

Systematic Theology: The Character of God

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By Don Green

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Truth Community Church

4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

On January 7, 1855 Charles Spurgeon opened his morning sermon with these words, he said, "The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy which can ever engage the attention of a child of God is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father. It is a subject so vast that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity, so deep that our pride is drowned in its infinity. No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind than thoughts of God, but while the subject humbles the mind, it also expands it. He who often thinks of God will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe. The most excellent study for expanding the soul is the science of Christ and him crucified and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the deity. Would you lose your sorrow? Would you drown your cares? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea, be lost in his immensity and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul, so calm the swelling billows of sorrow and grief, so speak to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead. It is to that subject that I invite you this morning." And it's to that subject that I invite you here this evening in this message as we continue our study on the attributes of God.

Let me remind you that we are in the midst of an ongoing study in systematic theology that we started a couple of months ago, starting with the premise that God has revealed himself in his word and established his authority, made his authority known in the Scriptures, and the most important thing that God has done in that revelation is he has made himself known. He has told us what he is like and that is where we all must begin; that is where all of our thinking must concentrate is to go to the word of God and establish our worldview, establish our thinking, establish the parameters of human thought based on what God has revealed in his word and specifically what he has revealed about himself in his word. Everything else is trivial by comparison.

As we study the character of God, as we looked at that over the past couple of weeks, we realize that we saw something of the immensity of God, that he is an infinite God of independence; he is self-existent; that he is a God of omniscience; that he is wise; that he is unchanging; and that he is powerful, powerful in the sense that he can do anything that he wants to do. Nothing hinders the will of God. He has the absolute power and ability to

do anything that he wants; that's why we call him Sovereign over all of creation. Those are lofty thoughts of God in the language that Spurgeon used. We've seen the greatness of God in the studies that we've had so far. What we're going to do this evening is take a look at the moral character of God: what is God like, what is he like in his nature, in his moral nature what is he like. Yet as we go from the mind of God to the power of God and now to the character of God, beloved, what I would want you to see, what I would be eager for you to grasp and to comprehend is that as we look at his moral character, we're simply displaying another aspect of his greatness.

God is great and he is good in his greatness, you might say. That's what we said last time, that as we consider the power and the omnipotence of God, is to realize that that is a place of rest for our souls because his omnipotence is never arbitrary, he always exercises it in consistency with his other attributes. That's so essential for us to understand. Today what we're going to see is what those attributes are that inform what God does; the character of God that shapes who he is and the things that he does. And we're going to look at five aspects of the character of God tonight. These are not exhaustive. We're kind of following the sequence in the book that we've been using as a bit of an outline by Louis Berkhof, "A Summary of Christian Doctrine," and we're going to follow this and it's going to go far too quickly. I promise you it's going to go far too quickly for you because what we're doing here tonight is we're stepping, in a sense, out of the – this is a very bad way to say it but we're moving from those things that make God great, his omniscience and those things that make him transcendent over us and now we move into the character that allows us to trust him, to know him, to approach his throne with a sense of confidence that he will receive us in our Lord Jesus Christ and this is just so very wonderful.

You know, I think we all probably, certainly in the past as maybe a new Christian, before you were a Christian, it's easy to, in one sense when you don't know God, it's easy to question him and to wonder, "Is he really good? Is he really loving? And if he's loving, why is there all these bad things that happen in the world?" Questions like that. Well, beloved, what we want to do is we want to step out of those shadows and those kinds of questions about the character of God and enter into who he really is and when you see who God really is, you cannot help but love him immensely and deeply and profoundly and honor him for the sheer goodness of who he is. You know, in Reformed circles, there is no doubt in my mind, I couldn't document this and prove it, this is just observations over a few years of pastoral ministry, we're quick to talk about the sovereignty of God and that kind of stuff and we would defend that and we would run to defend that when that's attacked, but we're less certain of the things that should equally inform our view of God. We're less certain of his goodness, that's why you doubt him when things go wrong. We're less certain of his love, that's why you question it when things aren't going your way or when life brings sorrow or changes that are difficult to you and you sink down in the quicksand of that. Beloved, what you should realize after we're done tonight is that all of that is entirely unnecessary and that there should be a yearning for your soul after this God whose character we're going to expound for you now.

Five things about the character of God, the moral character of God, and the first one is this for those of you that are taking notes, which is all of you, right? Good. 1. God is good. God is good. And when we use these simple adjectives about the character of God, it's very important for us to define what we mean by them because words get so familiar that they almost lose their sense of meaning from familiarity. Well, we're going to try to take just a moment to define these adjectives that we're using here tonight as we draw the rose, the magnificent rose of God's character to us, that we would breathe in the sweet aroma of who he is, understanding that these attributes mean something.

When we say that God is good, what do we mean? God is good in the sense that he does well to others. He acts kindly toward others, toward his creation. Berkhof says, and I quote, "God's goodness is that perfection which prompts him to deal kindly and bountifully with all his creatures." God is the Creator of heaven and earth. God is the sustainer of heaven and earth. It is in God that all creatures and all men live and move and have their being and what you and I should understand and what God has declared to be true about himself is that with all of his creation, he deals with it kindly, bountifully, overflowing in his goodness and generosity to those who are dependent upon him for their existence. Goodness is a universal trait of how God deals with creation and with his people. And mark this, beloved, and mark it well: goodness is a mark of how God deals even with his enemies. Scripture leaves no doubt about that.

Let's turn to some Scriptures just to give us an all too brief perspective on this. Psalm 145. As you're turning to Psalm 145, let me say this: it's my hope that somewhere in the future of our pulpit ministry, that there's an extended series on the attributes of God where these things where we're covering four and five times a pop in one message would each one become a topic of an individual message. The goodness of God is certainly one that deserves an independent treatment so that we would magnify him. You know, you should have it in your mind, you should be so convinced of this that you think this way, that when people start to speak badly about God and start to question him and make accusations against him, there would be a sense of moral repugnance in your heart toward that that says, "No! God is not like that at all! God is good!" And that you would know these things and be so persuaded of them that you would have a reflexive reaction against accusations against his goodness; that you would rise up in your heart and defend him because of the absolute goodness which is intrinsic to his being.

Psalm 145:8-9. In what way is the Lord good? Well, in verse 8,

8 The LORD is gracious and merciful; Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness.

The word that means loyal love.

9 The LORD is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works.

As a result, verse 10,

10 All Your works shall give thanks to You, O LORD, And Your godly ones shall bless You.

Why is it that we ascribe praise to God? In part it's because he is so magnificently good and he is so generous with his creation, so generous with his people.

Look down at verse 14, for example.

14 The LORD sustains all who fall And raises up all who are bowed down. 15 The eyes of all look to You, And You give them their food in due time. 16 You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing. 17 The LORD is righteous in all His ways And kind in all His deeds. 18 The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth.

Beloved, do you see it? Does your heart not just melt before the warmth of the burning goodness of God? That he is like this to all of his creation? That he is like this to dumb animals? That he is like that with you and with me? Aren't you here and most of you are here, you have a full stomach because you were able to eat before you came in? You've got a warm home to go to. Those of you that are Christians, the blessing that is ours in our Lord Jesus Christ, the forgiveness of sin because that wonderful God Incarnate went to Calvary, shed his blood in order that your sins could be forgiven and that he might graciously, freely give you the gift of eternal life if you would believe in him, and all of your guilt, all of your anger, all of your rebellion against God, your failure to love him with all of your heart, soul, strength and mind, in the goodness of God, in the salvation that he has provided for us in Christ, God says, "I'll wipe all of those things off of your slate and receive you into full fellowship with me. I will gladly own you as my own child so that you can rightly call me Father." And we could look up into heaven, as it were, and see Christ at his right hand and say, "There is my brother in heaven."

Do you realize what unspeakably great goodness that is? That goodness is infinite. There is no end to that kind of goodness and God just continues to deal with us well, even when we just take it for granted and you go days without even giving him thanks for the simplest of blessings. God keeps being good to you nonetheless. That unmerited goodness, that unmerited favor, that generosity, flows from nothing that's in you and me. You must see that. The reason that God is good to us is not because we have it coming to us, God's goodness flows from that which is intrinsic to his essence. That's why he's good to us. He's good to you because he's good himself and God isn't stingy about it. As we say, he gives to those who do not even give him thanks.

Look at Matthew 5 for another aspect of this. Matthew 5:45. You know, there's just a sense of privilege that we should have to even be able to look into these things, just to be able to comprehend them and study them with our minds. What a blessing it is just to contemplate the goodness of God, let alone be on the receiving end of it. But in verse 45 of Matthew 5, Jesus, having told us to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us, he says, "Here's why you do that, it's

45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

God showers upon his people the rains that are necessary for life. He brings up the sun day after day after day on his people. But do you know what? He shows that same blessing, that same goodness, on those who are his enemies who defy his name, who break his law, who curse the name of Christ, who have no intention of ever repenting of their sin. God shows them that same goodness. Why does he do that? Because he's good. He is so good that he even shows this kind of kindness and blessing on those who shake their fist at him.

Now, having said that, it's important for us to understand that God is good to all but he does make distinctions in his goodness which is evident enough and obvious enough. God is good to animals in a particular kind of way, but he's been good to the human race in a way that is distinct from animals. The passage that Andrew read at the beginning of our service, Psalm 8, said that God has made man just a little lower than the heavenly beings and he's put man over the animal kingdom and so God is good to the animal kingdom but he's been good to the human race in a way that is distinct and different. He doesn't have to treat everybody equally well for him to be good to all. And going even further, to his people, to the elect, God has shown a goodness that he does not share with the non-elect. Those who will never know Christ in a saving way are still on the receiving end of his goodness and yet we should be the ones, we who are in Christ, should be at the front lines most loudly proclaiming the goodness of God because he has saved our souls. He is good to us through life.

His character is impeccable and we love him for it so that we could say it this way, God is absolutely free in his goodness. He is free to determine how he wants to be good to any individual even within the church. Some he gives, the Spirit gives, different measures of giftedness as it pleases him. Some of us enjoy long lives, some of us will have a shorter life. Some of us have abundant prosperity, some of us live on the edge. But in all of that, we should all be able to look and see, "God is being good to me." And he's free in his goodness in the sense that he's under no obligation to share the same goodness with everyone without exception. But as we look around us, we see that all of creation benefits from the goodness of God, even the nameless flapping sparrow somewhere in northern Michigan that will never be seen by human eye is on the receiving end of the goodness of God.

His goodness, beloved, should make you thankful and not just thankful – oh, beloved, learn this, learn this deeply in your heart, would you? Learn to be thankful not simply for the gifts, learn to be preeminently thankful for the Giver; to be thankful to the One who dispenses those gifts so that when the gifts are removed, when good health and the youth is removed and now you're teetering on a cane in older age, when you're laying ill, perhaps on your deathbed, that your heart and your mouth would be so conditioned to still breathe out thanks to the goodness of God so that your thanks to God are not

dependent upon your outward circumstances, that it is rooted in the goodness of God himself and there is an eternal ever-flowing fountain from which you can drink in order to express your gratitude. God is good. That's intrinsic to his character.

Secondly, God is love. God is love as 1 John 4:7-8 tell us. But brothers and sisters in Christ, as we think about the love of God, again we need to define our terms. We need to think carefully about this so that we would think rightly about it. You should not think about the love of God in sentimental emotional terms, in terms of feelings that come and go. That's not the sense in which God loves us at all. Love means, when we say that God is love, God's love means that he sacrificially gives of himself to others. There is in love an active giving that flows out that is so contrary to the way the world speaks about love and silly, sappy, emotional, so-called love songs that are only speaking of transient feelings that are doomed to ebb with the flow of time. God's love is not, that's not what we're talking about at all.

Turn, I could quote this verse but I would rather you see it with your own eyes, John 3:16. We'll look at a couple of these as I tempt the clock with my tangents here. God is love and in John 3:16 – oh beloved, you must be if you have any ounce of regeneration in your soul which is a horribly bad theological way to speak, but if you have any ounce of the character of God, if you have any ounce of the Spirit dwelling within you, your heart must be flaming up in response to these things. John 3:16, God so loved the world, what did he do?

16 God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

In 1 John 4:10 it says,

10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

What did the love of Christ do? How did that manifest itself? An ultimate act of self-sacrifice for the salvation of your soul. You who had no claim on him, had no claim, no title deed to his blood, Christ comes and give it sacrificially, gives it voluntarily, gladly in full obedience to his Father lays down his life. Why? Because he has love for his people; because he had love for us; that he had love for you by name; that it was by name that he suffered for you on the cross; that as he was undergoing the torments of eternal judgment and feeling the weight and the pain of eternal judgment for you and me in love, as J. Gresham Machen put it so beautifully. He thought even of me on the cross. Thinking not of himself but giving of himself on the cross in a way that worked to your benefit.

So God in love brings salvation to his people in a sacrificial way. You could divide this up, talking about his love. God in grace gives salvation to sinners. God in his mercy relieves suffering. God in his patience bears with sinners in their rebellion. Think about this, think about the love of God in this way, we could just talk about it: the love of God is like having a three ton diamond, a perfect diamond in front of you, if you could have it

on some kind of swivel, the light would just radiate different colors into perpetuity, just seeing it from different angles, different perspectives. Think about the love of God in relationship to your own soul, beloved, that while you were a sinner, before you came to Christ, how patiently he bore with you in your sin, in your drunkenness, in your anger, in your lusts, in your refusal to bend the knee to Christ, some of us cursing the name of Christ and God patiently bore with that knowing that he had a timetable in which he would bring you to saving faith.

What love is that, that kind of patience? What kind of grace is it, that undeserved favor that you and I enjoy being a child of God and knowing that we'll see our Savior one day face-to-face? What kind of gift of love is that to such undeserving creatures like you and me? What kind of mercy is it that time and time and time again, beloved, you've gone to God in distress, you've gone to him in sorrow, you've gone to him in need and said, "O God, help me! O God, be merciful to me! God, this hurts!" And in time you find that God has met that need, God has relieved your suffering, he has brought a fresh comfort to your heart that has changed your disposition and those prior pains of the past have yielded into joy once more. Why is it like that? Why is the Christian life like that? It's not because of you and me, it's because that's what God is. He's loving. He's gracious. He's merciful. He's patient with us. And any preacher worth his salt is conscious of that every time he steps into the pulpit. Whenever we open the word of God, we do so out of his grace and mercy, not out of merit of our own.

So God is love and all of these things of which we've spoken, they're all aspects of God's sacrificial care and love, fully realizing that none of us return to him fully and perfectly the glory that he is due, sometimes we rebel against it, don't we? Don't you? And yet he still shows that same unbending, unyielding, unchanging love toward us. That's great love, isn't it? That's great goodness, isn't it? For God to be like that calls forth the most profound, from the deepest part of our inner man, it just bursts forth and goes like a rocket up to heaven to give him the praise of which he is deserving. That's how the redeemed heart responds to the character of God.

My friends, I try not to go any message without making some kind of an appeal to those who aren't in Christ, to realize, to highlight to you that in love God calls you and invites you once again, if you're not in Christ, lovingly, graciously again invites you come to Christ that God might pour out all of this kind of mercy and patience and love and goodness on you as well; that God will wipe away all of your sins, bring you into full and make you someone new and set you on a path that leads to heaven. In light of all of that goodness and love of God, do you see why the writer of Hebrews says how could we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? That the greatest judgment would fall on those that would hear of the love and the goodness of God and say, "No, I reject that. I refuse that. I want no part of that." How could you not want? What does it say about the heart of a man that says, "I don't want anything to do with the goodness and love of God. I want nothing to do with this sinless Son of God who gave his life for me." What does that say about the wretchedness of the human heart? It says, "No, I think I prefer darkness and Satan to light and Christ." Yet once more God says, "Come and I'll give you rest."

Well, the goodness of God, the love of God. All too quickly, let's go to a third aspect, a third attribute of the character of God as we talk about the reality that God is holy. God is holy in his character. What does it mean that God is holy? It has two senses. There are two ways that you can speak about the holiness of God. First of all, we can say with Berkhof this: holiness is that divine perfection by which God is absolutely distinct from all his creatures and exalted above them in infinite majesty. I'll say that again: holiness is that divine perfection by which God is absolutely distinct from all his creatures and exalted above them in infinite majesty. God is someone else, you might say. I like to look for basic ways to say these things. He is distinct from you and me. God in his essence is not like us at all. We've covered that when we talked about his incommunicable attributes.

Exodus 15:11 says this after God had delivered his people through the Red Sea, they responded in praise and said,

11 Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?

Who is like You? The answer is no one. He is distinct. He is different.

Let me point you to another verse of like character in Micah 7:18. You don't need to turn here. Micah is another book that I hope I live for like another 80 years because there is so much that I want to say from this pulpit. That would make me like 135 when I die. Those odds aren't looking too hot, are they? Micah 7:18. There is just so much to be said in response to the revelation of God. That's the point. Micah 7:18 says,

18 Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love.

Beloved, when you think about God, somewhere on the shelf of your mind, some of you with multiple shelves in your mind that have a lot to draw upon, a lot to pull down from, one of the shelves of your mind there should be the thought, "Who is like God?" and the immediate response of your heart would be, "No one. No one is awesome and majestic like he. No one else is of uncreated essence. No one else is the Creator of heaven and earth. No one else passes over the rebellion of his people in order that he might save them. No one else became man in order to go to Calvary. No one else can do the miracles that he does. No one else is good and loving and holy like he. No one else." So that there is a complete sanctification of God, a complete setting apart of God in your mind that when you think about him, you enter in lowliness of heart, in humility, in fear, in trusting love, always conscious that the access to this great God comes not on your merit but on the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. And you can see, can't you, why Scripture commands us never to take the name of God in vain? That there should be such reverence and love and esteem that we attach to the name of God, to use his name in vain, to use his name in a superficial text response, to use his name as a curse word, is just anathema to us. Why? Because his name is a representation of who he is. And who is he? We know

him. We know him as a good God of love and of holiness and therefore we revere and esteem the name which represents his being. God is separate from all else, in that sense he is holy.

Secondly, we can say this about God's holiness: holiness means that God is free from all moral impurity or sin and is therefore morally perfect. He's morally perfect. If you'll turn to another prophet, Isaiah 6, and this is a familiar passage so we don't have to spend a whole lot of time here, but what was the response of Isaiah when he saw the glory and the holiness of God and what does it tell us about the false claims to have gone to heaven and see God by those who make them in our modern day? These people have never seen God because they do not come back...first of all, they were never there in the first place and if they had they wouldn't come back as arrogant, boastful, profiteering racketeers, making money off the vision because a true vision of God has an opposite effect and so we condemn all of that stuff as false and satanic, never to be followed.

Isaiah 6:1,

1 In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. 2 Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory." 4 And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. 5 Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

You see, beloved, a right understanding of the holiness of God, the moral perfection, the absence of impurity in his being, convicts us of sin. When you rightly see the holiness of God, you see yourself by comparison and the light of his holiness shines out, brings forth the darkness in your own soul, the sin that still remains. And so, beloved, one way to evaluate whether you've come to know the true and living God is whether you esteem him as one who is holy and whether his holiness has brought you low in light of your own sin. You know, the man who has truly seen, truly understood the holiness of God, is one who is never going to flippantly refer to God as the Big Man Upstairs. God forbid that any of you under the sound of my voice would ever think of God like that. Holy, good, loving, we speak of him with reverence and according to who he truly is.

Well, God's holiness leads us naturally to a fourth attribute of his that we can consider in the brief time that we have remaining. God is righteous. God is righteous. God's righteousness means that he always does what is correct, what is right, what is true, what is fitting. Indeed, God himself is the final standard of what is right and true. You realize in one sense it seems like a bit of an esoteric point but understand that God himself is the standard of righteousness. There is not an independent standard by which you would evaluate the character of God and say, "Oh, God meets that standard and therefore he is

righteous." No, God is the standard. There is nothing higher than God by which he could ever be measured. God is righteous and he is the final standard of what is right and true and that has consequences.

Look at 2 Thessalonians 1 with me, if you will. One of the great things about heaven will be that there won't be any time restraints. There won't be anything else to distract us or to call our attention away and we'll just be able to absorb ourselves in the wonderful attributes of God forever and ever and ever, amen. That's going to be the best part of heaven. Seeing Christ, seeing him face-to-face and just having a greater unhindered understanding of who he is unfolded before us. I trust you're looking forward to that.

2 Thessalonians 1, beginning in verse 5. Paul is commending the Thessalonians for their perseverance through their afflictions and persecutions and he says in verse 5,

5 This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. 6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed--for our testimony to you was believed.

God is righteous. There are kind of two ways that that applies. He's righteous in the sense that he is faithful to his people and he rewards them and he honors them and he keeps them and he blesses them for their fidelity to Christ and he will never, ever be unfaithful to us. Never, ever, ever. Out on the thought. Repent of any contrary thinking. God will be faithful to his people. He will honor and keep us and protect us and provide for us. Why? Because he's righteous. Because that's how he deals with us. He righteously rewards those who trust and obey him and watch this as we saw from 2 Thessalonians 1, God righteously punishes those who rebel against his holiness. The punishment reflects his righteous wrath. It's only right for him to punish those who rebel against an eternal God. That's only right. That's correct. That is the way it should be, that justice would be served when the law is broken. That's right and yet it is also righteous for those of us who have received the free gift of God in Christ, the free gift of salvation and he's promised that he'll forgive us all of our sins and that he'll bless us for loving him, it is righteous, it is right for him to honor that promise and to reward those who trust and obey him. Whether it's a justice in reward or whether it's a justice in punishment, it's all rooted in the righteousness of God doing what is right according to his own essence. God is righteous. Those who do not know him should tremble. Those of us who are in Christ should rejoice. He's righteous. He'll always deal with us according to his promise.

Finally, all too quickly: God is true. God is true and we should love him for every one of these attributes. God is good. God is love. God is holy. God is righteous. And God is true. Living as we do in an age that prefers deception to truth, men who love to deceive and men who are gladly deceived, deceived and being deceived, deceiver and those who receive the deception and honor and reward it, what a blessing it is for us to know the God who is true. This attribute of God is sometimes called his veracity. His veracity is that perfection of God in virtue of which he is true in his inner being, in his revelation, and in his relation to his people. I stumbled all over that. Let me start over. Veracity is that perfection of God in virtue of which he is true in his inner being, in his revelation, and in his relation to his people. In other words, there is no falsehood in the essence of God. Everything is true, just and right in his essence and therefore that has implications from Scripture, therefore when God revealed his word, he revealed a word that was perfectly true in everything that it affirms. It could be no other way. It's the word of God. God is true therefore his word is true, without error in everything that it teaches.

And he's also true in his relationship with us. He's faithful. He's good. He does for us what he says he's going to do. Has he promised you in 1 John 3:2 that you'll see Christ face-to-face? He is true, you will see Christ face-to-face one day soon enough. Has he promised to keep us out of the wrath to come? He's going to keep us out of the wrath to come. Has he promised to perfect in you the work that he began in Christ Jesus? He's going to perfect that work. And your certainty of that, your confidence of that, your confidence of the outcome of your Christian life, of reaching the desired goal of being in heaven, depends not on you in the ultimate sense. It does not depend on you attaining a standard which you would quickly fall from anyway. No, God has said that he will perfect the work that he has begun in you and therefore it will be done. And those of you who are in Christ, it is guaranteed by the truth, by the veracity of God, that if you are in Christ today, one day you will be in his presence, perfected in glory, without sin, glorified and fit to be in his holy presence forever and ever. Why? Because God is true. Because he said that's what he's going to do and he tells the truth and he never lies. He can be believed. He's the true God, not the false gods of the imaginations of men. What he says can be believed.

One verse that I should read here, Numbers 23. You don't need to turn there but Numbers 23:19, Scripture says,

19 God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

He can't lie, Titus 1:2 says. He can't lie because he's true. God tells us the way things really are. He is faithful to fulfill his promises. Our Lord Jesus says, "that they might believe in You, the one true God and Jesus Christ in whom You have sent."

So, I feel like we've stepped for just a moment into the mental realm of heaven and now reluctantly it's time to step back out of that realm and come back to earth, as it were. But beloved, I trust that this ever so brief drink from the fountain of the character of God

gives you a sense that the fountain of the attributes of God are an ever flowing stream of purity and goodness. Yes, as we've seen in the past, we worship God for his transcendent majesty. The immutable infinite God, we bow low before his transcendence. The omniscient wise God, we honor him with our devotion. The power of God that enables him to do whatever he wants, we worship and we bow low. Beloved, do you see that his character, his moral nature, pulls forth from us, calls forth from our hearts, another aspect of love, reverence, devotion and respect of infinite value because we worship him not just for his loftiness, we worship him for who he is. And who is he? He's good. He's love. He's true. He's holy. He's righteous. Everything that this world is not, God is, and we love him and we worship him for it.

Let's bow together in prayer.

We will give thanks to thee, O God, above the nations, in the presence of nations. We will honor you. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. Let your glory be known throughout all the earth. And Father, as the consideration of your great attributes have, as it were, shed glory abroad in our hearts, we bow low, not in abject fear but in loving adoration. We join with the woman who laid hold of the feet of Christ, weeping tears over his feet and washing his feet with her hair, recognizing the presence of someone so good in her midst. She feeling so unworthy and yet drawn to the goodness of Christ and the promise of his love and the certainty of the forgiveness that he promises and all she could do is weep tears of gratitude and allow them to cleanse the earthly feet of Christ. O Lord Jesus, you're not here in physical presence for us to do that but we pray that you would accept the joyful tears of our heart, the glad gratitude with which we respond to what we've seen from your word this evening. Yes, Lord, we worship you. We honor you. We praise you. You are so very good and we worship you in response. In the name of our Lord Jesus we pray. Amen.

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