

Attributes of God (Series 2): The Love of God

by A.W. Tozer

God's love is an essential attribute of His being, and it conditions all of His other attributes, bringing joy and happiness to those who experience it.

Duration: 1:02:14

Scripture: Hosea 2:16, Matthew 22:37

Topics: "Attributes of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the love of God for humanity. He encourages those who have strayed from God or who do not believe in Him to dare to believe in His love. The preacher emphasizes that God sent His only Son to die for humanity and offers everlasting life to those who trust in Him. He acknowledges the difficulty of fully describing the vastness of God's love but highlights the importance of recognizing and accepting it.

Transcript

from the fourth chapter of 1st John. 1st John, 4th chapter, beginning with verse 7. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God. And everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God.

He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love. And this was manifested, the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love.

Not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man has seen God at any time.

If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love.

And he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment.

He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him because he first loved us. For men say, I love God, and hateth his brother.

He is a liar, for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have I, this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God loveth his brother also. Now, after four months of preaching on the attributes of God, I bring this series quite conveniently to a close, the last day of the fourth Sunday of the fourth month. Sunday of the fourth month.

And I am to preach on the love of God, that is, God's love for us. And you may not understand this quite. I don't know that I do myself.

I only know that this is the hardest of them all to preach, because it is trying to comprehend the incomprehensible, it is trying to take the ocean in your arms, or embrace the atmosphere, or rise to the stars. Nobody can do it. So I suppose the best we can hope to do is to do the best I can and trust the Holy Spirit to make up for human lack.

Now, the text says that God is love. But I want you to know, to begin with, that this is not a definitive description of God. That is, this is not a definition of God.

Now, this is most important that you get a hold of this, for there are a great many crackpot poets and religious people abroad that are saying, God is love, and love is God, and therefore all is love, and all is love, then all is God, and if all is God, then all is love. And they are dizzy and happy for the time being, but they are also very, very much confused in their theology. When the scripture says God is love, it is not defining God.

It does not tell us what God is in his metaphysical being. In the first place, the Bible never tells us what God is in his deep, essential being. For you see, nobody can conceive what God is except God, because God is inconceivable.

And if anyone could conceive it, it couldn't be expressed because God is ineffable. And if it could be expressed, it couldn't be understood because God is incomprehensible. And therefore, to say that God is love and mean that God is love, and that you can equate love with God, is to go way off in your theology.

If God is love in his metaphysical being, then God and love are equal to each other, and God is only equal to love, and love and God are identical, and we could worship love as God, and thus we could worship an attribute of personality and not the personality, and we would thus destroy the concept of personality in God and deny in one sweep all of the attributes of the deity. But here is what it means when it says God is love, but don't forget that it also says that God is life and God is life. But here is what it means when it says that God is love.

It means that love is an essential attribute of God's being. It means that in God is the summation of all love so that all love comes from God. And it means that God's love, we might say, conditions all of his other attributes so that God can do nothing except he does it in love.

Now, keep that in mind. And in the long run, when we know as we are known, it will be found that the damning of a man is an expression of the love of God as certainly as the redeeming of a man because God cannot separate himself into parts and do with one attribute one thing and with another another. All that God is does all that God does.

So when God redeems a man in love or damns another man in justice, he is not contradicting himself, but justice and love are working together in the unitary being of God. And what do we mean when we say God is love? It is what we mean when we say he is kindness itself. We say of a man, he is kindness itself.

We don't mean that kindness and the man are equated and that they are identical, but we mean the man is so kind that kindness is all over him and conditions everything he does. So when we say God is love, we mean that God's love is such that it penetrates his essential being and conditions all that he does and that nothing God ever does or ever did or ever will do is done separate from the love of God. Now, let's look at what love is.

And this reminds me a little bit of what my dear friend Max Reich, the sweet old Jewish son of a rabbi, an Oxford graduate and a great saint. I sat one time having a glass of milk with him after a meeting, you know, in a drugstore. You know, we went in for something really heavy.

So we had a glass of milk together. And I said to him, Dr. Reich, what do you think of Rotherham's work on the psalms? And he said, Brother Tozer said, Rotherham botanizes. He said a botanist takes a flower and he pulls it apart and he analyzes and he names the parts.

And when he's through, you have not a flower, you have botany. And he said Rotherham takes the psalms and he analyzes and classifies and breaks down and pulls apart. And when you're through, you have not David's psalms anymore, you have theology.

Well, I thought that was pretty good. And I feel a little bit self-conscious now when I try to preach on the love of God and botanize a little bit, or to tear the petals off to try to notice what they are. But I'll try to be very careful to put them back together so you won't go away with a petal and think you have the whole garden.

Now, the first thing that love is is a principle of goodwill. The angel sang goodwill unto men. And love always wills the good of its object.

You may settle on that, my friend. But love always wills the good of its object and never wills any harm to its object. If you love anybody, really love them, you want to be good to them and to do good to them.

And you never want any harm to come to them if you can help it. That's why John says, love casteth out fear because there is no fear in love. If I know a man loves me, I'm not afraid of him.

If I'm not sure he does, I may be a bit cagey around him because it's love that casts out fear. And when we know we are loved, we are not afraid. And whoever has the perfect love, fear has gone out of the universe for him.

Now, all real fear goes when we know that God loves us because fear comes when we're in the hands of somebody that doesn't will our good. Take a little child lost in a department store. That little child will stand there in a paroxysm of hysterical fear.

It's afraid. People's faces are strange and even those who want to be kind, the child is afraid because it's afraid it's in the hands of somebody that wills its harm. But when it sees the familiar face of the mother, it runs sobbing to her and grabs her and climbs into her arms.

It's never afraid in the hands of its mother because experience has taught it that its mother wills its good. Perfect love casts out its fear. And when the mother is not there, fear fills the little child's heart.

But the mother's kind, smiling, eager face drives out fear. And so it is. We are born in a world where there are a great many things against us.

And there are sin and Satan and the devil and accidents and everything. And if we are in the hands of accidents, if we are in the hands of the devil, if we are in the hands of sin, then we have something to be afraid of. All those little books on how not to be afraid.

I think they are as ridiculous as can be. I don't know. You know you never can overestimate the ability of people to be goofy.

They will beat you at any effort you make, brother, any effort you make. And people write books on how to conquer fear. And you are to sit down and tell yourself, now there is nothing to be afraid of.

There is nothing to be afraid of. The sky smiles and the wind is yours and the sun. And about that time you tumble over with a heart attack.

Or you are stricken with some disease or you get a telegram your son was killed in an automobile accident. Or somebody declares war on somebody else. It's all so ridiculous to say, don't be afraid.

A man sitting on a railroad track telling himself there is nothing to be afraid of, and five minutes later they are picking him up in a basket. Of course there is something to be afraid of in the world. Of course there is.

If you are in the hands of chance, of course there is something to be afraid of. And we are a fool if we are not afraid. If you are a sinner and a sword hangs over your head, of course there is something to be afraid of.

And if you have sinned against God and not repented, then the judgments of God wait on you and there is a fearful looking for of judgment and it is right and natural that there should be. But when through the open door of the cross, through the name and power of Jesus Christ, I come into the Father's heart, and God cancels all my past and accepts all my present and swears his holy name for all my future, and the love of God takes me over, then fear goes out of my heart because love has come in. I am now not in the hands of men.

I said years ago, and some last preacher took me to task for, I said, I am not in the hands of these delegates. They can't elect me and they can't kick me down. They can't put me in and they can't put me out.

He came up to me and he said, you'd be surprised to know how they could. They can't. I am in the hands of God, my brother.

And I appeal away from delegates and I appeal away from people. I appeal to the most high God. And God is my friend through Jesus Christ, and he wants me to prosper, and therefore I am not afraid.

I put myself in his hands without fear. Love casts without fear. I say that love is a principle of goodwill, and God wants to be our friend.

And then love is an emotional fixation. That is, it identifies itself emotionally with its object. Now this may sound just a little bit silly, but have you ever noticed that somebody you love real well, even their clothes? You love even their clothes.

Which one of the poets, Ben Johnson it was, that talked about his girlfriend, the sweetheart, Sash? He found that Sash hadn't what they are, but he found, I guess, a big ribbon that goes around the waist. He found one. And he went around with lugging her, this thing around, you know, writing poetry about it.

Well, now some of you dignified old boys sit back there and try to look mean, but the fact is, it was a day when you had butterflies in your heart, and it was a day when just the sight of her handwriting was enough to set you off for the day. And now to get down to our children, get down to our children. We look at their pictures, and we love them, and we will their good, and we will nothing but their good.

I was thinking when I was thinking and praying over this sermon, I was thinking about our little daughter, our young daughter. She'll be 22 this summer, but she's still our little girl. And I was thinking that if it were known that she had some disease, and that the doctors, after it was properly declared by reputable physicians, that she would die unless she had a blood transfusion, and that if I gave her a blood transfusion, I would die.

You know, I wouldn't even hesitate. I wouldn't even, I wouldn't hesitate a second, not a second. And I'm not a hero.

I'm just a father. That's all. Love emotionally identifies itself with its object.

And I'm perfectly sure that I wouldn't consult anybody. I wouldn't question it a moment. If I knew that she lay at the point of death in the hospital, and that to give her my blood was to make her live long years and let me die, I'd take it in a second.

I'd lie down there with a smile. Anybody would that loves your children. Anybody would that loves.

Love always identifies itself emotionally with its object. Have you ever seen a thin wisp of a young mother staggering around carrying a big, fat baby? Well, the mother, the mother's literally being, she's literally being nursed to death, and the baby's getting fat and happy and slick while the mother is really suffering under it. And yet does that mother complain? Not at all.

She looks down into that little face and loves it and would give twice that, ten times that, because she has already identified herself emotionally with that baby. Why was it? Why was it that Peter and John and Bartholomew and the rest of them were healthy and Jesus dead? Why there between Calvary and resurrection? Why were they walking around eating and drinking and sleeping, healthy men and Jesus dead? And in the tomb, because he had identified himself emotionally with those disciples and with what he called the world, so that dying for them was not a hard task. That's why I never care for mournful songs.

I don't like mournful songs. I don't like these songs that put Jesus out there weeping on his own shoulder and saying, Oh, what a hero I was, and you don't appreciate it. Too bad for me.

I never like that kind of song. They are not healthy. They are not healthy.

They are written by men who need psychiatric treatment. Jesus Christ never went to his disciples and said, Now look, I died for you. Don't you remember my sufferings and my tears and my groans and my blood? Never! He said, And Mary turned and said, Oh, my.

He never said, I died for you. He said, Mary. And so they all threw the New Testament.

That's the difference between the New Testament and a lot of religious books. Religious books often are unhealthy. And the effort to become spiritual, they become more unhealthy still.

I want to be a healthy Christian. I want to be healthy-minded. And I believe it's the will of God that we should be healthy-minded.

The healthiest man was Jesus Christ, and the healthiest disciple was Paul. And we ought to be healthy men and women. That's why I can't go much on Good Friday sitting around moaning and groaning and trying to follow Jesus through the stations of the cross.

I could never do it anyhow. What kind of a child would it be who would try to follow its mother through the long hours of labor? It's enough to say, Thank you, Mother, I'm here. And she forgets all about it.

Jesus said she forgets her troubles that a man is born into the world if she's healthy-minded. If she isn't, she writes poetry and cries on her own shoulder. Has to go off to a doctor and have her head examined.

But if she's healthy, she's emotionally identified with her child. And so whatever prospers her child, prospers her. And whatever hurts her child, hurts her.

God was so emotionally identified with the human race that the devil knew that the only way he could get at God was through the human race. Now, Milton knew that. Paradise Lost is not an inspired scripture, and there's much of it that isn't scriptural at all.

But at center, it's quite scriptural. And Milton was theologian enough to know it. And so he pictured the devil figuring out, talking to those horrible devils of his down there, those demons, how they could get at God.

They said, We've been licked outright and there's nothing we can do. God's mighty engines have thundered and we're done for. We can never hope to go and take the throne by storm.

What'll we do? Well, the devil being the devil said, I think I've got it. He said, There is talk some about God going to create a people that will be after his image and like him. And he'll love them more than he loves anything else in his universe.

And if I can get to them and ruin them, I've hurt God worse than if I'd overthrown his very dominion. So he went and hunted up Adam and Eve and began to talk to them. Eve first.

And when he brought about the fall of the human race, he caused injury to the heart of God because God loved the human race made in his own image. And our sins are an emotional wound in the heart of God. It says in the book of Hebrews, quoting from the Psalms, What is man that thou art mindful of him? And I've looked it up in the Greek and I find that word mindful means a fixture in the mind.

We're a fixture in God's mind. And the only wonderful, strange eccentricity of the great free God is that he's allowed himself to be emotionally identified with me, so whatever hurts me hurts him. And whenever

I'm in pain, God's in pain.

And whenever I suffer, he suffers. And Scripture says he makes all our bed in our sickness. And God sits beside us and grieves when we grieve.

So it feels pleasure in its object. And God is happy in his love. Love always is happy.

I don't like the expression fall in love. It smacks a little bit of the barnyard. But when anybody loves anybody else real well, they're very happy.

I've met, and you've met, the town mayor, Woodrow Wilson, longtime president of the United States. He fell in love with a widow, Mrs. Gault, G-A-U-L-T. And he was a dignified old fellow with a face that long, you remember, and a big pair of thick glasses? Professor and president of a college and looked the part.

And he was so dignified, you know, that it was a production just to clear his throat. But somebody said he met Mrs. Gault and she bowled him over. And somebody tells this on him that once he said, well, he said, I'm going to get married.

And then he jumped up and did a little two-step, a little dance around over the presidential floor. Imagine a president doing a thing like that. He did it.

What had happened to the old man? Well, love had come. He thought, you know, that that snow that was on his roof meant the fire had gone out in the furnace. But it hadn't really.

There was still some emotion there. And he was happy to find that love always makes people happy. A young mother is always happy over her baby.

I never saw one that wasn't. Oh, sometimes they get mad, a little mad when they get big enough, you know, to push things over. But for the most part, love always is a pleasurable thing.

And God is happy in His love toward all that He's made. I've just been reading again those early chapters in Genesis and there's no escaping the pleasure God felt in His creation. It said God made the light and He said, that's good.

He shook His head, that's good. He said, He'll like that. And then He made the dry land to appear and the seas in one place and He said, that's good.

And then He made the sun and the stars and the moon to rule the night and the day and He said, that's good. Then He made man and He said, that's good. God was an artist and every time He finished a painting He shook His head and said, that's good.

God loved it. He was pleased with what He was doing. And that's the kind of God I preach to you tonight.

Not a faraway, dehydrated, sour, salty God hiding in some imperium. But I preach to you a friendly God who is happy in His work. It's only sin that has brought the curse and the pain and the grief.

And He has sent His Son to deal with that sin business, too. God makes delightful reference to His works and everything that He has made. It says, the Lord will rejoice in His works.

And in Zephaniah 3:17, let me read this wonderful passage of scripture. I don't think anybody believes it. If we believed it, we'd do like the President.

We'd do it two steps out of sheer joy. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty. He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy.

He will rest in His love. He will joy over thee with singing. Now listen to that.

God Almighty in the midst of us is mighty. And He will save and He will rejoice over us with joy. God is happy if nobody else is.

And He will rest in His love and He will joy over thee with singing. The eternal God is singing. That's why I wonder congregations can't sing.

I don't require they sing on pitch. I just require they sing with joy and enthusiasm. I don't mind if the piano is out of tune and if one fellow is singing a little step behind the next fellow.

That doesn't bother me. But it's the lack of warmth and enthusiasm that makes me question the spirituality of Christians. Because a Christian church has God in it, and wherever God is, it says God will joy over His people with singing.

And the singing of the church has been the great God singing among His people. Now, I notice here that Jesus Christ, our Lord, said about His church in Song of Songs 4 and 9, Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse. Thou hast ravished my heart with one glance of thine eye.

That's in the book of Psalms. Thou hast ravished my heart with one glance of thine eye. And when the Lord says this about His church, it can only mean one thing.

He feels toward His church as a bridegroom toward the bride, as a mother toward the child, as the lover toward the object of his affection. And there is a highly satisfying love content in true Christianity if you go deep enough. The trouble is we don't go deep enough.

Moody told about the Irishman that heard about a feather bed, and he found a feather and lay on it all night and said, If the one is that hard, I don't know what the whole pillow full of them would be. Moody told that silly thing, but it illustrates something. And we just get enough religion to make us miserable, you know.

If we'd go on, we'd find some of you are all you know about Christianity as it won't let you do things. You say, Well, I can't smoke if I'm a Christian, and I can't drink if I'm a Christian, and I can't gamble if I'm a Christian. Those are the things you can't do.

Spurgeon said about a certain fellow, he said, I hope the grass grows on his grave when he dies because nothing ever grew around him when he lived. The fellow said, Mr. Spurgeon, I don't drink, I don't use tobacco, I don't swear, I don't attend theater. And Moody said, Do you eat hay, Mr. Spurgeon? And he said, No, I don't.

What do you mean? He said, I hope you did something. He said, All up to now, you've been doing nothing. And Christianity to some people is only what you don't do.

You don't do this, and you don't do that. That's not Christianity, brother. The monks, they don't do it.

The fellow that goes naked and sleeps on spikes, he doesn't do very much either. He just lies around there and rots. But that's not Christianity.

There's a love content in Christianity. And discounting all the irresponsible things people do, nevertheless, there's a deep healing emotional content in the Christian life. And that's why the Bible calls the church the bride and Christ the bridegroom.

And he means that his people should know his love, and he means that we should feel it, sense it. You know I'm trying to analyze love, and yet you can't describe love. For the conclusion of this message, please turn your tape to side two.

You can't describe love. You've got to feel love. You can't describe it.

You can see how it works, but you can't describe it. And you don't know it until you've felt it. And so with the love of God, it says in the book of Hosea, the time would come when they'd no more say Bala.

They would say Eshi, Eshi, meaning husband. Eshi. Well, that means that God wants to be to us what a husband is to a new wife.

He wants to be to shelter and care for and love and cherish. I've often wondered why women were willing to change their names when they're getting married. They're Mrs. Smith, and they marry Mortimer Jones.

One of them does. And she doesn't mind changing from Smith to Jones. She's proud of the fact.

And one of the first things you'll say to her as they're right away with their hair full of rice is, Well, Mrs. Jones, how are you? And she giggles, and she's delighted to death to take his name. Take his name, Jones. What a wonderful name, she says to herself.

Now, I know many a husband has had his wife paged in the hotel, paging Mrs. Mortimer Jones. Oh, she fletched up, you know. Oh, this is wonderful.

And she'd taken the name of the man she loved and didn't mind it at all. Well, my brother and sister, your maiden name was Adam. Don't forget that.

Your maiden name was Miss Miss Adam. And that was your maiden name, but the Lord wants to give you a new name. He says, I'll be your husband, and you'll be called Christians in Antioch.

And the love of God is made us Christians. And he's joined us to him in the warmth of affection. What a mechanical business marriage would be if there was no love in it.

What a mechanical business rearing children would be. Wouldn't it be awful trying to keep them from committing suicide and getting up, you know, five times a night to give them a glass of water they don't need and don't want? And fixing bumps they never should have had. And then when they get older, looking at those awful grade cards, coming and holding them behind them, those awful grade cards.

Well, rearing a family would be a terrible thing except for one thing, the lubrication of love. Whenever love is there, everything is all right. Let me tell that silly little story, and it's quite a cute one, about I think it was in India.

And there was a young girl. She wasn't over nine, and she had a great big lug of a baby on her back, and she was carrying it around. And some visitor said to her, Well, honey, that's quite a burden you have there.

And she fired up. She said, That's not a burden. That's my little brother.

And whatever your little brother isn't your burden. And whatever is love isn't a burden. And so God is not having any burden.

That's why I never join, and ever emotionally or psychologically join with the people that are pitying the Lord. Never. God's happy to do what He did.

He's loved. And love is joyful, happy to do what it does. Well, now if I were to try to talk about the greatness of love, I know I'd be here all night.

And I would only run in circles because I can't speak of that which cannot be spoken of. But I've tried to break it down a little and say that this love of God is part of God, is an attribute of God, not part of Him, but an attribute. And it's eternal and immutable and infinite.

Now, does that mean anything to you? Yes, it ought to mean something to you. Meaning it's eternal, it never began to be, and it can never end. And immutable means it can never change.

And infinite means there's no boundary to it. For the love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind, and the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind. So remember that every time God thinks about you, He thinks about you lovingly.

And even if He must chastise you, even if He knows that hardships must come to you, it's love that allows it to come and love that sends it. And though we never should be afraid of love because love casts out fear. Ah, God proved His love toward us.

You know, we talk about love, but He proved His love. But God commended, that is, He proves His love toward us in that when we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly. In Hebrews 7, wherefore, He is able also to save them unto the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

The same love that created us, that love redeemed us, and now that love keeps us. The best preservative in the world is the love of God. Some people believe in the security of the saints from theological grounds.

They take a text somewhere. I believe in the security of the saints because God is love and God always keeps that which He loves. We always keep what we love, always.

And I hate to take another side and mention something else, but I just have to say to you, the soul that can scorn such infinite love as this, such emotional love, such eager love, the soul that can trample it down and turn on it and turn away from it and despise it, that soul will never enter God's heaven, never. For it would never be happy in God's heaven. The soul that loves hate and hates love, the soul that cultivates hate and despises the love of God would never be happy in the heaven above.

Sometimes men die and they've been wicked old scoundrels and the preacher gets up and preaches them right off into heaven, not knowing that the worst thing could happen until they go to heaven. I read once the story of a man. He was a very rich man and he found a little American urchin somewhere in the slums, sleeping in an old empty barrel down by the waterfront, sleeping in rags and picking up what he could get around the alleys and wherever anybody would give him a handout.

And this rich man decided that he would take the little fellow to his home. He took him. He took him to a mansion where one room led to another room led to another room and each one grander and more rich

and luxurious than the other.

And the trembling, timid little fellow was given an outfit the like of which he had never even dreamed could exist. His father, his adopted father took him to his bed and here there were silk sheets and silk coverlets and nightlight and all the beauties that wealth could bring to a boy's bedroom. The next morning a maid came to take him down to his breakfast and there he ate food that he never knew existed off of plates so rich and with silverware so exquisite.

The point of the story was that one morning after the boy had taken all he could they went up to get him and they found nothing there but his good clothes. They went and looked for the old rags they had taken from him and stored in a closet and they were gone. He got up in the night and got out of the rich, wealthy clothes that made him miserable and got back into his old rags.

He was psychologically conditioned to his dirt neat rags and his banana peels and his crusts of bread. He wasn't conditioned to silk beds and fine clothes and a rich, luxurious home and he was miserable there. So heaven would not be heaven to the man who has not heaven in his heart.

Heaven will not be heaven to the man who has not the love of God in his heart because heaven will be the place where love fills it as the atmosphere fills Canada tonight and covers it and drowns it in rich, life-giving air. So heaven is filled with love and whoever does not know the love of God on earth would not be happy in heaven. Certainly he won't be happy in hell and that's the horror of it.

He won't be happy anyplace. The rich man died. I heard a great Canadian preacher years ago come down to the States and preach the sermon.

What was his name? Paulman. A great Canadian preacher. And he preached on the text and the rich man died and in hell he lifted up his eyes.

And the poor man died. Lazarus died and was in Abraham's bosom. He said, why? And he analyzed it and broke it down.

He finally arrived at this conclusion. The poor man didn't go to Abraham's bosom because he was poor and the rich man didn't go to hell because he was rich. But each man went to his own place that he had been conditioned for.

Abraham's bosom was the place Lazarus belonged because Abraham had the love of God in his heart. And when he died, the love took him where he belonged. And the rich man didn't go to hell because he ate sumptuously and lived in a good home.

He went to hell because he had not the love of God in his heart. And when he died, he went to his place. There's a place for everybody.

And love has opened the door. But you say, now wait a minute, are you contradicting yourself? You say the sinful people and the people of the world that don't have God's love, they wouldn't be happy in heaven? Of course they wouldn't. But God changes your heart.

The Scripture says that old things pass away and all things become new. And God puts the seed of God in us and we become children of God. And then we are baptized into the kingdom of God.

And thus we become acclimated and psychologically conditioned to the kingdom of God. You love great hymns and you love to sing and you love to pray and you love to talk reverently about God. And you love the sound of anthems and the sound of Scripture being read.

Nothing pleases you more than to get up in the morning and read your Bible. Nothing pleases you more than to have time with God in prayer. All you can get.

If you will live in the face of God, then you'll be happy in heaven because you're conditioned for it. That's what they mean in camp meetings when the old ladies get down, you know, on their knees and pray, Oh God, we're having a heaven to go to heaven in. Of course you are.

God's already conditioned you and made heaven your natural habitat. St. Bernard's great hymn in the Celestial Country, he says, they're talking about certain pilgrims that fought their way through to heaven and he said they'll go to heaven because heaven demands them. Heaven demands them because they belong in heaven.

Hell is a place where people go because they belong there. God doesn't get mad and say, get out of here and go to hell. Not that.

They go where they belong. They belong there by nature. The gravitational tug of their moral lives is toward hell.

People who die and go to heaven, go to heaven because the gravitational tug of their moral lives is toward heaven by the blood of Jesus and the blood of the everlasting covenant. Well, I preached on grace last Sunday night and some people went in and one dear lady told me, her daughter told me that she'd started off home and had to come back and pray. The Lord met her on Tuesday.

Somebody else told me Wednesday night, said, I'm on my way walking in. The grace of God swept over me. So God's working.

Tonight I've tried to talk about the love of God. But it's like going around the world, visiting every country in the world and spending five minutes telling your friends about it. Can't do it.

So I stand here in a few minutes trying to talk about the love of God. How can any man do it? The love of God is so great, the Spurgeon can't hope to do it justice. Chrysostom can't hope to rise in the oratory of the pulpit to describe this vast overwhelming love of God.

I copied out here a brief paragraph. My friend Julian, my assistant pastor at home, used to call her my girlfriend. She's been dead 600 years, so it's all right.

But here's what she says. For our soul is so specially loved of him that is highest that it overpasses the knowing of all creatures. That is to say, there is no creature that is made that can fully know how much and how sweetly and how tenderly our Maker loves us.

Therefore we may with his grace and his help stand in spiritual beholding with everlasting marvel of this high, overpassing, inestimable love that Almighty God has to us of his goodness. Then she adds this little sentence. Therefore we may ask of our lover all that we will.

Therefore we may ask of our lover all that we will. He loves us so that there isn't a creature, not a seraphim, burning in front of the throne, not a cherubim, shielding the stones of God, not an archangel, nor

an angel, nor principality, nor power, nor all of them added together in all the vast universe of God, can ever hope to know or to tell how overpassingly great is the love of God and how tenderly and how sweetly and how much he loves us. Well, I go out feeling stronger myself.

I go out feeling better. What can the world do to a man or a woman that's drowned in the love of God, that swims in the ocean of his love, rolls and turns and leaps and swims in that love as the fish in the mighty ocean? What can the devil do to a person like that? What can sin do? What can the world do? What can accident do? Oh, love of God, how little we know about it and how little we do about what we know. May God help us tonight.

If you've been away from him and you're a backsliding, slidden person or you're an unsaved person or you're an unbelieving person, dare to believe tonight that God loves you and dare to believe he sent his only begotten Son and dare to believe his Son gave his life a ransom for you and dare to believe that if you will trust in him you shall have everlasting life. Dare to believe it. If you've been a wanderer from God, dare to come home.

Don't add this yet to your sins that you don't come home. The girl that gets an impulse to run away from home and runs away and hides somewhere and gets a job in a restaurant when she's only 13 or 14, she reads in the paper and hears over the radio how her grieving mother wants her home and she gets ashamed of herself and then she gets so ashamed that she feels that she wouldn't be right for her to go home after doing what she did. Why should she add this one more crushing blow to her mother not to go home when her mother wants her to go home? Therefore, why should you add this one more blow at the heart of God? If you've been away, sure you have.

You don't deserve to come. Certainly you don't. And it looks cheap and little.

Sure it does. And it's a humbling thing. Yes, it is.

But are you going to add one more sin yet? The sin of refusing to believe that he loves you? The sin of refusing to believe that this God of love is a God whose attribute is infinite and who calls you to himself? Come on, prodigal boy. Come on, prodigal girl. God never put the light out in the window when you went away.

It's still there. Every night he put fresh oil in it and trimmed it up and said, maybe she'll come back tonight. Maybe he'll be home tonight.

For one man it worked. The prodigal said of the prodigal, he arose and went. Will you arise and come? Whatever the need might be, you dear friends up in the balcony there.

I don't want to skip you. I've been looking down preaching here, but I want you to know I'm talking to you too. And if your heart needs God, I want you to come.

Brother Gray is an excellent personal worker and counselor. We have others here. I'm glad to be available when I'm wanted and needed.

And this church is a praying church. Therefore, I invite you while we sing. What's the number? This concludes Sermon Number 17.

This also concludes the series on the Attributes of God, originally taped April 30, 1961 at the Avenue Road Church.

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