

God's Communicable Attributes – His Moral Attributes

The Love of God

Read John 3:16-18

1. What is love? What did God do because He loves us? (See also 1 John 3:16, Rom 5:6-8)

- Concern and care; positive affections; desire good for the object of love

- God showed us His love by giving. He gave His best – His only Son Jesus Christ, commanding Him to die in order to save the world.

- God's love is shown to all (represented by "the world"). He gave Jesus to save to save the world. Whoever believes in Him receives eternal life. The gospel is offered to everyone without exception.

- God's love is incomprehensible. He sent His Son to die for His enemies... Look at the intensity of God's love for the sinful fallen world!

2. What are ways that one can respond to God's love? What does the response tell us about one's attitude towards God? (See also 1 John 5:10-12, Galatians 2:20, Rom 8:31-39, Matt 5:43-48)

1 John 5 - God gave His Son as a propitiation for our sins. We ought to believe in Him, else we provoke God to His face.

Gal 2 - We are no longer to live with selfish ambitions and goals, but remembering that Christ loved each of us personally and gave Himself up for us

Rom 8 - We should live with thankfulness for God loves us with an inextinguishable love. We may also have peace, especially in time of trouble, for even hardship and trouble can be turned into good. We can have an unshakable confidence that God loves us.

Matt 5 - God's love is perfect, loving His enemies. He causes the rain to fall on the evil and good, righteous and unrighteous. He calls us to have the same perfect love.

3. How does the way we choose to respond to God's love (the giving of His Son) affect us? (Still on John 3:16)

- God gives us eternal life, which is life with Him (John 17:3)

- Without God's love, His wrath remains on us. We would perish. We are condemned already. God's love gives all hope.

- God gave us His Son so that condemnation from the guilt of sin is removed from us

4. How are we to exercise love? (See Matt 22:34-40, 1 John 4:19-21, 1 Cor 13)

Matt 22 - The greatest commandment is to love God; then to love our neighbor. Jesus says that all the Law and Prophets hang on these 2 Commandments. Notice the degree of love we are called to: how strongly we are to love God, and how selflessly we ought to love our neighbor

1 John 4 - We cannot claim to love God, yet hate our brother.

1 Cor 13 - Some practical applications of love (vv4-7). Love is the greatest gift. Without love, other gifts cannot be exercised effectively. Love never fails, for it even endures forever, even after faith and hope (v13).

The Mercies of God

Mercy is defined as God's goodness towards those in distress. Grace is God's goodness towards those who only deserve punishment. The Bible, both Old and New Testament, repeatedly describe God as the God of grace and mercy. (Ps 51:1) Both attributes of God are similarly demonstrated towards all men.

But if God were not holy and just, then He would not need to exercise mercy. Similarly, if God did not love, then He would not exercise mercy.

1. Why is God merciful? What is the result from His mercy? (See Rom 15:8-9, Eph 2:4-5)

Rom 15 - God demonstrates His mercies so that we may praise Him. His mercy manifested in the person of Christ.

(Background – God promised to bless all nations through Abraham's seed, which is Jesus Christ)

Eph 2 - God is merciful because He loves us. Even though we were dead in our trespasses against Him, He made us alive in Christ.

2. In view of God's mercy, what can we learn how we are to respond to God? (Rom 12:1-2, 2 Sam 24:10-15)

Rom 12 - In view of God's mercies (Rom 1-11), we ought to offer our bodies as living sacrifices to God

2 Sam 24 - David did not try to hide or minimize his sin, but he accepted God as His Judge, and also His Redeemer.

- While God's mercy is great, David was not unashamed in his attitude, but begged for God's mercy. Yet he was confident that he would receive the most mercy from God's hand alone.

- David was humble before God; he did not dare to choose God's judgment to be carried upon him. At the same time, David knew God to be the good and merciful God, and he entrusted himself to God. That is how we must respond to God.

3. Why should we exercise mercy? How? (See Matt 5:7, 18:21-35)

Matt 5 - The merciful will also receive mercy

Matt 18 - Since we've been shown mercy by God, we ought to also show mercy to those who need it.

The Righteousness and Justice of God

Righteousness and justice actually have the same root words in both the OT Hebrew and NT Greek, even though they are translated into different English words depending on the context. Righteousness refers to a state of being or describes a set of acts. Justice has the idea of rewarding good and punishing bad.

1. Read Deut 32:4. Who is the one referred as just and righteous? What does that indicate about the standard of measurement for righteousness and justice?

- God does no wrong. Rather He does all things perfectly...

- God is the standard of just/right. (...just is He).

2. Read 2 Sam 12:9-10 & 13-14. Is it just for God to not execute His judgment on an adulterer and murderer? (See also Rom 3:21-26).

- God's Law prescribes that death is the penalty for murderers and adulterers. However David did not receive the penalty that he deserved. One could say that God was unjust.

- Apply observation to the passage with regards to God's justice

- Sinners are justified through the redemption in Christ (v24)

- Christ made atonement / propitiation / appeasement for sin, or to make reparation for sin. This atonement is to be received by faith. (v25A)

- The death of Christ ("this") was to show God's righteousness, which appeared to be "missing" when He passed over former sins. He passed over them in forbearance, in refraining from His wrath. (v25B)

- Today, we see that God was indeed just, for Christ bore the punishment for the former sins, and He justifies those who have faith in Christ. (v26)

One may say this logic is flawed, that when God is the most moral Being in the world, and at the same time sets the standard and definition for morality. However, God can justify this with the first verse of the Bible - In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;" Ps 24:1. That was indeed the Lord's response to Job (Job 39-41). Since He made us in His image, our sense of morality should agree with His. Alas, the motivation of the original sin came from the desire to decide right from wrong without God. Rather, when we are born again in Christ, let us once again judge everything through God's eyes. And since we share many attributes with God, let us appreciate see how great and perfect He is in comparison to us, and strive to live according to His ways.