

The Attributes of God  
Sunday School  
January 13, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Introduction

1. What comes into your mind when you think about God? In other words, in this day and age, how would you describe God to someone who finds out you are a Christian? **All-knowing, all- powerful, creator of all things, loving, holy, perfect, pure, sovereign, just, One, true and living God...consuming fire!**

2. Knowing God is what this series of lessons will be about. How many of you could make a list of attributes/characteristics of your spouses? Wives could do this easily...husbands on the other hand would be suspect of the reason why such a list was necessary knowing that we could get in trouble if we couldn't list enough. But that is the point...husbands have trouble making the lists for one main reason...??? ...we don't pay close enough attention to these kinds of details with the ones we love. It may sound academic to purposefully look for these things in your wife but it will go along way in your relationship when you can because it shows our wives that we know them and that is extremely important to a woman...to all of us really...and it is extremely important for our faith...to know God as best we can.

3. Now, how would you describe this God to your children?

4. Listen to this child's prayer: *God is great, God is good, let us thank Him for our food.* Which attributes are highlighted in this simple prayer? **Greatness= El; El Shaddai= Almighty God; El Elyon= Most High, Goodness- El Chasdi= God of my kindness, Provider- Yahweh Jireh= God my Provider; El Roi= the God who sees me.** These are simple...and yet they are profound attributes of our God.

5. One of the major issues in the Church today is that many if not most people go through life with a very vague notion of who God is and what His expectations are. If they think about Him at all, they don't think of Him rightly. And even those who ascribe attributes to Him, do not always ascribe biblical ones to Him. Can you think of any confusion among God's people concerning His attributes...that which defines Him? When I use the word "confusion" I mean that which is contrary to what the Bible teaches. **Some believe Him loving but not just...especially not judging. Some think of Him as full of wrath/judgmental, but not as gracious. Still others may think Him wise, but not all powerful...some believe Him a God of everyone rather than the elect...**

6. Ignorance of God's attributes is no small thing. It can have profound effects. Can you think of any?

**a. Hesitant to trust, worship or enjoy Him as Lord of our life...**

**b. Causes us to think too highly of ourselves...**

**c. We will tend toward extremes... more fearful...more confused...or not caring enough**

**d. Can our hearts truly be gripped by the glory of God if we are ignorant**

of who He is?

e. Can our lives be truly transformed by His grace if we remain ignorant of His graciousness and faithfulness?

f. Can we passionately preach/ teach/ and proclaim that Christ loves us and saves us from the wrath of God if we truly don't understand both God's wrathfulness and His love?

g. How can we keep from compromise if we are unaware of who God is?

h. Our understanding of God affects how we live in the world. The difference between doing everything on our own and seeking His will while resting in Him to guide and leads us to what is to be done.

i. It also defines us...we can either be defined by our work, our position in a marriage, or our gender...or we can be defined as a child of God...but we must know God to be able to do that adequately and authentically.

7. What is God commanding us in this phrase: *"Be still, and know that I am God."*

Daniel said... **"Shut up and listen!"** On one level we can see this as God is seemingly always trying to get our attention because we are so easily distracted since we don't know Him as we ought. However, the emphasis here is on **"...know that I am God"** Quite simply He wants us to know Him. Interesting fun fact here: **"...I am God"** are the Hebrew words **Yahweh (I am) Elohim (God)...LORD GOD...**which in itself reveals many of God's attributes:

a. Yahweh reveals He is self-existent...

b. Yahweh also reveals His covenant relationship with His people by giving us His personal name...

c. Yahweh also reveals His eternity and His infinite nature...the verb form of Yahweh means to be, is, will always be... **"I am that I am"**

d. El reveals first that He is God...mighty, powerful, sovereign...

e. Elohim also reveals that this God's nature is plural (SEE Gen. 1:1)...So Elohim speaks for and to the Trinity...3 persons that is described in the rest of Scripture...even in Deut.6 when Moses says, **"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one."** The word God is Elohim and the word for one are both plural in meaning.

f. Elohim reveals also that this God is transcendent/holy, mighty and strong...the title speaks of God's control over everything...this word speaks of God's fullness...refer to John 1:14; Col. 1:17-19

8. The Church rises and falls on its idea of God. How can we come about the knowledge of God and His attributes? What is required of us? 85% of those recently polled say that the Bible is the Word of God. 75 to 80% of the people in this country say they are Christians? What does this tell us about what most people think of God, really? **Obviously, they don't think of Him or know Him and His Word. Man in the Mirror ministry runs polls about Christian men all the time...we talked about this last week...Years ago they discovered that only 1 in 10 Christian men have ever read the entire Bible through...this statistic has remained true for every year that they have sought data. So it appears while many will say it is the WORD of God they don't consider it important enough to read it through or with much regularity. Going one step further we could also conclude that His Word**

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actually means nothing and that God is not trustworthy. Jumping into the text ... **"lucky dipping"** can give you momentary peace but it does not

**reveal the deeper nature of things about God; His attributes or His will or His plan the things that give us purpose and definition.**

9. How might a correct understanding of God's attributes be helpful for the believer?

**a. First, we recognize that the events of this life are not in our hands...if He is sovereign...then He is sovereign over everything...and all things happen just as He ordains them to...**

**b. Second, and close this one is the understanding that our "control" is extremely limited...in fact "control may be an illusion since God directs all things...**

**c. Third, with these first two firmly in place in our thinking then we are free to do as the Lord wills for us to do...glorify Him and enjoy Him in all that He has given us to do...we see that we do not control our destiny...the Lord has given us all that we have and He expects that we will do our best with what He has given us...we are simply stewards of this life seeking to make God Look good if you will not ourselves...bringing Him glory means accomplishing what He has called us to do with the resources and giftedness that He has given us for His honor and glory. We are to do God's will He will give the results...they are not up to us.**

**d. These 3 and there are more, free us up, because we come away saying our job is to be faithful to what God has given us to do and He will receive the glory... "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."** And just for grins what does this command...not suggestion... reveal about God's attributes?

10. How important is it to teach our children the biblical truth about God? Why? **It is not enough to simply teach that God exists they must also know what sort of God He is. As parents we cannot leave this up to them to choose for themselves...for without direction, correction and teaching they will never be able to choose the right God!** And if we can do this with them what else does this communicate to them as they grow?

**a. That it is important...**

**b. That it is important to us...their parents...**

**c. So if it is important to us then it may be important to them...**

**d. They will grow up understanding and knowing this one we call Father...**

**e. They may grow up with an awe and conscious of God's divine presence in all of life. Their desire to worship will be shaped by what we teach them from the Scriptures and how we live out what believe about God.** How helpful would that be as they move out into adulthood? Why?

The Attributes of God  
Sunday School  
January 20, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Why is it important for us to consider the attributes of God?
2. What does this command, *"Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven..."* reveal to us about God's attributes?

C. The Holiness of God...

1. I like R.C. Sproul view this attribute as the umbrella, the starting point or the big picture concerning God's attributes. Because He is Holy, He is infinite. Because He is Holy, He is incomprehensible. Because He is Holy, He is eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful, loving, just, faithful, merciful...so on and so forth...because He is Holy.
2. El HaKadosh= The Holy God.= means that God is unique. He is distinct from all His creation. There is no one or nothing like Him or can even come close to comparing with Him...he is pure, perfect...completely set apart to the point that He is the definition of the words we use to describe Him and attribute to Him.
3. Elohim Kedoshim= Holy God- speaks for the Trinity for this is plural in every form...each person of the Trinity are Holy. In His fullness He is Holy. Everything that is done is pure, righteous and holy...set apart ...defined by His being and nature.
4. Kadosh = at its simplest, most common use is probably to cut or separate. A holy thing is cut off from and separate from that which is common. It is as we used to say, "A cut above the rest"...speaking of its magnificence. God in His holiness is transcendent...He is above and beyond us and our understanding. Earthly things can be holy in relation to God...like holy ground (Ex. 3:5); holy assemblies (Ex. 12:16); holy Sabbaths (Ex. 16:23); a holy nation (Ex. 19:6); holy garments (Ex. 28:2); a holy city (Neh. 11:1); holy promises (Ps. 105:42); holy hands (I Tim. 2:8); holy women (I Peter 3:5); a holy faith (Jude 20)...almost anything can be holy if it is separated from the common use and devoted/consecrated to God's use.
5. Now let's look at Isaiah 6:1-3.
  - a. What are the things this passage tells us about God? Look closely!
    - (1) **Confident...none like Himself**
    - (2) **God is alive... King Uzziah is dead but God lives. Man and all that we are dies and vanishes from existence but God is...eternally and completely.**
    - (3) **God is sovereign/authoritative... He is sitting on His throne. No vision of heaven sees God on vacation or**

**plowing a field...He is always in session on His throne...  
He is in total control.**

- (4) God is omnipotent...His throne is not one among many as some authors would have us believe...but His *is high and lifted up*...above all other thrones. No other authority can oppose Him...he has the "HIGH GROUND". Is. 46:10 says, *"My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purposes."* Or as in Daniel 4:35, *"He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand."***
- (5) God is magnificent... *"His train filled the temple."* This represents the fullness of God in all things His being over all His creation ... in other words there was no room for anyone else to rule for no one else could!**
- (6) God is revered/worshiped... *"Above Him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with 2 he covered his face, and with 3 he covered his feet, and with 2 he flew."* They weren't even worthy to look upon the Lord not to have their feet exposed in His presence...they revere their Master in great humility.**
- (7) God is holy... *"And one called to another 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of host..."* How does the Bible define the term Holy when describing God? **By using the word! Here using the word 3 times to make the point that it is only He that sets this standard...and then it is only Him who can deem others things holy that are devoted to Him. God is God he is separate from all that is not God. He is one of a kind...distinct...unique...the Only One about which that can truly be said. He is incomparable...it determines all that He is...it defines His nature on its own not our understanding...it defines itself by using God as its definition. Our language is unable TO CAPTURE THIS ONE WELL in fact this word is foreign to all languages in being defined adequately... All of His attributes are glorious, but only this one is described this way. Why is His holiness so exalted? E.J. Young says this, *"The designation "holy" signifies the entirety of the divine perfections which separates God from His creation. God is the Creator who exists in absolute independence of the creature. He is the Lord, and not a man. Although the creation depends upon Him, He Himself is entirely independent thereof."*****
- (8) God is glorious... *"...the whole earth is full of His glory."* The glory of God is defined and described as the manifestation of God's holiness...the display of His holiness. Look at Lev. 10:3, *"I will show myself holy among those who are near me, and before all the people I will be glorified."* When God shows Himself to be holy, what we see is His glory. .**

- b. What would you say is the main point of this part of the vision? **To declare and define God Holy!**
6. Now with all of this in mind let's read the rest of this vision Isaiah 6:4-7.
  - a. How does the rest of this text define God as Holy? His holiness is displayed in:
    - (1) **The shaking of the foundations...**
    - (2) **The house was filled with smoke...**
    - (3) **Isaiah recognizes his sinfulness and the sinfulness of the people before the holy God...**
    - (4) **Isaiah is then devoted to God, cleansed and made holy at the command of God Himself...**
  - b. What does this communicate to us today about how God reveals his holiness?
7. Turn with me now to Rev. 4:8. What does this text add to our understanding of God's holiness that wasn't evident in the Isaiah passage? **Timeless...the latter part of this phrase speaks to God eternity...eternal before time and will be eternal after time and He exists and is active in the present. It is the inclusion of time which is only inferred in the Isaiah passage.** Why is that important?
8. How is God's holiness seen at the cross? Turn to Ps. 22:1-3. **What we have here is God through the Psalmist telling us that even in the most terrible of deaths when Christ would experience the separation from the Father because He was imputed with our sin...that God is Holy and that this act shows His holiness. For God's holiness demands that sin be dealt with once and for all time. Christ received all our sin upon Himself in human form and he was ravaged and crucified setting forth the entire wrath due to us onto Christ. The atonement then in itself like the cleansing of Isaiah in Isaiah 6 reveals how we are made holy because of His holiness.**

The Attributes of God  
Sunday School  
January 27, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. How would you define the holiness of God?
2. Why do I and many others say this is the overriding attribute describing God?
3. We have this command in I Peter 1:16, *"You shall be holy, for I am holy."* Which is taken from Lev. 11:44-45, *"I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy as I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls upon the ground. For I am the LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy for I am holy."* What ALL is meant by this passage?
  - a. **It does not mean that we share in God's majesty...but**
  - b. **it does mean that we have been declared righteous,**
  - c. **set apart for God's purpose, and**
  - d. **we then are to be different from our normal fallen sinfulness...we are called to mirror and reflect God...to imitate Him since we have been set aside for this purpose.**
  - e. **We are called saints in the NT which means "holy ones"....we are set apart and called to purity. R. C. Sproul says we are called to be nonconformists and that in its simplest form is what it means to be called holy. ...a true non-conformist in the biblical sense is one who stops coveting whatever someone else has that you do not; he stops gossiping; he stops slandering; he stops hating and feeling bitter; and he practices the fruit of the Spirit...which is more than being a nonconformist since we are really called to transformation...we are not to conform to this world but we are to be transformed by God's grace.**

C. The Sovereignty of God

1. First let's look at the Supremacy of God.
  - a. Luther wrote to Erasmus, *"Your thoughts of God are too human."* God said to Israel in Ps. 50:21, *"These things you have done, and I have been silent; you thought that I was one like yourself. But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you."* In what ways could this be said of the Church today?  
**(1) Men tend not to think of God as absolute...and above all things...**

- (2) **Men often imagine that God is moved by sentiment/ feelings rather than by principle...**
- (3) **They question His omnipotence by restricting His power by believing that we guide our own lives or that Satan's work can somehow undermine His...**
- (4) **God's plans must be the plans we have for ourselves...because He wants what's best for us and we are the ones that know what is best for ourselves...**
- (5)

- b. Look at I Chr. 29:11-12 and II Chron. 20:6, *"Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all."*(I Chr. 29:11-12) *"O Lord, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you."*(II Chr. 20:6) How do these passages describe God's supremacy? **As an infinite distance which separates the mightiest of creatures from their Creator. Before Him presidents and popes, kings and emperors, are less than ants. He is the potter we are the clay to be molded into vessels of honor or dashed into pieces as He sees fit Ps. 2:9. Even as the nations of the world seek to rally against Him Ps. 2:4 tells us... "He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision."**
- c. Now turn to Ps. 135:6, *"Whatever the Lord pleases, He does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps."* What does this passage reveal to us about God's supremacy? **God is supreme over all the works of His hands...inanimate matter, irrational creatures...everything acts at God's bidding....The Red Sea parts the earth opens its mouth to receive the rebellious, the sun stood still, the ravens carried food to Elijah, lions to be tame around Daniel, fire not to burn Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego...even and especially over the wills of men ... "The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps." (Prov. 16:9)**
- d. Men may boast of having "free will" ...that is... with a will of their own, free to do whatever they wish, but Scripture is clear even in the NT, *"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit'—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.' As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin."* James 4:13-17

2. Now let's look at the Sovereignty of God closer.



- a. How would you define God's sovereignty? **We often define His supremacy when we seek to define His sovereignty...just like God's glory is His manifestation of His holiness...sovereignty is the manifestation or exercising of His supremacy...and so they go together for God always has to be exercising His sovereignty just like He must always be exercising His holiness.**
- b. Charles Spurgeon once said it this way: **"There is no attribute more comforting to His children than that of God's sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe trials, they believe that sovereignty has ordained their afflictions, that sovereignty overrules them, and that sovereignty will sanctify them all. There is nothing for which the children ought more earnestly to contend than the doctrine of their Master over all creation—the kingship of God over all the works of His own hands—the throne of God and His right to sit upon that throne.**

**"On the other hand, there is no doctrine more hated by worldlings, no truth of which they have made such a football, as the great, stupendous, but yet most certain doctrine of the sovereignty of the infinite Jehovah. Men will allow God to be everywhere except on His throne. They will allow Him to be in His workshop to fashion worlds and make stars. They will allow Him to be in His almonry to dispense His alms and bestow His bounties. They will allow Him to sustain the earth and bear up the pillars thereof, or light the lamps of heaven, or rule the waves of the ever-moving ocean; but when God ascends His throne, His creatures then gnash their teeth.**

**And we proclaim an enthroned God, and His right to do as He wills with His own, to dispose of His creatures as He thinks well, without consulting them in the matter; then it is that we are hissed and execrated, and then it is that men turn a deaf ear to us, for God on His throne is not the God they love. But it is God upon the throne that we love to preach. It is God upon His throne whom we trust."** -Charles Spurgeon

How is Spurgeon describing God's sovereignty here in this quote? **Truth is, we are living in a day when even the most "orthodox" seem afraid to admit the proper sovereignty of God. They say that to press the sovereignty of God excludes human responsibility; whereas human responsibility is based upon divine sovereignty, and is the product of it.**

We will finish the sovereignty of God next week...

The Attributes of God  
Sunday School  
February 3, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Supremacy and Sovereignty cont.

1. We concluded last time talking about God's sovereignty and human responsibility. Why specifically do we have such a hard time with the fact of the sovereignty of God in this culture?
  - a. **Sinfulness/Pride**
  - b. **Don't want to be judged...**
  - c. **Following the wrong people...**
  - d. **American Revolution: We purposefully threw off the shackles of the king of England...When British evangelist John Guest came to the US in the 70's he went to an man in Philadelphia who was an antiquarian...a collector of rare and historical artifacts. As he looked through this man's collection he came across original slogans, mementoes and poster boards/signs that dated from the Revolutionary War like: "Don't Tread On Me"; "No Taxation Without Representation"...all familiar but then his eyes saw a sign that caused him to pause; "We Serve No Sovereign Here"...and he said to his companion at the time, *"How can I possibly communicate the idea of the kingdom of God in a nation that has a built-in allergy to sovereignty?"***
  - e. **R.C. Sproul used to ask this question in in his classes at seminary: *"Is God in control of every single molecule in the universe?"* Then he would go on to say, *"The answer to that question will not determine whether you are a Christian or a Moslem, a Calvinist or an Arminian, but it will determine whether you are a theist or an atheist. If there is one molecule running around loose outside the scope or the sphere of God's divine control, authority or power, then***

***that single maverick molecule may be the grain of sand that changes the entire course of human history, that blocks God from keeping the promises He made to His people. If there is this one maverick molecule then God is not Supreme and not sovereign and if God is not sovereign then He is not God.***

2. Let's go back there for a bit. Turn again to: Ps. 115:3, "*Our God is in the heavens; He does all that he pleases.*" What does this passage say about the topic at hand? **God sovereignly chose to place each of His creatures exactly where He thought to be good and right in His sight. ...that all things happen according to His will...**
  - a. **God placed Adam right where He was in the garden to do exactly as He was preordained but also responsible to do...we don't fully comprehend the whole fall into sin thing except to say that it too was part of God's will and plan though God is not the author of sin.**
  - b. **God established Israel as His people and they were responsible to live out God's will before the nations, if they did not they would be punished...covenant relationship ...parent to child...**
  - c. **So God placed Adam, Israel, and all peoples, nations and even Satan in their respective responsible roles to do as they were created to do...**
  
3. Let's break this down even more to capture this concept:
  - a. What right had Adam to freely eat of most of the trees in the garden? **None, except that God was given permission by God...without the permission he would have been a thief. But God also added a restriction concerning one of the trees**
  - b. What right did Adam have to name the animals? **None, except that he was commanded to do so and so he was responsible to carry out the command.**
  - c. What right did the Israelites have to ask for the silver and gold and clothing from the Egyptians at the Exodus? **None, except that God had authorized it and they were responsible to carry out what God said to do.**
  - d. What right had Israel to kill the Canaanites? **None, except that God had commanded it and Israel was responsible to carry out what God commanded.**
  - e. What right did the Babylonians have in taking the Israelites into exile? **None, except that God was directing them to do his bidding...and they must do it...they had no choice...**
  - f. How could Paul say in Acts 27:22 and 31, "*There will be no loss of life among you, only the ship...*" and then later say, "*Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.*"? **Here you have the twin principles of divine sovereignty and human responsibility perfectly juxtaposed against one another... they appear side by side and in perfect harmony. Both things are true. Not one soul on that ship was going to die, because God had decreed it. Yet unless the crew stayed on the ship and brought it**

**aground on the island of Malta, the passengers could not be saved. How can both truths be simultaneously true? Simple. Because God ordained the means as well as the end, and the means He had ordained for saving that ship depended on the crew's ability to steer the ship to the island of Malta and run it aground in the sand and surf. God's sovereignty did not annul the sailors' responsibility. In fact, God's sovereignty is the very thing that established their responsibility.**

- g. **What right has a husband to require submission from his wife? None, except that God has commanded it to be so and the wife is responsible to do as God commands and the husband is also responsible to live as God commands.**
- h. **Upon what foundation do God's elect stand? Only on the one He has graciously provided for us to stand. II Tim 2:19, "*But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His...'*"**
- i. **What would happen if they had not obeyed in these areas? Everything they have done required God's permission and His direction so how can they be held responsible? For as creatures we are bound by the law...God placed them into responsible roles to be accountable to God by the law...He made them/us responsible when He gave His law. My answer to that through the years has simply been to clarify the issue because the Bible doesn't really give us a resolution to that because this is something that is beyond us. It is a transcendent reality that is perfectly harmonized in the mind of God but a dilemma for us. Our responsibility is to give God the glory for salvation, and to give our lives to calling sinners to repentance in the ministry of reconciliation. The responsibility for sin (the transgression of God's Laws) lies in the heart of man, and is the reason that he will be judged of God.**

**(1) J.I Packer says this is a antimony= something that appears to be a contradiction but is set side by side with another doctrine in explaining conclusions that are equally logical, reasonable or necessary.**

**(2) And he gives us a guide on how to deal with this: What should one do, then, with an antinomy? Please note the following.**

- **Accept it for what it is, and learn to live with it.**
- **Refuse to regard the apparent inconsistency as real; put down the semblance of contradiction to the deficiency of your own understanding; think of the two principles as, not rival alternatives, but, in some way that at present you do not grasp, complementary to each other.**
- **Be careful, therefore, not to set them at loggerheads, nor to make deductions from either that would cut across the other (such deductions would, for that very reason, be certainly unsound).**
- **Use each within the limits of its own sphere of reference (i.e., the area delimited by the evidence from which the principle has been drawn).**

• **Note what connections exist between the two truths and their two frames of reference, and teach yourself to think of reality in a way that provides for their peaceful coexistence, remembering that reality itself.**

**(3) What the objector has to learn is that he, a creature and a sinner, has no right whatsoever to find fault with the revealed ways of God. Creatures are not entitled to register complaints about their Creator. As Paul says, God's sovereignty is wholly just, for His right to dispose of His creatures is absolute. (Rom. 9:20)**

**j. How can God justly hold one accountable for his sins when God is the one who predestined that the sins come to pass? That the Scriptures teach that God predestines that sin comes to pass and then holds those whom He ordained to sin guilty is clear.**

**(1) Those who crucified Christ did so because God had predestined them to do so (Acts 4:28), yet they are considered morally guilty for their sin (Acts 2:23; 7:52).**

**(2) Judas betrayed Christ according to the divine plan, yet Judas was also justly guilty of sin when he did so (Luke 22:22).**

**(3) Pharaoh refused to obey God's command to let Israel go because God hardened his heart, and yet God responded by judging Pharaoh for his sin (Exodus 7:2-4, etc.).**

**(4) Joseph's brothers sinned in selling him into slavery, and yet God was the one bringing this about all along (Genesis 50:20).**

**(5) The implication revealed by these Scriptures is clear--a person does not need to have the power of ultimate self-determination in order to be held accountable for his sins.**

**k. So... What is it that makes us morally accountable for what we choose? God's sovereign law! we are morally accountable for choices that God predestined us to make because God brings our choice about through moral causes. Since moral causes do not remove our moral accountability, we can be justly held accountable for our sins even though they are ultimately ordained by God. If God ordains that you will do something and be accountable for it, then He brings things about such that the option that He has ordained for you to choose is the option which you most prefer. Since you are choosing it because you prefer it the most, the fact that God had ordained you to choose it does not remove your moral agency.**

**l. Human responsibility is based upon divine sovereignty! God in His sovereignty normally accomplishes His plan through the use of ordinary means, it will clear away most of the confusion and perplexity that is so often associated with the doctrine of divine sovereignty and its twin truth, the doctrine of human responsibility.**

4. Help me with some feedback. How does this help in understanding and being able to communicate this concept the next time someone throws out the free will card? **So what we see is human responsibility is based upon divine sovereignty! They and us are responsible to live as God has directed within the parameters He has established and when we do we truly live freely...**
5. How would you describe the difference between God's supremacy and God's sovereignty? **God is supreme...over all things...good and bad...so far above all things that it cannot be measured ...He is The KING of Kings...no other ...He sovereignly works out of His supremacy...in other words His sovereignty is the manifestation of His supremacy...He is so He does!**

The Attributes of God  
Sunday School  
February 10, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. How would you defend the fact of God's sovereignty and human responsibility?
  - a. **Accept it for what it is, and learn to live with it.**
  - b. **Refuse to regard the apparent inconsistency as real; put down the semblance of contradiction to the deficiency of your own understanding; think of the two principles as, not**

**rival alternatives, but, in some way that at present you do not grasp, complementary to each other.**

- c. Be careful, therefore, not to set them at loggerheads, nor to make deductions from either that would cut across the other (such deductions would, for that very reason, be certainly unsound).**
  - d. Use each within the limits of its own sphere of reference (i.e., the area delimited by the evidence from which the principle has been drawn).**
  - e. Note what connections exist between the two truths and their two frames of reference, and teach yourself to think of reality in a way that provides for their peaceful coexistence, remembering that reality itself.**
- 2. How would you define the difference between God's Supremacy and God's Sovereignty? God is supreme...over all things...good and bad...so far above all things that it cannot be measured ...He is The KING of Kings...no other ...He sovereignly works out of His supremacy...in other words His sovereignty is the manifestation of His supremacy...He is so He does!**

**C. The Incomprehensibility of God**

1. I love this story about the Swiss theologian Karl Barth. One day at the height of his influence as a theologian he was asked by a student this question, *"Dr. Barth, what is the most profound thing you have ever learned in your study of theology?"* Barth thought for a moment and replied, *"Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."* The students laughed at first and then realized by his demeanor that he was serious. With this statement Barth highlighted 2 truths: (1) There is profound meaning in even the simplest of biblical truths; and (2) no matter how deep our knowledge of theology there will always be much about the nature and character of God that we cannot fully comprehend.
2. Calvin used to say this, when explaining this attribute of God, *"God speaks to us in a kind of lisping. As parents engage in 'baby talk' with their infant children, so God, in order to communicate with us lowly mortals, must condescend to speak to us in lisps."*
3. What comes to mind when you hear the title of this attribute of God? **Simply put, God cannot be known. That it is beyond our capacity to understand...to know God. But we are not entirely comfortable with these phrases. So having said that let us be clear on this; God is not like anything else. He cannot be compared to anything else. He is incomprehensible in that He is outside our ability to comprehend what that means. For in our life most everything has something that it can be compared to...except maybe the platypus ☺ ☺ Really...even the platypus can be compared to other mammals even though it lays eggs. I love the platypus because evolutionists cannot understand how it came to be...God did it to confuse them...and to try and get us to think about the fact that there are simply things we do not and will not fully comprehend.**

4. The early Reformers used the phrase “finitum non capax infiniti”= “The finite cannot grasp (or contains) the infinite.” The word “grasps” deals with the incomprehensibility of God. The word “contains” deals with applying divine attributes to men. If this attribute is true why are we then bothering to talk about God’s attributes as if we can know them? **Because, obviously, that is not what it means entirely. It does not mean that we can KNOW nothing about God. It means that we cannot know EVERYTHING about God. What the finite cannot grasp is the EVERYTHING of God since to know everything would require an infinite capacity to comprehend which the finite does not have. In other words, what we can know of God is limited at best...falling short of total comprehension on every way. Why would this irritate modern man so? Because we pride ourselves on what we can know. Since this is true we do something forbidden, we bring God down to a place where we can understand Him...we reduce Him to something manageable. When you read many of the books today that describe God sometimes you come away with a God that is not that much different than the gods of the Greeks...this God portrayed can often appear capricious, uninvolved, weak, cold. That is why I have begun to tell people until you know what God reveals about Himself in the Bible don’t read the books of men.**
  
5. Why did Isaiah, Ezekiel and the Apostle John react the way they did when God peeled back the curtain to reveal the throne room to them? **They had no point of reference. What they saw was completely different from anything else they had even known. Then God does an amazing thing, he opens their minds to make references to things they could recognize the prophets use words such as “likeness” or “appearance of” to make reference for them...things they could comprehend...they that made sense to them...for if God had not done this they would have died from too much awe...But even in the words God gives to them as points of reference we know the vision is real but entirely different from anything they had ever experience or seen before. So what we can know of God is controlled by God to the degree that He chooses to reveal Himself. So we could change the above Latin phrase and say, The finite can “grasp” the infinite...we can know He is infinite...but we cannot hold the infinite within our grasp.**
  
6. Look at Deuteronomy 29:29. What does this passage tell us about what we can know of God?
  - a. **1<sup>st</sup>, there is more to God than we can know...**
  - b. **2<sup>nd</sup>, that there is 2 aspects to our God with respect to us:**
    - (1) **What is hidden, and...**
    - (2) **What is revealed...and we are to work and live in the light of what God has revealed...and be content without the rest. A daily act of confession, because we are constantly beseeching God to reveal more about, Why He**



**does things. And why He doesn't give us more information...as if that would really help.**

7. Look at Ps. 46:10. What is God saying to us here? **Bases on the rest of Scripture...which is always in mind when God gives or reiterates a command...that we are to meditate on what we know of God, in other words what God has revealed...and know it well.**
8. See Isaiah 55:8-9. **He doesn't think or act the way we do...Specifically here, God's thought concerning grace are beyond our ability to comprehend...just like His forgiveness...we do not grasp the fullness of it...or His love for us...things that are literally beyond our comprehension...we can know His grace, His forgiveness and His love...but not fully and we have nothing to compare it to ...**
9. See Jeremiah 24:7; 31:34. What does God reveal about Himself in these passages? **That he will reveal to us what we need to know...that we are always on a need to know basis with God and the He knows what we need to know.**
10. Look at Rom. 11:33-36. What does this tells us?
11. Now look at I Cor. 2:6-16. What is revealed here to us that God wants us to know about Him?
  - a. **Paul and the other Apostles along with the prophets are teaching wisdom or a truth "wholly" different than anything devised by men.**
  - b. **That what was once "secret and hidden" is no longer a mystery in that they are fully revealing it now...**
  - c. **That these things are really being revealed by the Holy Spirit...who Jesus had said would reveal these things to His people...**
  - d. **Only the Spirit could perform this function since only God comprehends God...**
  - e. **And God gives them words of "worldly" reference...illustrations and metaphor, and allusion...though each our inadequate to convey everything because what we can understand is finite.**
  - f. **As believers we have the Spirit within us enabling us to understand these truths to the degree that God would have us understand...**
  - g. **We who are His are one with Him and so we also have the mind of God because we have the Spirit within us.**

Next Time: The Self-Existence of God

The Attributes of God  
Sunday School  
February 17, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Review the Incomprehensibility of God

1. The incomprehensibility of God is not one of the attributes of God that a lot of time is spent on these days. Why?
2. What does it mean? Look at Rom. 11:33-36 again for a definition. Why is this attribute important for us to understand today?

C. The self-existence of God

1. The child's question, "Where did God come from?" can you answer it? **The clearest answer is that God never needed to be made, because he was always there.**
2. How would you define this attribute at this point to a crowd of non-believers?
  - a. **To say that God is self-existent simply means that there was not a time when God started to exist.**
  - b. **That the Bible asserts God's self-existence...**
  - c. **If God is just one among many since there are levels of authority there would need to be one higher than Him...**
  - d. **In most world religions even those with a pantheon of gods there is one above the rest...so the human condition recognizes a "supreme being"...**
3. What do the words "*In the beginning God...*" tell us?
  - a. **1" they tell us that there was a "time" that God in His Trinity dwelt all alone....no heaven, no earth where His glory is manifested...no earth to engage His attention...no angels to sing to Him...no universe to be upheld...no one but God the Father , Son and Holy Spirit. A people being curious always want to know what happened before time began. Jonathan Edwards responded one day to such an inquiry by saying, "*God was making Hell for the curious!*"**
  - b. **We can say from this text that He existed before time...the rest of Scripture tells us that He exists apart from time.**
  - c. **He was self-contained, self-sufficient, self-satisfied, in need of nothing or no one.**
  - d. **He has within Himself the power of being...**
  - e. **He is self-existent.**
4. Next what is fuller revealed by "*In the beginning God created...*"?
  - a. **Creator God...He did it all by Himself...He had no assistance...**
  - b. **He was without and then by the power of His word He had...but**

- c. **What He created added nothing to Him...He is complete all by Himself...Nothing can create itself...**
  - d. **He had no supplies...**
  - e. **He didn't need permission...**
5. What is meant by God calling Himself "*I Am that/who I Am*"? How does God reveal His self-existence in this name that is to be a memorial to all generations?
- a. **Yahweh=to be; to live; the self-existent One...He is...He has no need for anyone or anything...**
  - b. **He defines Himself because He was, is and always will be...He is not open to interpretation and redefinition...He is who He is and He tells us who He is only in His Word...nobody's opinion of Him makes any difference...**
  - c. **He is personal and wants to be known by name...**
  - d. **He is independent**
  - e. **He is unchangeable...His character will remain constant...**
  - f. **He has always been...He is eternal...He has no beginning and no end...**
  - g. **He has the power of being within Himself...in fact, all things derive their power from Him**
  - h. **He is really unique...in fact, nothing IS unique but God... he is the only One who can truly say I AM with full certainty, because He is self-existent...**
  - i. **God's name appears over 6800 times in the OT more than 3 times as many as any of His titles...**
6. How does Acts 17:24-25 help define and defend this attribute? ***"The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything."*** (Acts 17:24-25)
7. Why is this attribute important to us? So what? What difference does it make to my life that God is self-existent?
- a. **We know He is God...**
  - b. **Since he is self-existent and He has the power of being that he alone is to be worshiped...**
  - c. **It gives us comfort that he is not in need as we are...**
  - d. **And by virtue of that He can fulfill the needs of His creation...**
8. To be self-existent is also to be self-sufficient. **WCF II-2. God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of himself; and is alone in and unto Himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which He has made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting His own glory in, by, unto, and upon them; He is the alone foundation of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom, are all things; and has most**

**sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever Himself pleases. In His sight all things are open and manifest; His knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature; so as nothing is to Him contingent or uncertain. He is most holy in all His counsels, in all His works, and in all His commands. To Him is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience He is pleased to require of them.**

9. So since He is self-sufficient why did He create the universe and all that is in it? **WCF IV-1. It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create or make of nothing the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good. See Rev. 4:11- Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."**

The Attributes of God  
Sunday School  
February 24, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Quiz: How would you describe
  - a. God's holiness...
  - b. His supremacy...
  - c. His sovereignty...
  - d. His incomprehensibility...
  - e. His self-existence?
2. How does God's name Yahweh... *"I am that/who I am"*...reveal His self-existence? Also, one more thing on His name. Turn to Exodus 34:5-8. What else does God Himself say that His name means according to this text?
  - a. **God is merciful...**
  - b. **Gracious...**
  - c. **Slow to anger...**
  - d. **Abounding in steadfast love...**
  - e. **Faithful...**
  - f. **Keeping steadfast love for thousands...keeping speaks of forever...nothing can snatch His own away from Him...but also speaks of nurturing and tending...caring for and shepherding...and also protecting...God because of His love is our "keep" our fortress, our refuge...**
  - g. **Forgiving to His own of our iniquity, transgressions and sins...**
  - h. **Judge of those who aren't His own... *"who will by no means clear the guilty..."***

C. The "omni's" of God

1. OMNIPOTENT

- a. This one is easy. How would you define this attribute?
  - (1) **All powerful over all His creation...**
  - (2) **God refers to Himself as Almighty (SEE Rev. 1:8)...in fact, often the KJV and NJKV often translates Almighty in the Scriptures with the term omnipotent...See Rev. 19:6...having ALL power...unlimited power and force...everything bows to His will...**
  - (3) **The main and only power source for all things...**

- (4) Unlimited authority...**
  - (5) God is able to do all things that are consistent with His will...**
  - (6) One last thing we don't think about when we say this...He expends no energy that must be replenished...every act He carries out is effortless**
- b. With these being true, then the age old question must still be asked, because it gets to the core of our understanding. Can God make a rock so big that He cannot move it?
- (1) If we answer yes, then we are saying that there is something God cannot do which would by extension prove that He is NOT almighty...**
  - (2) If we answer No, then we are saying that God cannot do something...thus by extension proving again that He is not all powerful.**
  - (3) This question is based on a false premise...that God can do anything! But the Bible tells us some things that God CANNOT do. Can you think of any?**
    - **He cannot lie- Hebrews 6:18**
    - **He cannot die...we have seen this to be true from our past discussions...**
    - **He cannot change...**
    - **He cannot stop loving His own...**
    - **He cannot sin...**
    - **He cannot act unjustly...**
    - **He cannot act against His nature...and it is this point that helps us with our false premise...**
    - **The answer is that God cannot build a rock that he could not move because it would be against His nature to be all powerful over all things...**
- c. With all of this being true than what is meant by this simple affirmation to Mary, *"For nothing will be impossible with God"*?
- (1) The angel is reminding Mary and us of God's omnipotence...because it was within God's will for this baby to be conceived He was...and that was enough of an explanation for Mary at this time.**
  - (2) What is impossible for us is possible for God...**
  - (3) God is able to do whatever He wills to do...whatever supports His nature and character...**
- d. What is comforting about this attribute for us?
- (1) He is trustworthy... people aren't**
  - (2) He uses His power to do His will which will always glorify Himself and be "good" for us... which equals hope**
  - (3) Nothing can frustrate His plan...**
  - (4) Nothing can withstand the power of God...**
  - (5) We are his...we derive hope and comfort from and all-powerful God...sort of like a child's understanding of**

**their parents early in their age...we are in awe but we hope, trust and are comforted in their arms when we aren't with someone else.**

**2. OMNIPRESENCE**

a. Another easy one; How would you define this attribute?

**(1) God is everywhere at the same time...**

**(2) God is close to all who are his all the time...**

**(3) There is no place that men can hide from God because He is everywhere at the same time...these 3 once again are linear attempts to describe God, because...**

**(4) Having said these things we must also say...that since God is a spirit He does not occupy space...since he is not physical in nature he does not occupy a place...**

**(5) His being knows no limits...He is fully present everywhere that He is...this is called His "immensity"...which is not a reference to How big God is but that He is fully present everywhere...**

b. Let's look at a couple of texts to support this attribute: I Kings 8:27; Ps. 139:7-10; Acts 17:22-31. What do they tell us?

c. How is this attribute comforting for us?

**(1) We can be certain of His undivided attention...He will never be preoccupied by someone else or something else...**

**(2) We can know that nothing gets past Him...good or bad...easy or difficult...**

**(3) We don't have to wait for God at any time...for He is always present...**

**(4) There is no place on earth or in the universe for the enemy of God to hide...**

The Attributes of God  
Sunday School  
March 3, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. How would you describe God's omnipotence fairly completely? **God is all powerful over all His creation and He is the main and only power source for all things...He has unlimited authority...God is able to do all things that are consistent with His will...One last thing we don't think about when we say this...He expends no energy that must be replenished...every act He carries out is effortless...** Can he make a rock that is too big for Him to pick up? Why or why not? Why do we even discuss such a ridiculous subject?
2. How would you define God's omnipresence fairly completely? **God is everywhere all the time but having said that we cannot think of God in a special linear way...for He is spirit and He transcends time and space... he is fully present where he is...this used to be called the "immensity" of God.**

C. The Omni's continued...

1. OMNISCIENCE

- a. Anyone wish to offer a definition without looking it up on your phone?
  - (1) **To have all knowledge...omni=all---knowledge=science...**
  - (2) **He possesses perfect knowledge and has no need to learn...In Fact, He has never learned and cannot learn anything for there is nothing to be learned that He doesn't already know...**
  - (3) **This term can only properly applied to God alone...since He is infinite and eternal only such a being can be all =-knowing.**
  - (4) **He is aware of all things...**
  - (5) **Understands all things...**



- (6) Comprehends all things...all at the same time...**
- (7) So the past, present and future are all known at once...He is forever aware of all things at the same time...God does not access information like a computer...all knowledge is always with God ...**
- (8) He is surprised by nothing....**
- (9) He perfectly knows Himself and being the source and author of all things it follows that he knows all things equally well...**
- (10) His knowledge is infallible...**

b. Stephen Charnock (English Presbyterian 1628-1680) once wrote: *“God knows everything not by viewing the things, but by viewing Himself; His own essence is the mirror and book wherein He beholds all things that He ordains, disposes and executes; so He knows all things in the first and original cause.”* What is he saying?

c. Passages to consider: What do they tell us about this attribute?

- (1) Job 36:22-23
- (2) Isaiah 40:12-14
- (3) Malachi 3:6
- (4) Hebrews 4:13

d. What is comforting about God's omniscience?

- (1) Many of the same things from His omnipotence and His omnipresence...He understands all things...He is in control...nothing happens outside of His knowledge...**
- (2) He is not puzzled by those things that puzzle us...**
- (3) It speaks of Him being a just judge...for one to be totally just in every judgment they must know all the facts to render a perfect judgment...and He does...**
- (4) There are no mistakes possible...**

The Attributes of God  
Sunday School  
March 10, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. How would you characterize and define omniscience?
  - a. **To have all knowledge...omni=all---knowledge= science...**
  - b. **He possesses perfect knowledge and has no need to learn...In Fact, He has never learned and cannot learn anything for there is nothing to be learned that He doesn't already know...**
  - c. **This term can only properly applied to God alone...since He is infinite and eternal only such a being can be all =- knowing.**
  - d. **He is aware of all things...**
  - e. **Understands all things...**
  - f. **Comprehends all things...all at the same time...**
  - g. **So the past, present and future are all known at once...He is forever aware of all things at the same time...God does not access information like a computer...all knowledge is always with God ...**
  - h. **He perfectly knows Himself and being the source and author of all things it follows that he knows all things equally well...**
  - i. **His knowledge is infallible...**
2. How is this attribute comforting and hopeful for us?
  - a. **He is surprised by nothing....**

- b. He knows everything...plans and ordains all things which enables us to trust Him since we know that someone knows...He knows**

### C. OMNIBENEVOLENCE

1. Another easy one. Does anyone wish to take a shot at this one?
  - a. The concept of omnibenevolence stems from two basic ideas of God: that God is perfect and that God is morally good. Therefore, God must possess perfect goodness. Being perfectly good must entail being good in all ways at all times and towards all other beings...**
  - b. An all-loving, or infinitely good God. Its use is often with regards to the divine triad, whereby a deity is described to be simultaneously omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent. This triad is used especially with the Christian God, Yahweh.... The omnibenevolent God, by definition, was unable to withhold forgiveness from his people.**
  - c. The original Saxon meaning of our English word God is "The Good". God is not only the greatest of all beings but He is the "best" most benevolent.**
  - d. This goodness is underived...it doesn't originate from anywhere except from God...for it is part of God's essence.**
2. How is the goodness of God seen day by day?
  - a. Gen. 1:31**
  - b. Psalm 33:5**
  - c. Psalm 119:68**
  - d. God could have been pleased to satisfy our hunger in some other way than food bringing pleasure to our lives...think about the various flavors of things they all come from God...**
  - e. God omnibenevolence is also seen in variety of foods...meats, vegetables and fruits...**
  - f. God gave us senses and all that gratifies them...**
  - g. The earth could have been fertile without so many forms of surface area to arouse our pleasure...mountains, valleys, forests, deserts...**
  - h. Our physical lives could have been sustained without flowers for our eyes and their smells for our noses...**
  - i. With rare exceptions mankind experiences a far greater number of days of health than we do sickness and pain. *"There really is more creature happiness in the world than creature-misery."* A.W. Pink**
3. What about the question of evil? How can there be evil if God is an omnibenevolent God? Maybe doing some more defining of terms would be helpful:
  - a. How do we define "good" when we speak of God? **Good in short form is whatever brings glory to God.****
  - b. What is evil? **Again in short form, whatever does not bring God glory...that which opposes God.****

- c. But hold on, if God is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient and omnibenevolent what purpose does evil have? ***“This is part of the infinite goodness of God, that He should allow evil to exist, and out of it produce good.”--- Thomas Aquinas*** What does this mean?
  - d. Some would say, *“Being perfectly good must entail being good in all ways at all times and towards all other beings.”* If this is true how would you define the purpose of evil in the world?
4. How do judgment and justice fit in here? If God is perfectly good and infinitely benevolent, how can He punish anyone? Can God be good if He is not just? Why or why not?
5. How does God’s grace define His infinite goodness?
6. Did anyone see the mini-series last week the Bible by Roma Downey and her husband? (Only one person saw some of it beside myself...something about a History Channel production that doesn’t spur excitement in biblically astute folks.) How did the series portray God?
- a. **Weak...and dependent upon the faith of man...**
  - b. **Capricious in His carrying out of His wrath...The way they portrayed Sodom didn’t even begin to describe why God did what He did for the average person...**
  - c. **Weak...offering no protection to the Israelites before they crossed the Red Sea...**
  - d. **Weak...in even the crossing of the Red Sea...barely opened a section up wide enough for 4-5 Egyptians to get through...everyone was wet by the time they got out of the other side...the Bible is clear about how “BIG” this miracle was even specifically telling us where the waters piled up and that all was dry when the children went through...they wouldn’t have seen the water as they crossed through the city...**
  - e. **A complete opposite view of what we have been talking about...but this IS how the world wishes to see Him.**

Let’s look at Exodus 20: 1-21. How do the 10 Commandments reveal all the Omni’s we have talked about concerning God? Please give specific examples.

The Attributes of God  
Sunday School  
March 17, 2013  
St. Patrick's Day

A. Prayer

B. Review

C. Tri-unity of God-

1. What can you tell me about St. Patrick's Day and its relationship to the attribute of the tri-unity of God?

**a. Legend credits St. Patrick with teaching the Irish about the doctrine of the Holy Trinity by showing people the shamrock, a three-leaved plant, using it to illustrate the Christian teaching of three persons in one God. For this reason, shamrocks are a central symbol for St Patrick's Day. Legend: Patrick and 24 of his followers arrived in Ireland in the winter of 432. Patrick and his followers were invited to Tara by the King of Laoghaire. While he was there he plucked a shamrock from the ground and tried to explain**

**the to the druids and the King that the shamrock had three leaves just like God had three personas – The Father, The Son and the Holy Ghost. This was called the Trinity. King Laoghaire was very impressed and chose to accept Christianity. He also gave Patrick the freedom to spread Christianity throughout Ireland.**

- b. The shamrock had been seen as sacred in the pre-Christian days in Ireland. Before the Christian era it was a sacred plant of the Druids of Ireland because its leaves formed a triad. Due to its green color and overall shape, many viewed it as representing rebirth and eternal life.**
  - c. Three was a sacred number in the pagan religion and there is a thought that Patrick took this and used it in the biblical explanations of 3 and then associated it with the tri-unity of God.**
2. Fun Fact: On any given day 5.5 million pints of Guinness, the famous Irish stout, are consumed around the world. On St. Patrick's Day, that number more than doubles to 13 million pints, said Beth Davies Ryan, global corporate relations director of Guinness. "Historically speaking, a lot of Irish immigrants came to the United States and brought with them lots of customs and traditions, one of them being Guinness," she said. An Irish toast: *"May your glass be ever full. May the roof over your head be always strong. And may you be in heaven half an hour before the devil knows you're dead."* Many of the Irish toast have 3 parts to them like this one.
3. St. Patrick's Prayer: See below...
4. What does this teach us about the tri-unity of God, if anything? **Whether St. Patrick actually existed or if the gospel was brought by another priest at least these 2 things are true:**
- a. That this doctrine and these attributes have been taught in the church for some time...**
  - b. They obviously were well established in the church even by the early to mid-5<sup>th</sup> Century to be such a foundation of this young man's teaching/ministry...**
5. Quick Facts:
- a. The word "Trinity" refers to "Tri-unity" (three in one).
  - b. The term comes from the Latin trinitas.
  - c. The doctrine of the Trinity is a central doctrine of the Christian faith.
    - (1) "'Central doctrines' of the Christian faith are those doctrines that make the Christian faith Christian and not something else."
    - (2) No other religion holds to this teaching.
  - d. The first recorded use of the term "Trinity" is by Theophilus of Antioch (116-181) in the second century.[2]
6. Dr. Walter Martin points out: *"No man can fully explain the Trinity, though in every age scholars have propounded theories and advanced hypotheses to explore this mysterious Biblical teaching. But despite the worthy efforts of*

*these scholars, the Trinity is still largely incomprehensible to the mind of man. Perhaps the chief reason for this is that the Trinity is a-logical, or beyond logic. It, therefore, cannot be made subject to human reason or logic. Because of this, opponents of the doctrine argue that the idea of the Trinity must be rejected as untenable. Such thinking, however, makes man's corrupted human reason the sole criterion for determining the truth of divine revelation."*

7. So what's the issue that faces us? **The ultimate issue as always is, does the biblical evidence support the doctrine of the Trinity or tri-personality of God? If biblical evidence supports it, we can know it is true. Comprehending it is another matter.** John Wesley said, *"Bring me a worm that can comprehend a man, and then I will show you a man that can comprehend the triune God."*
8. The story is told, *"One day St. Augustine was walking on the sandy beach by the sea. There churned in his mind the mystery of the Holy Trinity. He was talking to himself, "One God, but Three Persons. Three Persons— not three gods but One God. What does it mean? How can it be explained? How can my mind take it in?" And so he was tormenting his mind and beating his brain, when he saw a little boy on the beach. He approached him to see what he was doing. The child had dug a small hole in the sand. With his little hands he was carrying water from the sea and was dumping it in the little hole. St. Augustine asked, "What are you doing, my child?" The child replied, "I want to put all the water of the sea into this hole." Once more St. Augustine asked, "But is it possible for all the water of this great sea to be contained in this little hole?" And the child asked him in return, "If the water of the finite sea cannot be contained in this little hole, then how can The Infinite Triune God be contained in your mind?" And the child disappeared; he was actually an angel!"*
9. Trinity is, of course, not a biblical word. Neither are tri-unity, subsistence, nor essence. Yet we employ them, and often helpfully, in trying to express this doctrine. Nevertheless, the doctrine and attribute grows out of the Scriptures, so it is a biblical teaching. The unity of God is expressed in many places like Deut. 6:4. And since the Bible teaches God in 3 persons then there is a tri-unity.
10. How have you heard this doctrine explained in the past?
11. We understand this as a doctrine but how is this an attribute of God as well?
  - a. **The doctrine of the Holy Trinity arises from God's Own revelation about Himself; God being God, all our knowledge of Him comes by divine revelation, for it is impossible for us to know God without His willingness to be known. God is known only as He makes Himself known to us through the revealing and saving agency of His Word and Spirit. God revealed Himself through Himself, through the incarnation of His Son among us as our Savior and by the power of His Spirit.**
  - b. ***"We worship one God in the Trinity, and the Trinity in unity; we distinguish among the persons, but we do not divide the substance...The entire three persons are***

***coeternal and coequal with one another, so that...we  
worship complete unity in Trinity and Trinity in unity”  
(The Athanasian Creed).***

### **Prayer of St. Patrick**

I bind to myself today  
The strong virtue of the Invocation of the Trinity:  
I believe the Trinity in the Unity  
The Creator of the Universe.

I bind to myself today  
The virtue of the Incarnation of Christ with His Baptism,  
The virtue of His crucifixion with His burial,  
The virtue of His Resurrection with His Ascension,  
The virtue of His coming on the Judgment Day.

I bind to myself today  
The virtue of the love of seraphim,  
In the obedience of angels,  
In the hope of resurrection unto reward,  
In prayers of Patriarchs,  
In predictions of Prophets,  
In preaching of Apostles,  
In faith of Confessors,  
In purity of holy Virgins,  
In deeds of righteous men.

I bind to myself today  
The power of Heaven,  
The light of the sun,  
The brightness of the moon,  
The splendour of fire,  
The flashing of lightning,  
The swiftness of wind,  
The depth of sea,  
The stability of earth,  
The compactness of rocks.



I bind to myself today  
God's Power to guide me,  
God's Might to uphold me,  
God's Wisdom to teach me,  
God's Eye to watch over me,  
God's Ear to hear me,  
God's Word to give me speech,  
God's Hand to guide me,  
God's Way to lie before me,  
God's Shield to shelter me,  
God's Host to secure me,  
Against the snares of demons,  
Against the seductions of vices,  
Against the lusts of nature,  
Against everyone who meditates injury to me,  
Whether far or near,  
Whether few or with many.

I invoke today all these virtues  
Against every hostile merciless power  
Which may assail my body and my soul,  
Against the incantations of false prophets,  
Against the black laws of heathenism,  
Against the false laws of heresy,  
Against the deceits of idolatry,  
Against the spells of women, and smiths, and druids,  
Against every knowledge that binds the soul of man.

Christ, protect me today  
Against every poison, against burning,  
Against drowning, against death-wound,  
That I may receive abundant reward.

Christ with me, Christ before me,  
Christ behind me, Christ within me,  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ at my right, Christ at my left,  
Christ in the fort,  
Christ in the chariot seat,  
Christ in the ship,  
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks to me,  
Christ in every eye that sees me,  
Christ in every ear that hears me.

I bind to myself today  
The strong virtue of an invocation of the Trinity,  
I believe the Trinity in the Unity  
The Creator of the Universe.

The Attributes of God  
Sunday School  
March 24, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What did St. Patrick have to do with a discussion concerning the Trinity?
2. What does this tell us about the accepted church's position of the time on this subject? **Whether St. Patrick actually existed or if the gospel was brought by another priest at least these 2 things are true:**
  - c. **That this doctrine and these attributes have been taught in the church for some time...**

- d. **They obviously were well established in the church even by the early to mid-5<sup>th</sup> Century to be such a foundation of this young man's teaching/ministry...**
  3. How does the fact that the Church of the 5<sup>th</sup> Century seemed so settled on this issue help us today? **Well, it is a historical reality that the church has taught and believed this doctrine and attribute since the church's founding. So when people seek to discredit it they have to discredit the whole church ...history is important.**
- C. Tri-Unity/ Trinity Cont.
1. The Church speaks through the years:
    - a. The Targum Neofiti- 200BC. (A targum is an accepted interpretation of the Scriptures from a Rabbi-- similar to a modern day commentary.) This specific Targum states that *"In the beginning by the firstborn, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and void and the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the Deep."* - This was 200 years prior to the birth of Christ! There existed at least to a certain extent Jews who were waiting for the coming messiah they believed to be God the son. Now not all Jews may have bought into this but clearly it was by no means a revolutionarily new idea from the 1st century AD Church.
    - b. *"We worship one God in the Trinity, and the Trinity in unity; we distinguish among the persons, but we do not divide the substance...The entire three persons are coeternal and coequal with one another, so that...we worship complete unity in Trinity and Trinity in unity"* (The Athanasian Creed). 3<sup>rd</sup> Cent.
    - c. *"If you deny the trinity you lose your soul, if you try to explain the trinity you shall lose your mind"*- Augustine- 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Cent.
    - d. *"We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son], who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets."*-Part of the Nicene Creed as finish at the Council of Constantinople in 381
    - e. WCF Chapter 2-3 states: "In the unity of the Godhead there be three Persons of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son." What would you say it is saying?
      - (1) **Interestingly is limited in definition...just like the Bible fully asserts that God was before all things and has always existed unto Himself...the Bible simply asserts the tri-unity/trinity of the God head with no real explanation. Many through the ages have asserted that explanation is beyond any explanation.**
      - (2) **When the Confession speaks of Christ being begotten of the Father it takes this from Ps. 2:7...and it speaks at the same time of the Son relation to the Father as being eternally begotten...not created...always existing with a specific mission from the Father.**

**(3) And the Spirit's proceeding from the Father and the Son verifies all three's divinity and unity.**

- f. Westminster Shorter catechism says: Q4: What is God? A4: God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. Q5: Are there more Gods than one? A5: There is but one only, the living and true God. Q6: How many persons are there in the Godhead? A6: There are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. How do these catechisms questions help us in understanding the tri-unity/trinity of God?
  - g. John Wesley said, *"Bring me a worm that can comprehend a man, and then I will show you a man that can comprehend the triune God."*
  - h. B.B. Warfield, reformed scholar of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century really says it best, *"When we have said these three things, then...that there is but one God...that the Father and the Son and the Spirit is each God...that the father and the Son and the Spirit is each a distinct person...we have enunciated the doctrine of the Trinity in its completeness."*
2. Now let's look at scripture again. How do these Bible texts reveal God's Holy Trinity in the Old and New Testaments?
- a. Gen. 1:1-3- **Indeed, the very beginning of the Torah (Gen. 1:1-2) speaks about the creative activity of Elohim (God) and the presence of Ruach Elohim (the Spirit of God) as narrated by an omniscient Voice or Word of God. Obviously the Spirit of God is God Himself just as the Word of God is likewise God Himself, and therefore the Scriptures begin with the idea that God represents Trinity within Unity.**
  - b. Deut. 6:4- Here in this text some things are true:
    - (1) **Moses could have used "yachid" in the Sh'ma to indicate absolute oneness unequivocally, but he did not. He used "echad". By using "echad, God through Moses wanted to make clear that He was not talking about a singular one= Yachid...but rather a compound one= echad. The word "yachid" is used often in Scripture to denote singleness. This was the word used in Genesis 22:2 to emphasize the absolute oneness of Abraham's only unique son, Isaac. "Echad" is the word used to describe "oneness" as in Genesis 2:24..."basra echad"= one flesh or oneness!**
    - (2) **A plurality of Persons is referred to in the Tanach as YHVH.**
    - (3) **The Scriptures identify three Persons as divine.**
    - (4) **Father, Son and Holy Spirit have one Name.**
    - (5) **In view of these things, it would have been misleading to describe YHVH in the Sh'ma as yachid as it is clear, even in the Tanach, that there are a plurality of Persons in the Godhead. There remains only one reasonable conclusion: Echad in the Sh'ma ascribes compound unity to YHVH; and since there**

**are three divine Persons who constitute that compound unit, we call them a Tri-unity.**

b. Is. 44:6- (speaks of the work of the Father and the Son)

c. Is. 48:12-16- **The Trinity...equal in creation, power and authority...**

The Attributes of God  
Sunday School  
March 31, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Listen again to a couple of quotes from Church History concerning the Tri-unity/Trinity of the One True God:
  - a. ***“We worship one God in the Trinity, and the Trinity in unity; we distinguish among the persons, but we do not divide the substance...The entire three persons are coeternal and coequal with one another, so that...we worship complete unity in Trinity and Trinity in unity”*** (The Athanasian Creed). 3<sup>rd</sup> Cent.
  - b. ***“When we have said these three things, then...that there is but one God...that the Father and the Son and the Spirit is each God...that the father and the Son and the Spirit is each a distinct person...we have enunciated the doctrine of the Trinity in its completeness.”- B.B. Warfield, reformed scholar of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century...***
2. What does listening to the words of Church History (these and the other quotes from last week...) tells us about how the church viewed this doctrine?
  - a. **As an absolute doctrine and attribute of the One true God...**
  - b. **This teaching has remained intact for many years...oh, there has been council after council to consider heretical views but the Church has come back to the one it has always held...**
  - c. **The Church has chosen to keep this doctrine/attribute of God simple...sort of like its definition of God...**
  - d. **It instructs us to keep doctrines of such complexity as simple as possible and not to have to worry too much to defend them...*“If you deny the trinity you lose your soul, if you try to explain the trinity you shall lose your mind”*- Augustine- 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Cent.**
  - e. **We can be comforted as we stand with the voices of those who have gone on before us...we stand with one voice!**

C. Now let's conclude...

1. We were looking at Scripture and how it reveals God's Holy Tri-unity/Trinity.
  - a. Matthew 3:16-17- **declares each to be equal as well... as well as Luke 3:22....**
  - b. II Cor. 3: 4-6, 12-18- ***“Since we have such a hope...”* refers back to vss. 5-6, *“Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant...”* so we have God the Father in the lead of the hope, along with God the Son as the only One who could provide the way for the veil of spiritual blindness to be lifted and the Spirit actually doing the heavy lifting on a daily basis.**
  - c. II Cor. 13:14-
  - d. Eph. 1:1-14- **a picture of the triune God's role in our creation and our re-creation. Which Trinitarian function is most important for our salvation? **They all have equal importance ...no salvation without the complementary role of each.****

e. II Peter 1:1-2-

f. I John 5:6-9- **An interesting text to be sure that clearly shows the 3 persons of the Trinity and their unity in the appeasement of God's wrath and our eventual salvation...but then there is the note that can be found in most Bibles, that can still be found in the King James...vs.7-8- "For there are 3 that bear record/testify in heaven: the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these 3 are one. And there are 3 that bear record/testify in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these 3 agree in one."** – This is not in the Greek manuscripts before the 16<sup>th</sup> Century...it is quite prominent in the later 16<sup>th</sup> Century Vulgate translation printings...used almost exclusively for the English King James version of 1611...a Latin version...another transliteration of the original text and this text appears to have been a scribal note...a commentary trying to explain from their perspective what was being said here...that was added in later printings of the Vulgate and then placed in the Authorized King James version and then subsequent printings... The ESV note is the better explanation on what is being spoken of here. Note: aside from it not being in the "original" and possibly being misleading of the context...what positive value can this scribal note have for us today? **Once again it points to the Church maintaining its Trinitarian position even through so many other heresies that affected the Church during the time of the note finding its way into the Vulgate text.**

2. Why do you suppose that this is one of the most misunderstood and hardest doctrines to support for the Christian?

a. **Because the average Christian is biblically illiterate and non-discriminating of God's word and its applicability...**

b. **Since we don't do our homework...by reading THE BIBLE...we feel inadequate...which we are...but rather than being motivated to study we retreat into other things and leave this alone...**

c. **But it can be b3 grasped to a certain degree...**

(1) **Trinity describes a relationship not of 3 gods, but of one God who exists in 3 persons...the Godhead.**

(2) **The words Tri-unity or Trinity are used in an effort to define the fullness of the Godhead both in terms of His unity and His diversity. The unity of the God head is affirmed in terms of essence or being, while the diversity of the Godhead is expressed in terms of person.**

(3) **A distinction of work and yet unity of purpose...**

- a. The Father initiates creation and redemption...**
- b. The Son redeems the creation...**
- c. The Spirit regenerates and sanctifies...applying redemption to believers.**

3. Why does the Trinity matter to our faith today?

- a. Because it is a central tenet of not only Christian orthodoxy, but of the Nature of God. To deny such a principle is to deny a portion of God.**
- b. It is the beauty and mystery of the trinity that magnifies that sacrifice of the Cross. Had Jesus simply been a creation of God (And not God, like Jehovah's Witness, Islam, and Mormonism would all claim) then His sacrifice would be no more noble than that of any other honorable sacrifice that have taken place throughout the history. (Men dying to save their country, families, faith. Or women dying to save their children...etc. All are noteworthy but not monumentally and profoundly altering to the fabric of life, like Christ's sacrifice on the cross was.)**
- c. This is why the term used by members of Islam "*people of the book*", which they use to unify all Jews, Muslim's, and Christians together because they say we all worship the same God and trace our beliefs back to Father Abraham... is faulty. We as believers in Christ believe neither in the God of the Muslims nor the God of the Jews. Because both of these sects fail to recognize Jesus as both our Savior and our God. There is one God to deny that Christ is God is to deny God.**
- d. It reveals What and Who God is (one God in three Persons).**
- e. It brings together in a coherent manner the great truths about God's historical, redemptive actions.**
- f. This doctrine and attribute does not fully explain the mysterious character of God...rather it sets the boundaries outside of which we must not try to add to or take away from. It demands that we remain faithful to the biblical revelation, not man's explanations. I John 5:9**
- g. It reminds us that God is "bigger" than we can comprehend and to seek more than the Scripture allows will only confuse us.**
- h. To deny this belief is to deny the faith in its totality.**

4. Just so we are clear: How would you answer a Christian brother or a non-believer that says we all serve the same God?



The Attributes of God  
Sunday School  
April 7, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What did St. Patrick have to do with our discussion on the Tri-unity/Trinity of God?
  - a. **By using the shamrock he taught the concept of the Tri-unity of God to pagans...**
  - b. **His use of the Trinity shows us how important the doctrine was even in the early stages of the church...**
  - c. **It shows us how well it was taught...for it to used as a form of evangelism...**
  - d. **And it showed one other thing that iis crucial for Christians...he knew his surroundings well and because of that he knew how best to reach out to these pagans....much like Paul to the Athenians.**
2. Why is this doctrine/attribute of God one of the most misunderstood and hardest to explain?
3. We have already looked at a few of God's attributes since January. Can anyone name some of them?
  - a. **The Holiness of God**
  - b. **The Supremacy of God**
  - c. **The Sovereignty of God**
  - d. **The Incomprehensibility of God**
  - e. **The Self-Existence of God**
  - f. **The Omnipotence of God**
  - g. **The Omnipresence of God**
  - h. **The Omniscience of God**
  - i. **The Omnibenevolence of God**
  - j. **The Tri-unity/Trinity of God**

C. An attribute we really like to talk about ...God's Love.

1. As we consider this attribute we will look at 3 aspects of it:
  - a. The Love of God...
  - b. The Love of God to us...
  - c. God's Steadfast love...His lovingkindness
  - d. These may seem to be the same thing but in each we will look at specific features all along understanding that these are each interchangeable...a lot like the Tri-unity/Trinity of God.
  
2. How is love defined in the world around us?
  - a. **A feeling, a choice, "good", putting others 1<sup>st</sup>, an action, trusting**
  - b. **The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines love as "an intense affection for another person based on familial or personal ties... attraction based on sexual desire... affection based on admiration, benevolence, or common interests" We love other people, or we say we love other people, when we are attracted to them and when they make us feel good. Notice that a key phrase in the dictionary definition of love is the phrase "based on". This phrase implies that we love conditionally; in other words, we love someone because they fulfill a condition that we require before we can love them. How many times have you heard or said, "I love you because you are cute;" or "I love you because you take good care of me;" or "I love you because you are fun to be with"?**
  - c. **Our love is not only conditional, it is also subject to sudden or unpredictable changes. We love based on feelings and emotions that can change from one moment to the next. The divorce rate is extremely high in today's society because husbands and wives supposedly stop loving one another-or they "fall out of love". They may go through a rough patch in their marriage, and they no longer "feel" love for their spouse, so they call it quits. Evidently, their marriage vow of "till death do us part" means they can part at the death of their love for their spouse rather than at their physical death.**
  - d. The Greek has a number of words to describe different types of love but there are 5 particular words that often come up:
    - (1) **EPITHUMIA is the Greek word for strong desire, which can have either a positive or negative connotation in the Bible. The positive connotation is usually translated strong desire, while the negative connotation is usually translated LUST. Lust is simply a strong desire that is perverted, corrupt, or otherwise contrary to God's will and plan.**
    - (2) **EROS- sexual love.**
    - (3) **STORGE- Familial love...a love of family member... The word is equal to the word "affection" (στοργή) is fondness through familiarity, especially between family members..."Blood is thicker than water.." These 2 terms EROS and STORGE do not appear in the Bible though the idea for both is certainly dealt with in many ways.**

- (4) **PHILOS**-which means basically “to like”. This is a love that receives, and it is what most men tend to have in mind when it comes to marriage. We tell our wives that we love them but we mean “You make me feel good or I like feeling this way because of you.” This kind of circumstantial, self-centered love is what comes most easily to us. However, on a positive note it can also mean a love for people who have otherwise found themselves together for a cause or membership like a church family, soldiers. People you have gotten so used to that when they are absent you “feel” something is missing. Phileo is about companionship, camaraderie, partnership, mutual affection, or giving and receiving. Philia pertains to friends, freely chosen because of mutual compatibility and common values. As for the term Philia, the love of friendship, it is used with added depth of meaning in John’s Gospel in order to express the relationship between Jesus and his disciples. The type of bond perhaps between David and Jonathan.
- (5) **AGAPE**’- Agapē, ἀγάπη is the love that brings forth caring regardless of the circumstance. a giving love like the one God has for all his children. A Christian loves their spouse in this way by giving themselves to our spouse and for our spouse. This is especially true for the husband when Paul says “*Husbands you “must” love your wives...*” God desires that when a Christian man says to his wife, “I love you,” he is not saying “...as long as I receive what I want from this...” but instead he is to be resolved in meaning, “I give to you in the way God has given for me.” Agape=unconditional love. The word “agape” was not used commonly in ancient manuscripts, except in the New Testament. Many scholars believe that early Christians used and possibly even coined the word. Agape is all about unconditional, selfless, and sacrificial love- the love displayed by God through Jesus. There is this underlying idea of total commitment to the object of love even if it doesn’t deserve or desire it. New Testament writers prefer (Agape), which occurs rather infrequently in Greek usage and most frequently in the New Testament.”

The Attributes of God  
Sunday School  
April 14, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What seems to be the main factor in how modern man defines love? **The key phrase in the dictionary definition we look at of love was the phrase "based on". This phrase implies that we love conditionally; in other words, we love someone because they fulfill a condition that we require before we can love them.**
2. Why do you suppose that other languages have many words to describe love and we basically have one with so many meanings?

C. God is Love

1. The whole Bible gives us much to consider concerning God's attributes and His nature. We like to talk of God's "main" attribute, if that is possible, as being holy. And that may be true since it is the only attribute that is offered up three-fold as praise to the One Holy God. *"Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty!"* We might even be tempted to say that holiness is His very nature. Of course, He alone defines holiness for He is Holy. But as we come into the NT Paul offers up one of these absolutes concerning God's nature in I Cor. 1:9

he says, *"God is faithful..."* Then John the Apostle that seems to have been the closest to Jesus gives us 3 other aspects that seem to be offered up as defining God's nature. Can you think of these three:

- a. John 4:24- **God is Spirit-not God is a spirit for that would put God in the same class with other spirits...**
  - b. I John 1:5- **God is light- the opposite of darkness...darkness stands in Scripture for sin, evil, and death...while "light" on the other hand stands for holiness, goodness, purity, omniscience and life... theologically when the Bible speaks of God as light it is speaking of the sum of all His excellence, grace and virtue.**
  - c. I John 4:8, 16- **God is love- This is not simply that God Loves, but that He is love itself. Love is not merely an attribute, but His very nature.**
  - d. John is known to us as "the apostle of love." It is a subject that he can't get away from. In church history the historians of the past have reminded us that in the last weeks of John's life, when he was too feeble to go to church on Sunday to worship with the saints, that the elders of the church would literally carry him there on a pallet, and he at his very last meeting with his Christians in the local congregation could only say one thing: *"Beloved, let us love one another."*
2. Each of these above, God is Holy, God is Spirit, God is Light, God is Love, God is Faithful are presented as absolutes as if each individual attribute IS all God is...each one having the same weight in defining God's character. We could add others like God is...a consuming fire, merciful, a refuge, a Rock...and the list goes on. Why would the Bible present these in this light?
- a. **God wants us to know who He is...His attribute describes God and after a while we would run out of ways to describe Him but He doesn't so we won't forget just who our God is and how BIG He is...and how different He is from other gods...little "g"!**
  - b. **God defines these things rather than these things defining God...**
  - c. **These completely capture His essence...He can't separate Himself for who He is...**
  - d. **We like to categorize but God is a unity...God is...God knows our need so He condescends to our need!?**
  - e. **Jeremy is a man. But what else is he absolutely?**
3. When you hear the phrase "God is love" what things come to your mind?
4. How does the Church and the world often define this last one...God is Love?
- a. **He takes care of my every need...**
  - b. **He is never harsh...**
  - c. **He is always good-natured to all His creation...**
  - d.
5. How does the Bible speak of God's love?
- a. **God's love is uninfluenced. The love that people have for each other is primarily based on something...their looks,**

**their intelligence, their age...God's love is not based on anything the creature does or can do...See Deut. 7:7-8; Eph. 1:5; II Tim 1:9.** With this in mind; we should ask ourselves, "What was there in me to attract the heart of God?" **Nothing... in fact, we had everything to repel Him if His love was based on what we did or what we were...with no good thing in me.**

- b. God's love is eternal. God Himself is eternal so is His love. His love has no beginning or ending. Man can look back and ask when is it you began to love someone...but God has always loved His own. See Jeremiah 31:3; Eph. 1:4-5. Think on this...From everlasting to everlasting God loves His people, because God is love!**
- c. God's love is sovereign. Since God is sovereign, under obligation to no one, a law unto Himself, He then acts according to His pleasure which is always right. See Rom. 9:13...Did Jacob bring anything more to the table that would have caused God to love him more than Esau? So, why did He love one twin over the other? **Because it pleased Him to do so...and what pleases Him is always right. he has compassion on who He wills. Suppose for a moment that God's love was regulated by anything else than His will: in such a case He would be no different from us...needing to base His love on something.** Think on this: He does as He pleases and He is pleased to love us because of Jesus Christ.**
- d. God's love is infinite. God's essence fills heaven and earth. His wisdom is limitless, for He knows all things past, present and future. His power is unbounded...so His love is without limit. There is a depth to His love than cannot be measured. See Eph. 2:4, I Peter 1:3...the word "great" is crucial in these verses...no little love will do.**

The Attributes of God  
Sunday School  
April 21, 2013

- A. Prayer
- B. Review

- 1. Each of these above, God is Holy, God is Spirit, God is Light, God is Love, God is Faithful are presented as absolutes as if each individual attribute IS all God is...each one having the same weight in defining God's character. We could add others like God is...a consuming fire, merciful, a refuge, a Rock...and the list goes on. Why would the Bible present each of these as absolute...as if each of these were all that God is?
- a. God wants us to know who He is...He attribute describes God and after a while we would run out of ways to describe Him but He doesn't so we won't forget just who our God is and**

**how BIG He is...and how different He is from other gods...little "g"!**

- b. God defines these things rather than these things defining God...God is these things. He and He alone...we only reflect them in a small way.**
  - c. To show the intensity and depth of each...**
  - d. Accentuates His divine nature...nothing is like Him in all His essence...**
  - e. These completely capture His essence...He can't separate Himself for who He is...**
  - f. We like to categorize but God is a unity...God is...God knows our need so He condescends to our need?!**
2. How does the Bible speak of God's love?
- a. God's love is uninfluenced.**
  - b. God's love is eternal.**
  - c. God's love is sovereign. Think on this: He does as He pleases and He is pleased to love us because of Jesus Christ.**
  - d. God's love is infinite. God's essence fills heaven and earth. His wisdom is limitless, for He knows all things past, present and future.**
  - e. God's love is immutable. God's love never changes. Since it is not "based on" anything but His good pleasure not person, circumstance or situation can ever decrease the amount or for that matter increase the amount of love for His love is eternal, unchangeable, and infinite. See John 13:1... *"Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end."* Then what comes after this verse in this chapter:
    - (1) Washes the disciples feet ...and has trouble with Peter who at first refuses to have his feet washed by his Lord when they had forgotten a basic rule of hospitality themselves...**
    - (2) Talks of how one of them will betray Him...and the disciples began bickering among themselves...conspiring to find out which one it was...and even after He told them they still didn't get it...**
    - (3) The disciples will be scattered like little children looking for their parent...**
    - (4) Peter will openly deny the Lord...Peter swears that He would never deny Jesus**
    - (5) And still for those who were His He says, He loved them to the end.!"****
  - f. God's love is holy. God's love is not regulated by passion or sentiment, but by principle.
    - (1) His love never conflicts with His holiness. God is light is mentioned before God is love. God's love is no mere weakness of heart or effeminate softness. See Hebs. 12:6....God will not wink at sin, even in His own people.****

**(2) His love is holy, pure, unmixed with sentimentality. God's love is never in conflict...it is always true towards His own.**

**(3) God's love for His people moves Him to act powerfully and, if need be, painfully. How does God answer us in keeping with our idolatry? God allows us to taste the often destructive consequences of trusting idols. Only when our idols fail us will we begin to understand the futility and insanity of idolatry (Isa. 44). Idolatry carries a blinding and binding power. Only a power as great as the grace of God can possibly cut through the delusions and destroy the entrapments of idolatry.**

**g. God's love is jealous!** How do you "feel" about that statement? See Exodus 20:4-6. **Because he gave so much... it required the life and death of His Son; it is costly to us because it means God's love will never let us go. That can get very disruptive and messy. Sometimes we proclaim, "Nothing will ever separate me from the love of God," not fully realizing everything implied. The God of love will not tolerate our love of idols.**

**h. God's love is gracious. The love and favor/blessing/ grace of God are inseparable. See Rom. 8:32-39. Which statement is true and why:**

**(1) Christ died so that God would be able to love us.**

**(2) Christ died because God loved His people.**

**(3) Why is the correct answer important today?**

**(4) Whenever we are tempted to question God's love all we have to do is go back to Calvary!**

### **C. The Love of God to Us**

1. Do you agree with the statement, "God loves All people?" Why or why not?  
**Ps. 145::9, Matt. 5:45, Luke 6:35.**

2. How does God manifest His own love? **Christ is the object of God's the Father's love. The Bible seems to make clear that there is nothing of the love of God outside of Christ. Rom. 8:39. God loves because of Christ. Christ is the sole channel through which the love of God flows. Ralph Erskine (1685-1752)said, "God has a marvelous way to manifest His love. When he would show His power, He made the universe. When He would display His wisdom, He put it in a frame and form that discovered vastness. When He would manifest the grandeur and glory of His name, He makes heaven, and puts angels and archangels, principalities and powers therein. And when he would manifest His love, what will He not do? God has taken a great and marvelous way of manifesting it in Christ: His person, His blood, His death, His righteousness."**



3. As Reformed Christians we often make the claim that all who are God's cannot be lost. That all who are God's are loved completely and that love can never be taken away. How can we so resolutely make that claim?
  - a. **The love of God is in Christ Jesus and all who are God's are "in Christ Jesus" ...and since Christ Jesus cannot be diminished in anyway...then His love for His own cannot be diminished in anyway. His love is uninfluenced. See John 13:1...**
  - b. **As we are chosen in Him (Eph. 1:4)...we were accepted in Him (Eph. 1:6)...as our life is hid in Him (Col. 3:3), so we are loved in Him..."the love of God which is in Christ Jesus...": in Him as our Head...our finisher and protector of our faith...nothing will separate us from the love of Christ.**
4. Here is another question to consider: Do you feel more loved by God because God delights you, or because God, at great cost to His Son, frees you to enjoy delighting in Him? **The aim of this question is not to deny that our God delights in us, because He does...but the purpose of the question is to get us thinking beyond ourselves. Why does God delight in us? For His own Glory!**
5. In what ways does God show His love for us that leads to His own glory?
  - a. **He predestined us for adoption in His family...Eph. 1:4-6...according to this passage because God did this for us in love it was purposed to the praise of His glorious grace. He glorifies Himself by placing His full love on us.**
  - b. **God showed His love by creating us. Is. 43:6-7...for His own glory.**
  - c. **God shows His love for us in sending a Savior... Luke 2:10-14..we get the Savior , He gets the glory...this is God's design in sending His son that he would be glorified.**
  - d. **God shows His love for us when Christ died for us. Ps. 79:9; Rom. 5:8...Christ went and died to appease the wrath of God, to satisfy the requirements of the Law...to do His Father's will ..and the result is that because of so great a love we have been delivered and God is glorified through Christ's death.**
  - e. **God shows His love for us in the way Jesus prays for us. John 17:24...so that we "with Him" would see His glory...exactly what Moses wanted to see before.**
  - f. **God shows His love for us by making us fellow heirs with Christ, who owns everything. I Cor. 3:21-23; Matt. 5:5; Rom. 4:13**
  - g. **God shows us His love by rejoicing over us as His treasured possession. Zeph. 3:17; Mat. 10:29-31, I Peter 2:9-10**
6. Why is it so necessary for us to know how much God loves us?
  - a. **As humans we like to hear it...**
  - b. **As humans we need to hear it...but**
  - c. **We also need to know how someone loves us...why someone loves us...in this case because we are in Christ Jesus.**

7. How do we stay reminded of God's love for us? **Open and often communication...just like with a loved one here...and by loving others as He describes...as we fulfill His will we are fulfilled by His love for us and he is glorified in all that we do.**
8. Why do you suppose that the Love of God for His own brings such comfort and hope, especially when we can't touch Him as we can each other? **One author put it this way in answering this question, "*Nothing so warms the heart of the saint as a spiritual contemplation of God's love. As he is occupied with it, he is lifted outside of and above his wretched self. A believing apprehension fills the renewed soul with holy satisfaction, and makes him as happy as is possible for one this side of heaven.*" A.W. Pink** Is this your experience? Why or why not?

The Attributes of God  
Sunday School  
May 5, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. How do we stay reminded of God's love for us? **Open and often communication...just like with a loved one here...and by loving others as He describes...as we fulfill His will we are fulfilled by His love for us and he is glorified in all that we do.**
2. Why do you suppose that the Love of God for His own brings such comfort and hope, especially when we can't touch Him as we can each other? **One author put it this way in answering this question, "Nothing so warms the heart of the saint as a spiritual contemplation of God's love. As he is occupied with it, he is lifted outside of and above his wretched self. A believing apprehension fills the renewed soul with holy satisfaction, and makes him as happy as is possible for one this side of heaven." A.W. Pink** Is this your experience? Why or why not?

C. We've talked a lot about the attribute of God's love...but today we will look at the fuller sense of the attribute as it is talked about in Scripture...the Steadfast love of the LORD. Let's look specifically at this attribute for it defines fully what is meant by God is love.

1. How would you define this term..."the steadfast love of the LORD"?
  - a. **"Hesed" = steadfast love, loving kindness, goodness...in the New Testament Koine Greek this shows up as the word "grace"...or Covenantal/continual ...never ceasing/unconditional/ uninfluenced...the love by which God has bound Himself to all His people. Based on God's choice...not a feeling...or on anything we have done, or would do...simply His good pleasure to choose.**
  - b. **"Hesed" is outside the realm of duty, even though a promise to do "hesed" brings with it the idea of commitment. It is primal, elemental, associated with God's love, grace, and compassion. It is rooted in God himself. In short, it is simply who God is.**
  - c. **"Steadfast love" is how the EVS chooses to translate this word "hesed" to help us get a fuller and more powerful understanding of the kind of love that God has towards His people.**
2. Let's look at a few verses:
  - a. **Ex. 34:5-7...What are some of the things that stand out in this text right away? How would you describe the connection between God's name and His steadfast love?**

(1) ***“The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with Him there.”*** As was commented this should cause us great pause...that the God of the whole universe would condescend to man in this way...because of the depth of His love...because of His steadfast love He delights in being “with” His children. But while this is amazing it should also cause us to tremble that God would do this as well.

(2) **5 times in this short text we see God’s personal name...LORD=Yahweh. God shares His personal name with those He loves...and then He defines His name with the rest of the verses 6-7.**

(3) **this may be the first time we see this word “hesed” translated this way and it is in connection with the revelation again of His name...Yahweh.**

(4) **The pairing of “steadfast love” and “faithfulness” appears twenty-four times throughout the Psalms, clearly drawing from Exodus 34:6.**

**b. Ps. 13:1-6-** What is the Psalmist communicating in verses 1-4? **The Psalmist is struggling with a sense of abandonment...God seems distant. We can all relate to this sometimes. He knows intellectually God is there or he wouldn’t be calling out to Him...or at least He hopes He is there. Note: Principle for us today: The sensation of God’s absence and silence does not mean that He is absent or silent.** What happens between verses 4 and 5 that make his tone and his words change? (What turns this lonely forsaken cry into a song of joy? What causes this change of response of the psalmist to his circumstances? Have the circumstances changed? Is he now sensing deliverance?) **The psalmist does not record for us specifically the process of what happened. But it seems pretty apparent that he has remembered God’s steadfast love and how God has been with him in similar situations in the past...so in the midst of the dire circumstance he rejoices in the full and certain knowledge of God’s steadfast/ covenantal/ unconditional love...a love that God has bound Himself to toward His people.**

**c. Ps. 17:7-** As the note says this verse could begin this way, *“Distinguish me with your steadfast love...”* If this is the case what is the Psalmist asking of God and how does this work define God’s steadfast love?

**d. Ps. 33:13-22-** How is “fearing” God like “hoping” in His steadfast love verse 18? Which aspects of the steadfast love of the Lord does the psalmist “fear” to think about being withheld (vv. 19, 20)?

**e. Ps. 36:5,7-** How “big” is God’s steadfast love? **We must take this distance described here as infinite...not a set distance. Think God coming down from heaven just to be able to see the tower that man had constructed into the heavens. How precious is this steadfast love?**

The Attributes of God  
Sunday School  
May 12, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. How does the Bible define this term “hesed”- “the steadfast love of the LORD”?
2. What is the connection between God revealing His name and His steadfast love of His people?

C. More texts on God’s Steadfast Love:

1. Ps. 36:5,7- How “big” is God’s steadfast love? **We must take this distance described here as infinite...not a set distance. Think God coming down from heaven just to be able to see the tower that man had constructed into the heavens.** How precious is this steadfast love?
2. Psalm 119:121-128- Where does the psalmist expect to learn about the steadfast love of the Lord? How does the Law of God communicate God’s steadfast love? **From God’s own word...specifically His commandments, testimonies, precepts, rules...not things we normally associate with “love” let alone steadfast love but it is these wherein love is contained.**
3. Ps. 136...What is meant by the phrase, “The steadfast love of the LORD endures forever?” (This phrase is used 26times...in each of the 26 verses.)
  - a. **Webster’s Dictionary, the word “steadfast” means: “firmly fixed in place, immovable, not subject to change.”**
  - b. **The word “endure” means: “to continue, to last, to remain firm under suffering or misfortune without yielding.”**
  - c. **The word “forever” means: “for a limitless time, at all times, continually, eternally.”**
  - d. **Hence, the meaning of each of these key words speaks to us of the powerful, firm, trustworthy, tenacious, never ending love of God.**
  - e. **When our lives are all jumbled up, when very little seems firm or established, when very little seems to last or remain, when very little seems to be permanent or eternal, it is most fitting that the Holy Scriptures remind us of God’s never**

**failing, always remaining, never ending love. We may not be able to feel the love of God in our lives at a particular moment, we may not be able to see the hand of God at work in our lives, we may not even be able to remember a time when God's love was felt and seen, but we can trust in the promise found in these words of the Psalter, a promise which is true, trustworthy, and tenacious.**

- f. **What is the relationship between God's steadfast love and His providence? God's "hesed" is the providential exercise of his power on behalf of the needy people with whom he has established a special relationship. It is a promise and assurance of future help and fellowship, which is characterized by permanence, constancy and reliability.**
4. Is. 52:13-53:12- How does this text show God's steadfast love for all His children?
5. Is. 63:7- What is Isaiah specifically speaking of here? **God's mighty acts of the past that will remind His people that He is still with them.**
6. Lamentations 3:1-24- Came across this great quote associated with this text... *"What a great affirmation of the love of God! It declares that God's love is ever present. He is an incessant lover. Believers have a real reason for getting up in the morning. They eagerly anticipate the surprises God has in store for them on this new day."*
  - a. **These words in this text were uttered after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. Under the leadership of that dominating Babylonian emperor, Nebuchadnezzar, Jerusalem was completely destroyed.**
  - b. **The walls were pushed over, and everything combustible was put to the torch. In the long siege prior to the ultimate defeat, young children starved in the streets (Lam2:12), and apparently mothers even ate their own offspring because their hunger was overwhelming (Lam. 2:20).**
  - c. **The conditions were unmistakably horrible, like nothing we could imagine, and Jeremiah minced no words in expressing his bitterness (Lam. 3:1-21). He concluded his graphic lament: "He has made my teeth grind on gravel, and made me cower in ashes; my soul is bereft of peace, I have forgotten what happiness is; so I say, 'Gone is my glory, and my expectation from the Lord.'" (Lam. 3:16-18)**
  - d. **Nevertheless in the midst of these grievous circumstances, the author lifts up his heart in hope, "But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, His mercies never come to an end." (Lam. 3:21)**  
In the face of such devastation and horror, how can Jeremiah even repeat such words?
7. John 1:14- How is the Lord's "steadfast love shown here? **This passage is especially fascinating against the backdrop of the context of**

**Exodus 34:6...**(where we began our textual study) ***“God gave Moses His full name, “The LORD. . .abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,” after Moses asked in 33:18, “Please show me your glory.” God would not do it, at least not for Moses, and not then. But He has done it for us in the person and work of Jesus Christ. For Christ is the radiance of God’s glory, and it is in the gracious salvation of sinners through Christ that God’s glory is most brightly seen and praised (Hebrews 1:1-3; 2:17).***

8. **Eph.1:3-6-** How is God’s steadfast love displayed here? **Fulfilling His covenantal promise that was actually set in place before the foundations of the earth.**
9. What do these passages tell us about the steadfast love of the LORD?
10. Why do we need God’s steadfast love to perform the works He has prepared for us?
11. How do steadfast love and eternity go together?
12. What should be our response to this steadfast love from God?
  - a. **Obedience...Eph. 5:1-2, Col. 3:12- “kindness= steadfast love of God”...imitation is in order to love as God loves...Ps. 26:3; Ps. 36:7**
  - b. **With the assurance of this our faith is strengthened and we are emboldened for God...**
  - c. **It should stimulate our worship...Ps. 63:3, 138:2...**
  - d. **The fact of it ought to comfort us when depressed...Ps. 119:76...**
  - e. **We ought to pray for the continual experience of it...Ps. 119:159**
  - f. **When we sin we ought to appeal to it...Ps. 51:1...**
  - g. **It should be what we close the day with...Ps. 143:8**

The Attributes of God  
Sunday School  
June 2, 2013

A. Prayer

B. Review of Attribute Study

1. What have we learned? Anything new?
2. We have already looked at a few of God's attributes since January. Can anyone name some of them?
  - k. The Holiness of God**
  - l. The Supremacy of God**
  - m. The Sovereignty of God**
  - n. The Incomprehensibility of God**
  - o. The Self-Existence of God**
  - p. The Omnipotence of God**
  - q. The Omnipresence of God**
  - r. The Omniscience of God**
  - s. The Omnibenevolence of God**
  - t. The Tri-unity/Trinity of God**
  - u. The Love of God**
  - v. The Wrath of God**
  - w. Eternality of God**
3. In this day and age, how would you describe God to someone who finds out you are a Christian? **All-knowing, all- powerful, creator of all things, loving, holy, perfect, pure, sovereign, just, One, true and living God...consuming fire!**
4. What is God telling us about His attributes in this command: *"Be still, and know that I am God?"*
  - a. **Daniel said... "Shut up and listen!"**
  - b. **On one level we can see this... as God is seemingly always trying to get our attention because we are so easily distracted since we don't know Him as we ought. However, the emphasis here is on "...know that I am God" , quite simply He wants us to know Him.**
  - c. **"To know..." is an intimate word...a full knowledge like a husband and a wife...and obviously the only way we can "know God" is to be still long enough, to be focused enough, to never take for granted our relationship with God**
  - d. ***"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. 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. The proper study of the Christian is the Godhead."*- C. H. Spurgeon**
  - e. **Interesting fun fact here: "...I am God" are the Hebrew words Yahweh (I am) Elohim (God)...LORD GOD...which in itself reveals many of God's attributes:**



- (1) Yahweh reveals He is self-existent...**
- (2) Yahweh also reveals His covenant relationship with His people by giving us His personal name...**
- (3) Yahweh also reveals His eternality and His infinite nature...the verb form of Yahweh means to be, is, will always be... "I am that I am"**
- (4) El reveals first that He is God...mighty, powerful, sovereign...**
- (5) Elohim also reveals that this God's nature is plural (SEE Gen. 1:1)...So Elohim speaks for and to the Trinity...3 persons that is described in the rest of Scripture...even in Deut.6 when Moses says, "*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.*" The word God is Elohim and the word for one are both plural in meaning.**
- (6) Elohim reveals also that this God is transcendent/holy, mighty and strong...the title speaks of God's control over everything...this word speaks of God's fullness...refer to John 1:14; Col. 1:17-19**

- 5. What would you say is God's overriding attribute...the one the captures them all and why?
- 6. How would you describe God's holiness?
- 7. How would you describe the love of God?
- 8. What is the connection between God revealing His name and His steadfast love of His people?
- 9. How does knowing God help us, give us comfort and assurance in this life?

*"Theology is simply that part of religion that requires brains."* G.K. Chesterton