

Nature and Character of God

What Is God Like?

August 04, 2019

I. What is God like?

A. Today, we are continuing our study of the nature and character of God.

1. Last Sunday, I pointed out two of my presuppositions about God's nature and character along with five scriptures that I use as an anchor for my view of God and my faith in God.
2. I ended last Sunday's teaching by saying that we don't fully know what God is like because He is far beyond our human ability to comprehend and understand Him. And yet, because God created us with the ability to know Him, and because His compassion is greater than our weaknesses, it is possible for us to know at least enough about God to believe He exists, to trust Him fully, to submit to Him, to obey Him, and to love Him as we ought.
3. Today, I want us to take a closer look at God's nature and character through the lens of the second half of **1 John 1:5**, which says, "God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all."
4. However, before getting to **1 John 1:5**, I want to establish that when the Bible says God is "something," it is saying that God is that in His entirety.

B. Pray

II. What God appears to be in part, He is in whole

A. When the Bible says God is . . . something, it is not speaking of some part of God, as if He were like us – made up of many parts, some greater and some lessor, rather, when the Bible says God is . . . something, it is speaking of God as He is in His entirety. **For example,**

1. When the Bible says God is light, it means He is entirely light, which is why God's word goes on to say, "and in Him there is no darkness at all."
2. When the Bible says God is holy or righteous, it means He is entirely holy and entirely righteous.
3. When the Bible says God is love, it means He is entirely love.
4. When the Bible says God is faithful, it means He is entirely faithful.
5. When the Bible says God is a refuge, a stronghold, and a rock, it means He is in His entirety a refuge, a stronghold, and a rock.

6. When the Bible says God is compassionate, it means He is entirely compassionate.
7. When the Bible says God is our helper, it means He is entirely our helper.
8. When the Bible says God is with us, it means He is entirely with us.
9. And when the Bible says God is a consuming fire, it means He is in His entirety a consuming fire.

B. Because this truth is important to our understanding and view of God's nature and character, **and subsequently** to our trust in God, I want to give you a few more examples of what God is like in relation to this truth.

1. When you are experiencing the deepest and most intimate expressions of God's love, He is no less holy and no less the righteous Judge who you must stand before and give an account to of how you lived your life. In other words, when you are enjoying His love as if He were only love, He continues to be entirely holy and entirely the righteous Judge who is and will judge you according to your deeds.
2. When you are experiencing God's grace in ways that drop you on your face before Him in humble gratitude, He is no less a consuming fire and He has no less wrath toward evil.
3. When God is teaching you or testing you in the fire of difficult circumstances, or when Satan is tempting you, God is no less your helper and your refuge, your stronghold, and your rock.
4. When it seems you are alone in your sorrow or your trials or your struggle against the flesh, God is no less with you, nor does He love you any less than He always does.
5. When the circumstances imply that God has abandoned you or the worst is about to happen to you, He is no less your provider and protector, and no less faithful or compassionate than He is at all other times.

C. So once again, when the Bible says God is ... something, it means He is that in His entirety.

1. And this truth is important to our view of God and trust of God because it assures us that God does not suspend or minimize any aspect of His nature or being while exercising another. What God is in each of His attributes or character, He is in its entirety.
2. And this brings us to **1 John 1:5**.

III. God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all

A. **1 John 1:5** . . . This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

1. When the Bible says that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all, it means that God is perfectly and completely **holy** and **righteous**.
2. In other words, God always does what is right, what is fair, what is just, what is best, and what is good.
 - a. Now if we are to have a proper understanding of the holiness of God, we must think of it in light of the word **separation**.
 - b. And if we are to have a proper understanding of the righteousness of God, we must think of it in light of the word **justice**.
3. Therefore, when we say **God is holy**, we mean that God **purposefully** (*of His own free will*) and **completely** separates Himself from **ALL** that is sinful and evil so that nothing of a sinful or evil nature can enter into His being or influence His thoughts, choices, or behavior.
 - a. For example, God keeps Himself separate from all that is unjust, unrighteous, unloving, unclean, and impure.
 - b. And because God keeps Himself separate from all such things, He is never irresponsible, careless, or lazy. He never acts impulsively or on a whim. He is never selfish, greedy, or covetous. He has no evil intent, no ill-will, no double-mindedness, no mixed motives, no mean spirit, no bitterness, no malice, and no unkindness.
 - c. Therefore, God never sins or blunders or makes a mistake because He **purposefully** and **completely** keeps Himself separate from anything that has even a hint of evil.
4. To help us gain a better understanding of God's holiness, we can look at a human example of **intentional separation** from that which is sinful or evil – in order to be or remain holy.
 - a. We find such an example in Daniel, who “purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself by eating the king's meat, nor by drinking the king's wine” (**Daniel 1:8**).
 - b. And Paul calls us to this kind of purposeful separation in **2 Corinthians 6:14-18**, “Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? [15] Or

what harmony has Christ with Belial (*i.e., an evil spirit or a depraved person*), or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? [16] Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. [17] Therefore, come out from [*all that is lawless, darkness, depraved, ungodly*] and be separate, says the Lord. And do not touch what is unclean; and (*if you separate yourself from such things*) I (*God*) will welcome you. [18] And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,’ says the Lord Almighty.”

- c. What God is calling us **to do** in these verses is to join Him in living a holy or a separated life from all that is unclean in order to be holy like Him.
 - (1) Now according to these verses, if we will join Him in living a purposefully separated life – which is the same as saying, if we will join Him in being holy as He is holy, He will be a father to us and treat us as His sons and daughters.
 - (2) John wrote something very similar in **1 John 3:1-3**, “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. [2] Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. [3] And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him **purifies himself, just as He is pure.**”
 - (3) But that is another matter. The important point I am trying to get across today is that God’s holiness is a result of God purposefully, completely, and eternally keeping Himself separate from all that is sinful and evil.
- 5. In a similar manner to God’s holiness, when we say **God is righteous**, we mean that in all His thoughts, words, and deeds, God does what is just and right.
 - a. In other words, God always thinks, speaks and acts in an upright, moral, fair way. He shows no partiality, no favoritism, has no double-standards, and is never unfair, unjust, deceitful, or dishonest. Therefore, God always does what is right and just, and this includes always judging according to what is just and right.

- b. The Psalmist connects God's righteousness with His justice in **Psalm 33:5a**, "[God] loves righteousness and justice."
- c. And the Psalmist affirms that God is entirely righteousness in **Psalm 145:17**, "The Lord is **righteous** in all His ways and **kind** in all His deeds."
- d. Peter provides a very practical example of choosing to live one's life within the boundaries of believing that God is entirely righteous. And he makes this example practical by showing how Jesus dealt with injustice during His trial and crucifixion.
 - (1) We read about this in **1 Peter 2:21-23**, "For you have been called for this purpose (*to show the world how to remain godly when suffering mistreatment for doing what is right and good*), since Christ also suffered for you, **leaving you an example for you to follow** in His steps, [22] Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; [23] and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously."
 - (2) Because Jesus was fully confident that "God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all," He chose to trust God to do what was just and right in response to the injustice being done to him, rather than to take matters into His own hands.
 - (3) We can choose to make this same choice in the face of injustice or mistreatment, and if we will, we will in those situations keep ourselves separate from any sin or evil that might enter in and influence our choices and behavior.

- B. I want to spend the rest of our teaching time talking about some of the ungodly responses Christians make to God's holiness and righteousness.
 - 1. It's my experience that Christians want God to be holy, because that is what keeps any hint of evil or wrong doing out of His dealings with us. But what we don't want is for God to require us to be holy like He is holy.
 - a. Instead, we want God to require a lessor degree of holiness – as if an unholy holiness should be enough. And we want this compromised holiness so that we can keep the benefits of salvation while enjoying a few pleasures of sin and the world.
 - b. In fact, many Christians see a genuinely holy, or separated life, as too strict, too demanding, and too limiting. They talk as if it

- is hard to live like that. And they infer that living that unnecessarily prevents them from enjoying some of the common and socially accepted activities that the rest of the world enjoys.
- c. This is why many Christians join churches where either a separated life is unimportant, or where a separated life is defined by such things as the clothes you wear to church, the number of church type meetings you attend, how often you read your Bible, praying before meals, only watching G or PG rated movies, not smoking, and voting Republican.
 - d. So why do so many Christians prefer this kind of separation? I think it is because we believe life is better with at least a little sin and a few worldly pleasures than it ever could be if we were to live a separated life that included **all** our daily practices, **all** our thoughts, **all** our desires, **all** our fears, **all** our hidden or unseen activities, **all** our words, **all** the ways we relate to the people in our lives, and **all** the things that are in our heart which ought not to be there.
 - e. You see, we tend to be like drug addicts who believe that life with the drugs is better than life could ever be without them.
 - (1) And yet as all of us adults know, that life without drugs is the superior, better, healthier, far more satisfying, far more enjoyable life. The problem is that knowing truth is not enough. We must purpose to live according to the truth we know.
 - (2) But living according to the truth we know is not so easy either. However, it becomes much easier when we implicitly trust that because God is light – and in Him there is no darkness at all – He never asks anything of us that is to our harm, and everything He does ask of us is for our good.
 - f. Therefore, Peter writes, “Like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves (*be separated yourselves from all that is sinful and evil*) **in all** your behavior” (1 Peter 1:15).
2. Moving on to God’s righteousness, it is my experience that we like to talk about it in relation to the righteousness we have in Christ, and that we obtain this righteousness through faith, and that it is this righteousness that enables to be reconciled to God, gain eternal life, and live with God forever.
- a. It is also my experience that Christians are grateful that God is a just Judge, especially when it comes to judging those who are making their lives harder, more painful, and less enjoyable.

- b. Yet many Christians want to ignore or explain away God's righteousness when it comes to His judging them for the way they think, the desires they entertain, the fears they bow to, the hopes they pursue, the things they look at, the words they speak, the way they treat those nearest and dearest, and the way they behave – day in and day out.
 - c. For example, it is common to hear Christians excusing their bad and sinful behavior on the basis that being godly is hard, or that it is impossible to always do what is just and right. And when they talk this way, they often infer they rarely fail, when in fact they are practicing sin.
- 3. My point is that we Christians want God to be entirely and always righteous, and we want Him to give His righteousness to us so that we can be counted as righteous.
 - a. But we don't want to be required to pursue a righteousness that is like God's righteousness.
 - b. And we don't want to be required to practice a purposeful separation from sin and evil that is like God's separation.
 - c. Sadly, as with holiness so it is with righteousness, many Christians are not convinced that a truly separated, righteous life brings about the best life possible – in this world and the next.

IV. Conclusion

- A. We do not have to follow the path of self-serving or compromised Christianity – as if there were such things. We can pursue holiness and righteousness, because God has given us everything necessary to do so.
- B. And though we may never, in this life, be as holy as God is holy, or as righteous as God is righteous, we can at least get closer and closer to it as we make our way toward seeing God face-to-face.
- C. Therefore, may we make it our intention to see God as He is in holiness and righteousness. And may we pursue, day-after-day and year-after-year, becoming holy and righteous like Him. This is the path to pleasing God, to showing true gratitude to the one who died on our behalf, and to entering into and experiencing the abundant life.