

This is our twelfth study of the “Attributes of God.”

We are using Attributes of God, by A. W. Pink as the platform for this series of studies.

Published by

Chapel Library

2603 West Wright St. • Pensacola, Florida 32505 USA

Sending Christ-centered materials from prior centuries worldwide

Worldwide: please use the online downloads worldwide without charge.

In North America: please write for a printed copy without charge.

We do not ask for donations, send promotional mailings, or share the mailing list.

Attributes of God

by A. W. Pink

Contents

Preface 2

Chapter 1 The Solitariness of God 2

Chapter 2 The Decrees of God 4

Chapter 3 The Knowledge of God 6

Chapter 4 The Foreknowledge of God 8

Chapter 5 The Supremacy of God 10

Chapter 6 The Sovereignty of God 12

Chapter 7 The Immutability of God 14

Chapter 8 The Holiness of God 15

Chapter 9 The Power of God 18

Chapter 10 The Faithfulness of God 20

Chapter 11 The Goodness of God 23

Chapter 12 The Patience of God 24

Chapter 13 The Grace of God 26

Chapter 14 The Mercy of God 28

Chapter 15 The Lovingkindness of God 30

Chapter 16 The Love of God 32

Chapter 17 The Love of God to Us 34

Chapter 18 The Wrath of God 36

Chapter 19 The Contemplation of God 38

Index of Authors Quoted 40

The Attributes of God, by A. W. Pink. First Printing 1930. First Chapel Library edition 1993. Printed in the United States of America.

© Copyright 1993 by Chapel Library (this edition), Pensacola, Florida. Permission is expressly granted to reproduce this material by any means, provided:

- 1) it is not charged for beyond a nominal sum for cost of duplication
- 2) this copyright notice and all the text on this page is included.

A **Study Guide** is also available for this text, either in print or with this paperback text for online download from our web site. For copies or information on other Bible correspondence courses, please contact Mount Zion Bible Institute at the same address.

About the Author

Arthur W. Pink was born in Nottingham, England in 1886, and born again of the Spirit of God in 1908. He studied at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, USA for only six weeks before beginning his pastoral work in Colorado. From there he pastored churches in California, Kentucky and South Carolina before moving on to Sidney, Australia for a brief period, preaching and teaching. In 1934, He returned to his native land, England, and in 1940 took up permanent residence on the Isle of Lewis, Scotland, remaining there until his death twelve years later in 1952. Most of his works, including *The Attributes Of God*, first appeared as articles in the monthly *Studies In The Scriptures* published from 1922 to 1953.

Lesson 10 God's Love**Chapter 15****The Lovingkindness of God**

WE PROPOSE TO ENGAGE THE READER WITH ANOTHER OF His excellencies—of which every Christian receives innumerable proofs. We turn to a consideration of God's lovingkindness because our aim is to maintain a due proportion in treating of the divine perfections, for all of us are apt to entertain one-sided views of them. A balance must be preserved here (as everywhere), as it appears in those two statements of the divine attributes, "God is light" (1Jo 1:5), "God is love" (1Jo 4:8). The sterner, more awe-inspiring aspects of the divine character are offset by the gentler, more winsome ones. It is to our irreparable loss if we dwell exclusively on God's sovereignty and majesty, or His holiness and justice; we need to meditate frequently, though not exclusively, on His goodness and mercy. Nothing short of a full-orbed view of the divine perfections—as revealed in Holy Writ—should satisfy us.

The innumerable blessings on the Christian

Scripture speaks of "the multitude of His lovingkindnesses," and who is capable of numbering them? (Isa 63:7). Said the Psalmist, "How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God!" (36:7). No pen of man, no tongue of angel, can adequately express it. Familiar as this blessed attribute of God's may be to people, it is something entirely peculiar to divine revelation. None of the ancients ever dreamed of investing his "gods" with such endearing perfection as this. None of the objects worshipped by present-day heathen possess gentleness and tenderness; very much the reverse is true, as the hideous features of their idols exhibit. Philosophers regard it as a serious reflection upon the honour of the Absolute to ascribe such qualities to it. But the Scriptures have much to say about God's lovingkindness, or His paternal favor to His people, His tender affection toward them.

The first time this divine perfection is mentioned in the Word is in that wondrous manifestation of Deity to Moses, when Jehovah proclaimed His "Name," i.e., Himself as made known. "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exo 34:6), though much more frequently the Hebrew word, *chesed*, is rendered "kindness" and "lovingkindness." In our English Bibles the initial reference, as connected with God, is Psalm 17:7, where David prayed, "Shew thy marvelous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee." Marvelous it is that One so infinitely above us, so inconceivably glorious, so ineffably holy, should not only notice such worms of the earth, but also set His heart upon them, give His Son for them, send His Spirit to indwell them, and so bear with all their imperfections and waywardness as never to remove His lovingkindness from them.

Consider some of the evidences and exercises of this divine attribute unto the saints, “In love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself” (Eph 1:4-5). As the previous verse shows, that love was engaged in their behalf before this world came into existence. “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him” (1Jo 4:9), which was His amazing provision for us fallen creatures. “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jer 31:3), by the quickening operations of My Spirit, by the invincible power of My grace, by creating in you a deep sense of need, by attracting you by My winsomeness. “I will betroth thee unto Me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies” (Hos 2:19). Having made us willing in the day of His power to give ourselves to Him, the Lord enters into an everlasting marriage contract with us.

This lovingkindness of the Lord is never removed from His children. To our reason it may *appear* to be so, yet it never is. Since the believer be in Christ, nothing can separate him from the love of God (Rom 8:39). God has solemnly engaged Himself by covenant, and our sins cannot make it void. God has sworn that if His children keep not His commandments He will “visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.” Yet He adds, “Nevertheless My lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break” (Psa 89:31-34). Observe the change of number from “their” and “them” to “Him.” The lovingkindness of God toward His people is centered in Christ. Because His exercise of lovingkindness is a covenant engagement it is repeatedly linked to His “truth” (Psa 40:11; 138:2), showing that it proceeds to us by promise. Therefore we should never despair.

“For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee” (Isa 54:10). No, that covenant has been ratified by the blood of its Mediator, by which blood the enmity (occasioned by sin) has been removed and perfect reconciliation effected. God knows the thoughts which He entertains for those embraced in His covenant and who have been reconciled to Him; namely, “thoughts of peace, and not of evil” (Jer 29:11). Therefore we are assured, “The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me” (Psa 42:8). What a word that is! Not merely that the Lord will give or bestow, but command His lovingkindness. It is given by decree, bestowed by royal engagement, as He also commands “deliverances...the blessing, even life for evermore” (Psa 44:4; 133:3), which announces that nothing can possibly hinder these bestowments.

The response of the saints

What ought our response to be? First, “Be ye therefore followers [imitators] of God as dear children; and walk in love” (Eph 5:1-2). “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness” (Col 3:12). Thus it was with David: “Thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth” (Psa 26:3). He delighted to ponder it. It refreshed his soul to do so, and it molded his conduct. The more we are occupied with God’s goodness, the more careful we will be about *our obedience*. The constraints of God’s love and grace are more powerful to the regenerate than the terrors of His Law. “How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings” (Psa 36:7).

Second, a sense of this divine perfection strengthens *our faith*, and promotes confidence in God.

Third, it should stimulate *the spirit of worship*. “Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee” (Psa 63:3; cf. 138:2). Fourth, it should be our cordial when depressed. “Let...thy merciful kindness [same Hebrew word] be for my comfort” (Psa 119:76). It was so with Christ in His anguish (Psa 69:17). Fifth, it should be our plea in prayer, “Quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness” (Psa 119:159). David applied to that divine attribute for new strength and increased vigor. Sixth, we should appeal to it when we have fallen by the wayside. “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness” (Psa 51:1). Deal with me according to the gentlest of Thy attributes, make my case an exemplification of Thy tenderness. Seventh, it should be a petition in our evening devotions. “Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning” (Psa 143:8). Arouse me with my soul in tune therewith, let my waking thoughts be of Thy goodness.

Chapter 16

The Love of God

The nature of God

THERE ARE THREE THINGS TOLD US IN SCRIPTURE concerning the *nature* of God. First, “God is spirit” (Joh 4:24). In the Greek there is no indefinite article, and to say “God is a spirit” is most objectionable, for it places Him in a class with others. God is “spirit” in the highest sense. Because He is “spirit” He is incorporeal, having no visible substance. Had God a tangible body, He would not be omnipresent, He would be limited to one place; because He is “spirit” He fills heaven and earth. Secondly, “God is light” (1Jo 1:5), which is the opposite of darkness. In Scripture “darkness” stands for sin, evil, death, and “light” for holiness, goodness, life. “God is light” means that He is the *sum* of all excellency. Thirdly, “God is love” (1Jo 4:8). It is not simply that God “loves,” but that He *is* Love itself. Love is not merely one of His attributes, but His very nature.

There are many today who talk about the love of God, who are total strangers to the God of love. The divine love is commonly regarded as a species of amiable weakness, a sort of good-natured indulgence; it is reduced to a mere sickly sentiment, patterned after human emotion. Now the truth is that on this, as on everything else, our thoughts need to be formed and regulated by what is revealed thereon in Holy Scripture. That there is urgent need for this is apparent not only from the ignorance which so generally prevails, but also the low state of spirituality which is now so sadly evident everywhere among professing Christians. How little real love there is for God. One chief reason for this is because our hearts are so little occupied with His wondrous love for His people. The better we are acquainted with His love—its character, fullness, blessedness—the more will our hearts be drawn out in love to Him.

The character and blessedness of God’s love

1. The love of God is *uninfluenced*. By this we mean, there was nothing whatever in the objects of His love to call it into exercise, nothing in the creature to attract or prompt it. The love which one creature has for another is because of something in the object; but the love of God is free, spontaneous, uncaused. The only reason why God loves any is found in His own sovereign will: “The LORD did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but *because* the LORD loved you” (Deu 7:7-8). God has loved His people from everlasting, and therefore nothing about the creature can be the cause of what is found in God from eternity. He loves *from* Himself: “according to His own purpose” (2Ti 1:9).

“We love him, because He first loved us” (1Jo 4:19). God did not love us because we loved Him, but He loved us before we had a particle of love for Him. Had God loved us in return for ours, then it would not be spontaneous on His part; but because He loved us when we were loveless, it is clear that His love was uninfluenced. It is highly important, if God is to be honored and the heart of His child established, that we should be quite clear upon this precious truth. God’s love for me and for each of “His own” was entirely unmoved by anything in us. What was there in me to attract the heart of God? Absolutely nothing. But, to the contrary, there was everything to repel Him, everything calculated to make Him loathe me—sinful, depraved, a mass of corruption, with “*no good thing*” in me.

*“What was there in me that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
’Twas even so, Father, I ever must sing,
Because it seemed good in Thy sight.”*

2. It is *eternal*. This is of necessity. God Himself is eternal, and God *is* love; therefore, as God Himself had no beginning, His love had none. Granted that such a concept far transcends the grasp of our feeble minds, nevertheless, where we cannot comprehend we can bow in adoring worship. How clear is the testimony of Jeremiah 31:3, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” How blessed to know that the great and holy God loved His people before heaven and earth were called into existence, that He had set His heart upon them from all eternity. Clear proof is this that His love is spontaneous, for He loved them endless ages before they had any being.

The same precious truth is set forth in Ephesians 1:4-5: “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* having predestinated us.” What praise should this evoke from each of His children! How tranquilizing for the heart: since God’s love toward me had no beginning, it can have no ending! Since it is true that “from everlasting to everlasting” He is God, and since God is “love,” then it is equally true that “from everlasting *to* everlasting” He loves His people.

3. It is *sovereign*. This also is self-evident. God Himself is sovereign, under obligations to none, a law unto Himself, acting always according to His own imperial pleasure. Since God is sovereign, and since He is love, it necessarily follows that His love is sovereign. Because God *is* God, He does as He pleases; because God is love, He loves whom He pleases. Such is His own express affirmation: “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated” (Rom 9:13). There was no more reason in Jacob why he should be the object of divine love than there was in Esau. They both had the same parents, and were born at the same time, being twins; yet God loved the one and hated the other! Why? Because it pleased Him to do so.

The sovereignty of God’s love necessarily follows from the fact that it is uninfluenced by anything in the creature. Thus, to affirm that the cause of His love lies in God Himself is only another way of saying, He loves whom He pleases. For a moment, assume the opposite. Suppose God’s love were regulated by anything else than His will: in such a case He would love by rule, and loving by rule He would be under a law of love, and then so far from being free, God would Himself be *ruled by law*. “In love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to”—what? Some excellency which He foresaw in them? No! What then? “According to the good pleasure of His will” (Eph 1:4-5).

4. It is *infinite*. Everything about God is infinite. His *essence* fills heaven and earth. His *wisdom* is illimitable, for He knows everything of the past, present, and future. His *power* is unbounded, for there is nothing too hard for Him. So His love is without limit. There is a depth to it which none can fathom; there is a height to it which none can scale; there is a length and breadth to it which defies measurement, by any creature-standard. Beautifully is this intimated in Ephesians 2:4: “But God, who is rich in mercy, for His *great* love wherewith He loved us”: the word “great” there is parallel with the word “so” in John 3:16—“God *so* loved.” It tells us that the love of God is so transcendent it cannot be estimated.

No tongue can fully express the infinitude of God's love, or any mind comprehend it: it "passeth knowledge" (Eph 3:19). The most extensive ideas that a finite mind can frame about divine love, are infinitely below its true nature. The heaven is not so far above the earth as the goodness of God is beyond the most raised conceptions which we are able to form of it. It is an ocean which swells higher than all the mountains of opposition in such as are the objects of it. It is a fountain from which flows all necessary good to all those who are interested in it (John Brine, 1743).

5. It is *immutable*. As with God Himself there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jam 1:17), so His love knows neither change nor diminution. The worm Jacob supplies a forceful example of this: "Jacob have I loved," declared Jehovah, and despite all his unbelief and waywardness, He never ceased to love him. John 13:1 furnishes another beautiful illustration. That very night one of the apostles would say, "Show us the Father"; another would deny Him with cursings; all of them would be scandalized by, and forsake Him. Nevertheless, "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them *unto the end* ." The divine love is subject to no vicissitudes. Divine love is "strong as death." "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it" (Song 8:6-7). Nothing can separate from it (Rom 8:35-39).

*"His love no end nor measure knows,
No change can turn its course,
Eternally the same it flows
From one eternal source."*

6. It is *holy*. God's love is not regulated by caprice, passion, or sentiment, but by principle. Just as His grace reigns not at the expense of it, but "through righteousness" (Rom 5:21), so His love never conflicts with His holiness. "God is light" (1Jo 1:5) is mentioned *before* "God is love" (1Jo 4:8). God's love is no mere amiable weakness or effeminate softness. Scripture declares that "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Heb 12:6). God will not wink at sin, even in His own people. His love is *pure*, unmixed with any maudlin sentimentality.

7. It is *gracious*. The love and favor of God are inseparable. This is clearly brought out in Romans 8:32-39. What that love is, from which there can be no "separation," is easily perceived from the design and scope of the immediate context: it is that goodwill and grace of God which determined Him to give His Son for sinners. That *love* was the impulsive power of Christ's incarnation: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (Joh 3:16). Christ died not in order to make God love us, but because He did love His people. Calvary is the supreme demonstration of divine love. Whenever you are tempted to doubt the love of God, Christian reader, go back to Calvary.

Here then is abundant cause for trust and patience under divine affliction. Christ was beloved of the Father, yet *He* was not exempted from poverty, disgrace, and persecution. *He* hungered and thirsted. Thus, it was *not* incompatible with God's *love* for Christ when He permitted men to spit upon and smite Him. Then let no Christian call into question God's love when he is brought under painful afflictions and trials. God did not enrich Christ on earth with temporal prosperity, for He had not where to lay His head. But He *did* give Him the Spirit without measure (Joh 3:34). Learn then that *spiritual* blessings are the principal gifts of divine love. How blessed to know that when the world hates us, God loves us!

Study Questions: Lesson 10

Chapter 15 The Lovingkindness of God

First please read chapter 15 in the text.

RESPONSE

The innumerable blessings on the Christian

1. What are some of the “evidences and exercises” of God’s *lovingkindness* unto the saints? Include the Scripture references and key points with your answer.
2. a. Can God’s lovingkindness ever be removed from His children, even when He appears distant? Why?
b. What does Scripture tell us about God’s response to the saints when they do not keep His commandments? With your answer, include Scripture references and key points.
3. How was the covenant ratified and what did it provide? Include the Scripture provided.

The response of the saints

4. In response to God’s lovingkindness, what are the seven responses that should fill the hearts of the saints? With your answers, include Scripture references and key points.

Chapter 16 The Love of God

First please read chapter 16 in the text.

RESPONSE

The nature of God

5. What three things does Scripture tell us about the nature of God?

The character and blessedness of God's love

6. What does it mean that God is *uninfluenced*?

7. What does it mean that God's love is *eternal*? Please explain and include Scripture references and key points.

8. Does God love whom He pleases? Why? Include Scriptures and key points with your answer.

9. How are God's essence, wisdom, power, and love related?

10. What are the key points about God's love that the following verses proclaim?

- James 1:17

- John 13:1

- Song of Solomon 8:6-7

- Romans 8:35-39.

11. Because God is holy, how does He respond to the sin of the saints? Include Scripture and key point.

12. a. What does Calvary demonstrate?

b. If a saint is tempted to doubt the love of God, the remembrance of what event should quench those doubts? Please write out the Scripture verse that supports this.

REFLECTION

13. Please read again the last paragraph of the chapter. Spend some quiet time reflecting upon the fact that Christ was beloved of the Father, yet was not exempt from trials and tribulations. Then, think about your own personal experiences with trials and afflictions.

a. What were your responses in these situations? Did you feel abandoned by God?

b. As a result of this lesson, will your attitude be different when these kinds of situations occur in the future? Explain.