak physically still have "fainting fits." Young people, you get discouraged. You get depressed. You have your times when you feel like saying, "What's the use?" You can "utterly fall."

What is the answer?

— We find that in verse 31, but don't fail to link verse 31 with verse 28. In times when we are weak and depressed and ready to fall, we need to "wait upon the Lord.." But Who is the Lord that we are to wait upon? He is "the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth." He is the One Who has always existed, and Who always will exist, and Who never changes. He tests us, and sometimes it looks like He is not paying any attention to the problems we are having, but He is paying attention! He knows, and He cares. There is not a need we have, not a problem we face, but what He is fully aware of it all. Do you want proof? Listen to what David wrote in Psalm 139:

2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

3 Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

4 For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it (Psa. 139:2-6).

— Now apply all of that to yourself because it is just as true of you and me as it was of David.

But Isaiah said that we must "wait upon the Lord." What did he mean by that?

It means that you quit hoping in what you can do, or in what other people can do for you. Let your mind take hold of Who God is, put your trust in Him alone, and look to Him for the strength that you need to carry on instead of quitting. It means that you need to meditate on the Word, and to meditate on the Lord. It means that you need to spend more time in prayer. And waiting on the Lord means waiting for the Lord. Don't run ahead of Him.

— What will be the result? The Lord will give you strength that you never had before. You will mount up as with eagle's wings. You will run and not be weary, and you will not even faint when you are just walking.

Focus your attention on that word “renew.” It means that God is going to change you. You will find your weakness is being replaced with His strength, a strength that you receive and continue to use just as long as you are walking in fellowship with this eternal God Whom we profess to know and to Whom we claim that we belong. Every trial, every discouragement, every failure, certainly every sin, is a fresh call for us to remember our eternal God, to seek Him, and to expect that He will supply all that we need as He has promised to do.

Concl: Much, much, much more could be said about the eternity of God.

But I trust that we have all seen and heard enough today to make us realize how much we need the Lord, and how sufficient He is for our every need.

GOD IS EVERYWHERE!

Psalm 139:7-12

Intro: One of the unique attributes of God is that He is *omnipresent*. This means, according to Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, to be "present everywhere at once." The first part of this word, *omni*, is from the Latin, and it means *all*. So we can say that omnipresence for God means that He is all present everywhere. That is, the omnipresence of God does not mean that part of Him is here with us this morning, and some more of Him is in other places in Portland, and still more of Him is found in Vancouver, and Gresham, and Beaverton, or wherever you happen to live. No, it doesn't mean that. It means that God in His total Being is fully present at the same time.

So God is with us today just like this was the only place that He exists. But at this very moment He is fully present everywhere! He is with the Phillips in Camp Lejeune, NC just like He is with us here. He is with Tim and Machiko in Japan just like He is with us here. Many of us have family members in other parts of our country, or of the world, and the same is true of them. In fact, God is everywhere—where people know Him and love Him, but also where people do not know Him and do not give Him any place in their lives. There is no place on earth or in the universe where God is not present.

Theologians speak of the immensity of God. They speak of His transcendence. By omnipresence we are not teaching pantheism, that God is in everything. The universe is not God. God is above and beyond all that He has created, a living Person, and it is impossible to go anyplace but what we are in the presence of the living God.

To say the least, this is a most remarkable truth! It is beyond anything that man in his finite wisdom could possibly conceive. God is glorious beyond man's greatest imagination. Not only are God's ways past finding out, but so is He! Like every truth about God, we will never, at least in this life, be able to comprehend it fully, but the more we meditate upon it, and dwell upon the Scriptures which speak of God's omnipresence, the greater will be our understanding and our joy as we contemplate such a God as we have.

Now I want to read some of the passages of Scripture which speak of the omnipresence of God, and I will start with Psalm 139 which has been read for us a few minutes ago.

I. SCRIPTURES WHICH TEACH GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE.

A. Psalm 139:7-12.

- The first six verses of this Psalm speak of the amazing knowledge which God has of each one of us. The second six verses, 7 through 12, speak of His omnipresence. Let me re-read those verses for you. (Read.)

You can see that the Psalmist speak as a person who is deliberately trying in every possible way to get away from God, to escape from His presence. The first time that the presence of the Lord is mentioned specifically in the Bible is in Gen. 3:8 where we are told that “Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.” Did they succeed? Certainly not!

He tried the heavens; God was there. He spoke of the grace, but God was there. If he took the wings of the morning, and dwelt on the opposite side of the earth, even there he would find God's hand continuing to hold him.

- And when distance made no difference as far as the presence of the Lord was concerned, what about the darkness in preference to the light. Evil men love darkness because in darkness they hope to avoid being discovered and captured. But as far as God is concerned the darkness is as bright as the light. So there is no escaping from God.

But let us look at another passage to establish this doctrine:

B. 1 Kings 8:27.

Do you remember when Solomon built the temple which David had wanted to build? And at the dedication of the temple when it finished we have one of the great prayers of Scripture which King Solomon prayed. And as he thought of the temple, as grand as it was, and then thought of the greatness of God, this is what he asked:

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded? (1 Kings 8:27).

- There have been times when God has accommodated Himself to the limitations of man's understanding by appearing to be in a special place at one particular time—as when the cloud descended on the Tabernacle in the desert, and later on the Temple. But Solomon knew God well enough to know that such a God could not be confined to the house he had built.

And then we have that great statement which we find in the prophecy of Jeremiah.

C. Jeremiah 23:23-24.

This is what Jeremiah was directed by the Lord to write:

23 Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off?

24 Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.

This statement was made in the context of judgment that was being brought upon false prophets. They felt that they were getting away with what they were doing, and it was God's omnipresence that He declared to make them know that God was everywhere, and that nothing could therefore be hidden from Him.

We need to dwell on these words so that we will never forget them. What a different place this world would be if these truths were known even to believers, but also to the masses of evil people in the world.

Paul was referring to the omnipresence of God when he was preaching in Athens on Mars' Hill. His words are found in:

D. Acts 17:24-28.

This is what Paul said:

24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

Paul was using the doctrine of God to awaken the people of Athens to

their need of salvation.

We need to recognize that the promises of God with respect to His presence would not be possible if He were not omnipresent. For example,

E. Matthew 28:20b.

This is what the Lord said in the very last statement of Matthew's Gospel, spoken just before the Lord's ascension:

...and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.
Amen.

This was a promise to the disciples who certainly were scattered to different places preaching the Gospel. And when you think of all of the generations of the Lord's people from that day to this who have depended upon that promise, you have to realize that no one but an omnipresent God, in this case, our Lord, could possibly keep such a promise.

Think also of what we find in:

F. Ephesians 4:6.

The Apostle Paul was emphasizing the basis of our oneness with each other, and his concluding point was that there is:

One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all (Eph. 4:6).

This would not be possible if it were not for the fact that God is omnipresent.

And we can add other verses which have to do with our Lord as well as with the Holy Spirit. We have already noted the promise that the Lord would be with us in the last verse of Matthew's Gospel. What about the truth that we have in:

G. Galatians 2:20.

Probably most of us can quote this verse from memory:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

This is just as true of us as it was of the Apostle Paul. Christ lives in us, not just a part of Him, but all of Christ. To do that He would have to be omnipresent.

— And to have the glorious picture complete, we need to consider our relationship to the Holy Spirit. There are several verses I could choose, but I have selected:

H. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

The omnipresence of the Holy Spirit is seen by the fact that He also indwells every believer.

19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

So you can see that many of these familiar verses are verses which teach us the omnipresence of God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

— And then we shouldn't overlook:

I. Hebrews 13:5-6.

This verse brings together the OT and the NT because the promise quoted at the end of verse 5 is taken from the Lord's words to Joshua found in Joshua 1:5. It teaches us how promises given originally to just one of the Lord's people, can be claimed by all of the Lord's people in every generation. Here are the words:

5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

— So I trust that you will see from these passages that the Scriptures very clearly teach that each Member of the Trinity is omnipresent. But now let me spend the rest of my time today pointing out:

II. THE PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS GREAT TRUTH FOR ALL PEOPLE.

I say “for all people” because this is not only an important doctrine for those of us who know the Lord, but it has its meaning even for people who do not know the Lord. Let us begin with us.

A. For us, the people of God.

Surely this is the basis of our ability to fear the Lord, to give Him the reverence and worship for which He alone is worthy. To remember that the Members of the Godhead are always with us should make a difference in the way we live, in the places we go, and in the things that we talk about, and even in what we think about. God not only sees our outward behavior, but He knows what is going on in our hearts.

The key passage for this great truth, as almost all commentators realize, is the passage which was our Scripture reading for today. Did you notice how Psa. 139 begins, and how it ends? In verse 1 we read, “O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.” And the Psalm concludes with these verses:

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Psa. 139:23-24).

So our awareness of the omnipresence of the Lord makes us more conscious of our need to be holy in our lives. And it also encourages us to trust the Lord to be what He wants us to be.

But there is another verse that I should mention with regard to the presence of the Lord. It is Psa. 16:11:

Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

Some think this refers to what we experience when we get to heaven, but it certainly has some application to our lives here and now. Isn't this what fellowship is? Isn't it “fulness of joy”?

Do you remember the third verse of Fanny Crosby's hymn, *I Am Thine, O Lord*?

O the pure delight of a single hour
That before Thy throne I spend,
When I kneel in prayer, and with Thee, my God,
I commune as friend with Friend!

Is there any joy comparable to the joy we experience when we are enjoying the presence of the Lord?

But then I want to mention what this doctrine ought to mean concerning:

B. Those we love .

— Some of those we love know the Lord; others do not. Some of those we love are in church today where they are hearing the Word; others are not. Some of those dear to us read the Bible; others do not. Some of those we love seek the right kind of friends; others do not. I could mention many other contrasts. But isn't it wonderful to know that they are all in the presence of the Lord, and although some are so far away that we have little or no contact with them, yet we can pray for them, and trust the Lord Who is wherever they are, to work in their hearts.

I pray regularly for the pastors who are ministering to my children and grandchildren. And I pray for many of the members of your families whose names you have mentioned to me from time to time. Isn't it wonderful that it doesn't make any difference where people are, the Lord is where they are regardless of where it might be, and we can ask Him to work in their hearts, and to provide for them, and to protect them, and to keep them walking with Him if they know Him. And if they don't know the Lord, to be able to pray that the Lord will bring them to Himself. Oh, — how thankful we should be that our God is omnipresent, and He is the only God Who is! When I say that I am referring to all three Members of the Trinity.

But let me say just a further word in closing about:

C. Those we know and love who don't know the Lord.

In the last book of the Bible, we are told that the day is coming when a most tragic thing will happen:

12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond-

man, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? (Rev. 6:12-17).

But will they succeed in hiding from God? No. Man boasts about many things that he can do, but this is one thing that no one can do. When it comes to dealing with God, *there is no hiding place!*

Concl: And so I close with an appeal to any of you who do not know the Lord. Don't think that you are getting away with anything before God. There is nothing about you that He doesn't know. You can be a very respectable person outwardly, but you know that things are not right in your heart. I trust that the Lord has been speaking to you today as we have been thinking about our God Who is everywhere! And that He will give you the grace before Him to acknowledge that you are a sinner, and that you will repent of your sins and put your trust in Christ for salvation.