

# The Truth of God's Attributes

by Pastor George D. Cutler

## Grace Gospel Church

### Sovereignty

It is impossible to over-exaggerate the importance of God's sovereignty for He is the greatest of all realities. Indeed God is in essence reality. Sovereignty is one of the most definitive statements that can be conveyed concerning Him. The other attributes of God are also important. But if in our thinking and reasoning, we should eliminate God's sovereignty, which is the absolute determination and rule by Him of all His works and creatures; then He will no longer be God. In such a scenario, His Decree of acts would be determined by someone or something else; either by mere human beings, circumstances or some other cosmic power(s). These other forces (or non-forces), would constitute a challenge to God's power.

In order to be sovereign, God must also be all-knowing (omniscient), all-powerful (omnipotent) and all-possessor and occupant of all space (omnipresent). If He were limited in any one of these areas, He would not be truly sovereign. Yet the sovereignty of God is greater than any one of these as it is the authority by which He expresses all the attributes it contains. Sovereignty is no mere philosophical dogma, devoid of practical value. It is the one doctrine that gives meaning and substance to all the other doctrines. It is the foundation of His decrees and the nerve center of all truth.

Many of God's people would probably agree with it in a very limited sense, though they might feel that the Sovereignty of God is not a very practical focus for today's teachings. This is particularly true when it is taken into account that any serious endorsement must also stress the corollary (resulting) doctrine that is concomitant to God's sovereignty; namely, that if God is sovereign over all things then aside from Him nothing exists or moves. Thus men are not in control of the affairs of their personal lives. None are in a position to determine what their lives should be or even what their true needs are. Certainly none should suppose, not even for an instant that the world revolves around the likes of mankind.

If the doctrine of the Sovereignty of God is to be embraced in today's cultural setting, it necessitates opposition to the Nebuchadnezzar syndrome. Corroboration of this type of mindset is found in the prophecy of Daniel Chapter four, as king Nebuchadnezzar stands on the rooftop of his palace, looking out over magnificent Babylon with its glorious splendor and readily credits it to his doings. In the text, he is boasting "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30). He was claiming that the world he observed was of him, by him and for his glory. That is the very essence of the spirit of the world, which exalts itself in opposition to the sovereignty of the One and true God. Nebuchadnezzar's boast may be the best single expression in all of history, which could be termed today as, "secular humanism". But this is also exactly the spirit abiding in many of today's churches as they construct larger buildings to accommodate larger multifaceted ministries by catering to the love of self; effectively employing worldly means rather than precipitating God's work by His might, obedience to His word. In this sense, the Sovereignty of God more than any other single doctrine, defines the essence of repudiation against worldly agendas with their emphasis on the flesh.

The underlying question is who is sovereign? Is it mankind, perhaps is it even the powerful systems of the world or is it the God of all creation? As it is documented, Nebuchadnezzar through the workings of his ordeal eventually got the message, for his final testimony reads: "At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever -----" (Daniel 4:34-37). Thus God is not only able to humble men; He does in certain instances for the sake of His testimony. This is possibly what could occur in today's churches as well as is certainly within His prerogative to employ such pejorative measures.

## Holiness

This is perhaps the most misunderstood of all God's attributes yet it is multifarious in its conveyance of His character. This is the attribute around which all His others resonate. Indeed, it is from the comfort of His holiness that one can rest in the assurance of His sovereignty. But the two are intimately intertwined and they are so closely aligned that one might even ask which ought not to have come first. God is the holy and the potentially righteous one. In spite of this, God's holiness weighs lightly upon many of His people because they view it as a difficult matter to comprehend, as many ministries certainly do not understand it. God's holiness is not just a question of morality in the statement that He is always right in what he does but it employs His transcendence into what ought to be. It involves His majesty, the authority of His sovereign power and the stateliness of His grandeur. It embraces the idea of God's sovereign majestic will, a will that is set upon the proclamation of Him as to who He truly is. He is God alone, who can not nor should not be denied and who will not allow His glory to be diminished by another.

When one fails to understand what the holiness of God engenders, it presents an array of complications great and small. A far greater irony is that God's holiness is something of which all human beings ultimately stand in awe of even though there is very little about which some humans today do stand in awe of the least of which is God. Today is an age wherein everything physical is exposed as there are no mysteries or surprises, as even the most intimate personal secrets of men's lives are shamelessly portrayed on television for the entertainment of the masses. Sadly today's churches are also contributors to this frivolity in the treatment of God as a celestial colleague, who mostly indulge men in the trivialities of their day to day lives. Perhaps the greatest problem of all in regards to the misconception of God's holiness is the compromising of the standard against which human activity is assessed. Misapplication of scriptural dispensational-wisdom, mostly produces susceptibility to impressions of shame, guilt, embarrassment and terror in those who indulge the word of God in this manner. These are all painful emotions and they are evidenced by the way human actions are categorized. So the relevant question that should be asked is what became of sin as it is so defined in the Scriptures as everything that falls short of the glory of God? It seems as if God's standard of righteousness has been banished from the religious and cultural landscape in that men have redefined sin to mean crime (because it is now no longer an offense against God, which is what sin is but rather offenses against the state) and then have reclassified such into symptoms.

Thus, in order for today's churches to stand justified and comfortable in foisting humanistic agendas, unrighteousness and sin are things that are now consigned strictly to nonreligious practices. In this view, if caused by the environment, malfunctioning homes or even desensitized genes creating such actions. It is suggested in some circles that psychiatrists may have compounded the problem by "neglecting the availability of help for some individuals whose sins are greater than their symptoms or whose burdens are greater than they can bear." These types of analysis have unfortunately been messes into the mode of acceptable ministering. In effect, many mainline ministries have bought into today's therapeutic culture that they no longer classify transgressions as sin or even confront sin directly by teaching God's directives for maturation. Instead they set up counselors to work through why their constituents are acting in an "unhealthy manner, thus prescribing natural methods for physiological and psychological "healing."

What God's people have failed to glean from the scriptures is that true holiness fundamentally defines the character of God. In essence, if the stature of Godliness is compromised, true worship loses its awe, the truth of God's Word is not utilized to exercise its ability to compel and obedience loses its virtue. In this sense, if a church loses its authority as given by and through the commission of the Holy Spirit in its assigned roll to lead and guide into all truth. It is critical for God's people to recover the Bible's teaching that God transcends above all things and explore the input that this information transfers to the lives of God's children. To be effective, with, teaching and preaching must primarily flow from the greatest passages of the Bible (the Grace Doctrine) in which His people are exposed to God's awe-inspiring majesty and holiness. It is utterly important that the conveyance of relevant truth is prioritized as it is the critical antidote for alleviating the current tendency of church ministries relinquishing their spiritual effectiveness and eventually even their true purpose.

## The wisdom of God

The internalization of this phraseology evinces diverse impressions upon the hearts and minds of God's people. What is comprehended by the statement that God is wise or all-wise? The standard answer in theological circles is that God is omniscient. Of course, God cannot be all-wise unless He is all-knowing. True wisdom is more than mere knowledge and even more than total or perfect knowledge. An individual can have a great deal of natural knowledge or "head knowledge" and not know how to properly apply it. One can know a great deal about a lot of things and still be a blundering fool. And there is the companion quality of true wisdom, the virtue of goodness. In effect, without the virtue of goodness, the virtue of wisdom is incomplete. In this sense, humans may be described as crafty or cunning but wisdom consists of and abides in the attribute of the perfect utilization and direction of that knowledge to the highest and most moral ends. Thus, the selection of proper ends is supreme and must of necessity exist prior to the selection of proper means for the accomplishment of such ends. However, such is not possible without the attribute of goodness. Ultimately, wisdom is the capacity to comprehend and the determination to effectuate the best and highest good concomitant with the secured means of attaining it. Hence wisdom is in essence the efficacious component of moral goodness. In this light, wisdom in its fullness is exclusively inherent in God, who alone is immanently and invariably wise. Wisdom is His essence, as power, truth and goodness is His essence as integral elements in His character. Accordingly, His omniscience is the root agency governing His omnipotence in that His infinite power is ruled and dictated by His infinite wisdom, as this is corroborated in the Scriptures documenting the description of His divine character.

This is the sobering lesson that today's churches must come to grips with. As the spiritual cogitation of God's people are aligned along these premises, such will at once ascertain why human wisdom has no function in the implementation of His perfect will. It becomes apparent to properly informed minds that human wisdom does not begin to compare with God's as documented by I Corinthians 1:20-21, wherein the Apostle Paul states, "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world did not through wisdom know His mind, God was well pleased through the foolishness of preaching to save those believing."

Today's ministries should not only be amazed but also humbled by God's wisdom. There are three primary areas of doctrinal teaching in which this needs to be inculcated into the hearts of God's elect.

1). **The wisdom of God in justification.** The opening sections of Romans (chapters 1-4) address this subject as it inquires how a God of perfect justice who must punish sin, is nevertheless able to save sinners. To the finite mind, this is the question that defies all human rationale. Naturally, the answer is incomprehensible to the wisdom of mankind as they assess justice. Hence such enlightenment is not accessible to the wisdom of humanity but it was never beyond the wisdom of God. Such was implemented and decreed in the eternal sphere and manifestly assigned: "but when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem those under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Galatians 4:4-5). Also, according to Paul's epistle to the Romans, "God previously placed a propitiation...to show His righteousness" (Romans 3:25). In essence, God satisfied the perfection of His justice by the expiation of Jesus in lieu of His elect. Thus with the demands of God's justice fully met and His righteousness fully satisfied, the love of God in eternity, freely reached out, embraced and saved those whom He chose, as this was all manifested in time.

Who but God could inherently possess beforehand the perfect solution to the designed problem in the series of providing the proper ends of saving selected sinners, precedent to the proper means of the sacrifice of Jesus and also a forum for manifesting His love for elected ones? The obvious answer is that only God possessively is of wisdom to even comprehend such workings and the revelation of such is only ascertainable to those whom He has chosen to reveal it to.

2). **The wisdom of God in sanctification.** The next section of Romans (chapters 5-8) addresses the permanent nature of salvation, embracing the requirement of sanctification as a prerequisite for acceptability unto God. In what way is the wisdom of God revealed in effectuating this? Here one should note that in the previous question of justification discussed in Romans chapters 1-4, the perfect end was provided by the faithful work of Christ. The act of sanctification would follow in the same mode as it is all of His grace. But if that is so, how can the perfect end of sanctification

conferred upon the possessor of a sinful nature and what mitigates the consequences of a justifi person from the indulgences of the sinful nature, assuming that person's salvation has already be secured by the justification of Christ's sacrificial work? Also if the act of ones sanctification does engender the employment of such ones moral input of conduct, is there a requirement consecrated living unto God?

Unfortunately, these types of inquiries places great strains on most church ministries because of th inefficacies in doctrinal matters of salvation and as such questions arise, they wrestle in the dilem of erroneous scriptural exegeses (interpretations). The scriptural answer is that the requirements salvation have been proven to be unobtainable by works, which destroys grace as no one would saved since none can provide sufficient good works (Galatians 2:16; 3:10). However, does the f that salvation is of grace translate into giving such blessed ones a license to sin greatly (Roma 6:1). Sanctification is the culmination of God's eternal purpose in the election of designated ones w were instantly set apart (sanctified), which included the entire gamut of His spiritual blessings grace (Ephesians 1:3). Accordingly, the entire salvation package entails numerous doctrines salvation (justification, imputation, propitiation, regeneration, etc.) that were enacted in eternity, wh are unfortunately erroneously taught or not taught at all by the majority of church ministries today.

The manifestation of God's wisdom is documented in the fact that the perfect end of His will ne encumbered sanctification or justification apart from one being regenerated or being made alive Christ. God's elect have been given a new nature in eternity, before creation and this new natu being the very life of Jesus Christ within, will inevitably manifest itself in the sphere of tin Portionally, according to the design of God for each individual's course in this life, He (the Holy Spi produces good works corresponding to the character of God. In fact, this is the most effect manifestation of testimony of one having been saved by Him. Moreover, since this is the work of G and not of humans, it cannot be reversed and somehow reverted to its prior manifested unsav condition. Thus, the fact of being sanctified certifies that one cannot ever be separated or consider a "backslider" in the sense of being loosed or cut off from God, hence, the only way one can move is forward to the manifestation of glorification in Christ. The Gospel of Grace's illustration of this tr is stated as a forceful imperative: "Likewise also you consider yourselves to be dead to sin but al to God in Christ Jesus" (Roman 6:11).

Who but God could co-jointly possess such power and love to the perfect end of providing such grace transfer the moral nature of perfection to vessels of imperfection, thus manifesting such a blessed gosp The answer is, only God is inherently gracious as no creatures (mankind nor angels) could possess t capacity to do it, because they naturally perceive grace and works as a unit, which is impossible. Wh mankind emphasizes morality, it is with the notion that one can be saved by good works as some strive to In this effort they repudiate grace. But then on the other hand, when some embrace grace, knowing that nc can possibly be saved by inadequate and polluted works, there is the tendency to abandon works entir and teach antinomianism. But all scriptural positions hold to the grace of God and repudiate the works of t flesh, as God's purpose exudes a gospel that is entirely or completely of grace and yet its results produce t most exceptional works of the Spirit in those who are its recipients.

**3). The wisdom of God in the manifestation of His decrees.** The third section of Roma (chapters 9-11) addresses the manifestation of God's eternal decrees as the covenants of God fl according to dispensational arrangements. For those who repudiate dispensational teaching, t presents enigmatic problems, in that although God made great salvation promises to the Jew people, in spite of these promises, the majority of Jews at the present time are not responding to t gospel. Those who embrace the position of Covenant Theology have problems explaining the flaw indication that the purposes of God may have failed. Also the amalgamation (blending or mixing) Israel and the Church (Body of Christ) presents addition problems in non-dispensational teachir concerning the status of the Gentiles. In Paul's day as well as today, Gentiles were and a responding to the gospel that was first presented to the Jews.

Does this represent a seemingly unexplainable paradox that the vast majority of the Jews a apparently estranged from God presently and has He permanently rejected the Jews in favor of t Gentiles? If He has, (even for the present age only) is that unjust? And doesn't the factuality of ev part of this destroy the Doctrine of Eternal Security? The answers to these questions are varied

they comprise a magnificent array of the Doctrine of Theodicy, in which God is inherently justified all His dealings in the affairs of men. Specifically, God has manifestly set aside His dealings w Israel for a time as the focus shifts to the Gentiles, i.e., "in order that His mercy might be extended the Gentiles", and that salvation to the Gentile will provoke Israel to jealousy" and so in His appoint time, "it will bring the Jewish people to faith in Jesus as their Messiah." As one focuses on the chapters of Romans (9-11), they prove to be an exploration of the omniscience and omnipotence God in the ordering of space/time events as a vivid display of His masterful wisdom.

Who but God could devise a plan of that scope for the design of expressions in the forum of creation that manifestly the very opposite of His righteous and holy nature, without such subsequently imposing or even implying ambiguity and antipathy in His essence? The answer is God alone! Spiritual intellect can only understand the wisdom of God on the basis of scriptural revelations and even then it is difficult for finite beings to comprehend. The greatest expression of human testimony that can be affixed in regard to this phenomenal, is stated in the epistle to the church as written by the Apostle Paul wherein the Holy Spirit exclaims: "Oh, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are His judgments and His ways cannot be tracked out. For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid unto Him again? Because out of Him and through Him and unto Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen." (Romans 11:33).

The superiority of God's wisdom places it far above the realm of anything that can be attributed to human comprehension. The scriptures teach that natural man is incapable of understanding the things of God; they are spiritually discerned (I Corinthians 2:14). This is corroborated in the Old Testament by the statement of the Prophet Isaiah (KJV), "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9). Yet there are a plethora of scriptures that encourage God's people to ascertain those revealed portions of His wisdom, e.g., Ephesians 5:17 states, "On account of this do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

Accordingly, the central inquiry is how may God's elect become privy to the revealed workings of His wisdom? The standard Theological response is the quote taken from Proverbs 9:10, which states (KJV) "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." However, the most concise methodology is God's desire for believers to study the Bible to know His Word. Note, Paul's statement to Timothy were that the Scriptures "are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (II Timothy 3:15). Thus one should especially study the Bible as the true church must draw its life and sure direction directly from the written word. In fact, the revealed portion of God's wisdom is exclusively documented in the information that is gleaned from His expressed Word and more specifically those directives that are given in the Apostle Paul's epistles. When these directives are not internalized, the organized Body of Christ has no spiritual communications, though it may continue to function in religious manners and practices.

Thus if God's people sincerely believed that God is all-wise and really desired the benefits of His wisdom they will be motivated and seek to really know Him according to His perfect knowledge. True wisdom enters one's fervent and consistent desire to be in alignment with the will of the all-wise-God, knowing that God always works to the best end of His beloved (Romans 8:28). But apparently many of God's children do not really believe in His wisdom, as they may readily admit that He is all powerful and yet not feel secure in His eternal workings. The bottom line is, it is one thing to verbally acknowledge His wisdom but quite another to faithfully and enthusiastically abide in it.