

# The Attributes of God - Part 3

by William MacDonald

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding God's sovereignty and its implications for human responsibility and accountability.*

**Duration:** 36:38

**Scripture:** Psalm 115:4-8, Proverbs 16:9, Isaiah 46:9-10, Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:2, Ephesians 1:3, Ephesians 1:11

**Topics:** "Attributes of God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing the existence of God and our accountability to Him. He argues that if evolution were true and there was no God, there would be no moral accountability and chaos would prevail. The speaker quotes Daniel Webster, who believed that his accountability to God was the greatest thought he ever had. The sermon also highlights the connection between belief and behavior, emphasizing the need to have correct doctrine and align our lives with it. The speaker concludes by stating that we become like what we worship, and encourages worshiping the true God, Jesus Christ.

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## Transcript

Let me take a deep breath and say a few words on why this is important. The fact of the existence of God means that man is accountable to Him. If there is a God, if He is the Creator and the Sustainer of the universe, then man is responsible.

Daniel Webster is quoted as saying that the greatest thought that ever entered his mind was his accountability to God. Now, if evolution were true, if we're just here by blind chance, by the random converging of circumstances, there is no moral accountability. I mean, if evolution is true, there's no reason why the Soviets shouldn't invade Afghanistan.

There's no reason why the people in the north of Ireland shouldn't be at one another's throats, if evolution were true. If evolution is true, then the law of the jungle prevails. It's the fact of the existence of God that makes all the difference.

Now, Paul reminds us in Romans chapter 1 that man knows there is a God. Man knows there's a God. How does he know? He knows by creation and he knows by conscience.

Anyone can look up into the stars, into the sky at night, and know that creation demands a Creator. You can know that design demands a designer. There has to be a supreme, creatorial being above it all.

And man knows that. He knows it by conscience. He knows it by that inward moniker in his life.

Even unenlightened by the word of God, man knows when he's doing wrong. That chief in darkest Africa knows that it's wrong for a man to come and steal his wife. He knows that.

Well, if he knows that, he knows it's wrong for him to steal somebody else's wife. The most primitive person in all the world today has that sense of right and wrong that God has placed within him. The trouble is that man does not like to retain God in his knowledge.

It says that in Romans 1, doesn't it? Because they did not want to retain God in their knowledge. To me, that's a very enlightening expression. Man knows there's a God, but he doesn't want to think about it.

He doesn't want to retain God in his knowledge because he knows he's accountable. And so man, I should say this, primitive man, according to Romans 1, primitive man was of a very high moral order. Not the caveman you read about in textbooks.

Nonsense. Primitive man was of a very high moral order. But he rejected the knowledge of God, and he started devolution, not evolution.

He turned to idolatry, Paul tells us, and he began to worship images made like man, flying things, four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Now, there's a downward stage in creation there. Man, flying things, four-footed beasts, creeping things.

And the thought is that man's idea of God became more and more debased. First of all, he thought of God as a man like himself. Then he deified the birds.

Then he deified animals. And then he deified snakes. Well, the lower his concept of God, the more vile his personal behavior would become.

Let me just put it this way. Look, if God is a snake, it doesn't make any difference how you live. Isn't that right? Actually, if God's an animal, or even a man, it doesn't make any difference how you live.

There's a decreasing sense of accountability there. And, incidentally, that explains the very close link between idolatry and immorality. Wherever you go in the world today, wherever you find idolatry, you'll find immorality.

Because men have abandoned the knowledge of the true God, and fashioned God for themselves out of their own hands. Imagine how ridiculous, how bizarre that is. For a man to worship a God made by his own hands.

If he made it, he's greater than his God. But he did that because he can live the way he wants. We know today that belief determines behavior.

So it doesn't make any difference what you believe. It does make a lot of difference what you believe. And what you believe about God really determines your life.

And the higher your concept of God, the better your life is going to be. I often think back to the times of the Puritans. The Puritans had great views of God as they lived godly lives.

I know that they're being socked at, born today, by the liberal element in our society. But the fact was, they were great men and women of God, the Puritans. Why? Because their concept of God was so lofty.

And that applies to you and me today. That's why the study of the attributes of God is so important. For instance, if I believe that God is omnipresent, that God is everywhere at one and the same time, that wherever I am, God is there, that's going to affect my behavior, isn't it? If I really believe that.

We teach children to sing, little eyes be careful what you see, little hands be careful what you do, little feet be careful. It's good doctrine. Little feet be careful where you go.

Why? Because God's in heaven above looking down. He knows we're accountable to him. Belief does determine behavior.

That's why Paul, in many of his epistles, begins with doctrine, and then moves on to duty. Ephesians 1, 2, 3. Doctrine. Get your doctrine right, and then base your life upon that doctrine.

Somebody said that the first three chapters of Ephesians are in the heavenlies, and the last three in the kitchen. Well, that's good. It brings it right down to where we live.

And it makes it very practical in our lives. Connected with that is this thought, we become like what we worship. I think I mentioned that the other night.

We become like what we worship. You show me men that are worshiping idols, and I'll show you base men. You show me a man who is a worshiper of the true God, and every time he talks, the Lord Jesus comes out.

And I'll show you a godly man. A godly man. A Christ-like man.

The study of the attributes of God is very, very important. The attribute that I'd like to think with you about first today is what is known as the sovereignty of God. Some of the words we use are kind of big words, aren't they? And we don't like big words.

I never even explained the word attribute. When we say the attribute of God, we mean the characteristic of God. What is God like? And that word has just become accepted in describing God's moral excellency.

The attribute of God. When we speak of the sovereignty of God, we mean that God is sovereign. The sovereign of a country is the supreme ruler in a country.

Like the emperor, the king, he would be the sovereign of the country. The sovereign is one who is in complete charge. He can do just as he pleases, and that's true of God.

God is in complete charge of this universe, and God can do just as he pleases, but what he pleases is always good. Just, fair, and best. I always like to add that qualifying phrase.

God can, he can do anything he pleases in this universe. He has complete charge, complete power over the universe, but what he does is always good, and acceptable, and perfect. The doctrine of the sovereignty of God allows God to be God.

That's what it does. It allows God to be God, and the doctrine of the sovereignty of God refuses to bring God down to our level. Very, very important to remember that.

God is over everything, and he can do whatever he wants without any explanation, without any permission, or without any apology. Okay, now we want to read about some of the verses that deal with his sovereignty, and the first is in Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 11. Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 11.

It says, "...in whom also we have obtained an inheritance being predestinated according to the purpose of him," Notice, "...who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." That is the sovereignty of God. He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. That says God does as he pleases.

Now turn back, please, to Isaiah chapter 46. Isaiah chapter 46 and verse 10. I'll have to begin for sake of continuity back in verse 9. Isaiah 46 verse 9. Remember the former things of old, for I am God and there is none else.

I am God and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, and saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. That's wonderful. I'm so glad that we have a God who can say that My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.

God is claiming here nothing less than complete and unlimited authority over the whole universe. Doesn't that make your heart rejoice? It does mine. Daniel adds his testimony in Daniel.

I'll just read it to you. It says, All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing, and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can say unto him, What doest thou? And that says that God is supreme in heaven and on earth, and nobody can stop him, or he's not accountable to anyone outside himself. Now, absolute sovereignty would be really dangerous in the hands of anyone but God.

It would be terrible. I can hardly think of anything so gross as a created being having absolute sovereignty. Why? Because he doesn't have the wisdom, he doesn't have the love, he doesn't have the power to exercise it well.

The sovereignty is only one of the attributes of God, and he exercises it in connection with all his others. For the believer in the Lord Jesus, it's a wonderful thing to know that God is over all. It's really a source of great comfort to us, going through the trials of life, to know that we're not the victims of blind chance, that everything is under his control.

It might not seem that way at times, but it's true. It's just the same. And I want to tell you this morning, if the supreme, sovereign Lord of the universe is on our side, nobody can be successfully against him.

William Cooper, I think, said it, I quote it in one of the verses of his hymn the other night. He said, God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform. He plants his footsteps on the sea and rides above the storm.

Ye fearful saints, get this, maybe there's somebody here today that this is just for you. Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take. The clouds you so much dread are filled with blessings and shall break in blessings on your head.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take. The clouds you so much dread. Sometimes, you know, we're afraid of a blessing.

We enter the cloud and we're afraid, and we get inside the cloud and we see no man but Jesus only. The sovereignty of God, when I think of the sovereignty of God, it should make a worshipper out of me. I should really prostrate myself before him in homage and praise and thanksgiving for this marvelous attribute.

But not only so, if the Lord is sovereign, I should submit myself to his control. If he's a potter, I really must be the clay, and I must be sensitive to the pressure of his hand. I was thinking about this the other day.

When I was 18, I experienced a miraculous, marvelous, supernatural birth known as the new birth. I was born again through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And then I turned my life over to the Lord for salvation.

But you know, for the next years, I lived my life the way I wanted to live it. That is, I pursued my own objectives, I pursued my own plans, I had my own ambitions, and I didn't want anybody to interfere with them. What I'm really saying is that I could trust the Lord for my eternal salvation, but I couldn't trust him to run my life down here.

Now isn't that foolish? I want to tell you something today, dear friends, and especially dear young people here today. If you can trust the Lord to save your soul, trust him to manage your life too. And it wasn't until one night out in Honolulu in 1946, I was reading a book called C.T. Studd, and I read those devastating words.

C.T. Studd's life motto, he said, If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him. And I got down on my knees that night, and I turned my life over to him for service. I had already done it for salvation.

But years later, I turned my life over to him for service. Looking back, I think that was one of the best decisions I ever made in life. Because I got a wonderful life.

More wonderful than if I could have planned it. The Lord knew options that I didn't know anything about. But I came to know something of his wisdom, love, and power.

Now, problems. There are some people who have a problem with God's sovereign election. I believe that before I was ever born, I believe that in an eternity past, God chose me to belong to Christ.

I never understand it. I don't ever expect to understand it for all eternity. But I believe it's a fact.

The Bible teaches the doctrine of election. But I never mention election without mentioning man's responsibility too. I believe just as strongly that as God chose individuals to belong to him before the foundation of the world, he also makes us responsible to accept the Lord Jesus Christ by an act of faith.

God is sovereign in his grace and in his election. But the same Bible that teaches election teaches human responsibility. In fact, God puts them together in the same verse.

And they're sleeping there soundly without fighting for all of these years. It says, listen, it says, All that the Father has given me shall come unto me. Dear friends, that's election.

All that the Father has given to me shall come unto me. But listen, in that come unto me, I will in no one pass out. And I know from the word of God and I know from personal experience as well that the time came in my life when I had to make a choice for Christ.

The choice was mine. The truth does not lie in somewhere in between election and human responsibility. The truth isn't somewhere in here.

The truth lies in both extremes. But they are like parallel lines. Parallel lines meet only in infinity.

And I'll tell you, those two parallel lines will never meet in the human mind. You cannot reconcile those two things. And don't try.

And don't hold one at the expense of the other. Hold them in perfect balance. Any problem that exists exists in our minds but not in the mind of God.

He has no problem with it at all. The fact that God has chosen some people to be saved does not mean, listen carefully, it does not mean that he chose some people to be lost. The Bible does not teach that.

That's known as reprobation. And the Bible does not teach reprobation. Let me explain it this way.

The potter comes into his house. And on the floor of the potter's house there's a big lump of clay. And that big mountain of clay represents sinful, lost humanity.

Why is it lost? By its own choice. Supposing the potter just leaves it alone. What will happen? He'll go to hell.

That's what will happen. Does the sovereign Lord have a right to come into his house and see that mountain of fallen humanity? Does he have a right to reach in and take a handful of that clay and fashion a vessel of beauty? Yes, he's got a right to do that. That's right.

He has a right to do that. Is he condemning the rest to hell? No, the rest is condemned to hell by its own sin. But God has a right to come in, stoop down, take a handful of already doomed clay and fashion a vessel of beauty out of it.

C.R. Erdman said something that I read years ago and it's been such a help to me. He said, The sovereignty of God is never exercised in condemning men who ought to be saved, but it is exercised in saving men who ought to be condemned. And you know, truth is self-authenticating.

That has the ring of truth. The sovereignty of God is never exercised in condemning men who ought to be saved. Why? Because nobody ought to be saved.

Nobody ought to be saved. If we received what we deserved, we'd all be in hell today. But the sovereignty of God is exercised in saving men who ought to be condemned.

And I think that puts it in right perspective. Maybe somebody here today, you might be saying, Well, I don't know whether I'm elect or not. That's probably true.

You may not know whether you're elect or not, but I can tell you how to find out. The only way you'll ever find out if you're elect is by coming to the Lord Jesus Christ, confessing the fact that you are a guilty sinner, believing that he died for you on the cross of Calvary, and by a definite act of faith, receiving him as

your only hope for heaven. And the minute you do that, you'll know you're elect.

1 Thessalonians chapter 1, I think, puts it in good perspective. 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, verses 4 through 7. Paul is speaking of how he originally went there to Thessalonica and preached the gospel, and he says in verse 4, Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. How did they know their election of God? Well, here's how.

For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, even as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word with much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost, so that ye were in samples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. You get it? Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

How? Because when the word of God came to you, you responded to it. You exercised your will. You trusted the sinner's Savior, and you are saved.

God holds men responsible to accept the Savior by an act of their will. If there's someone here in the meeting today, and you're not saved, you're not a decided Christian. You've never been born again.

That's what God is waiting for. People say to me, well, I have intellectual problems about all of this. Do you know what I say to them? I say, look, the problem is not in your intellect.

The problem is in your will. And that's true. There's nothing about the Lord Jesus Christ that makes it impossible for a person to trust in Him.

Nothing. The problem is not in the mind. The problem is in the will.

Jesus said that. He said that to the Jews of His day. He said, You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and these are they that testify of me.

And you don't want to come to me, that you might have life. It says in the King James, He will not come unto me, but that's not the will of future. You don't wish to come to me, that you might have life.

Notice, He didn't say, you can't come to me because you're not elect. He didn't say that. He said, You don't want to come to me, that you might have life.

And that's the truth of the matter. People who are unsaved are unsaved because they don't want to be saved. Him that cometh to me, Jesus said, I will in no wise pass out.

Well, somebody says to me, You don't understand, Brother MacDonald. You see, a sinner is dead in trespasses and in sins. And a dead person can't will to come to Christ.

Have you heard that? Well, I've heard it too. But by the same reasoning, a dead person can't sin. But they do.

When we use that expression, dead in trespasses and in sins, you have to understand what that means. It means dead toward God. Dead as far as God is concerned.

I tell you, their spirits are very much alive. If you don't believe it, go into the world of the occult. Go to these fortune tellers and all that.

But their spirits are alive. They're evil. But they themselves are dead.

Godwards. Dead in trespasses and in sins. The real question that a believer should have is not, Does the sovereign God have a right to choose some to be saved? That's not the question.

The question is, Why did he choose me? That's the question you should have. You know, that's what makes me a worshiper. Even when I come to the breaking of bread on Lord's Day, that question goes through my mind.

Why am I here? Why hast thou made me hear thy voice and enter while there's room? While thousands make a wretched choice, they'd rather starve than come. I want to tell you there are people in Tennessee tonight, today, with better characters than mine. People with better dispositions than mine.

People with better temperaments than mine. And they're going to hell, and I'm going to heaven because of the merit of Jesus, not because of my own merit. And I don't understand why.

I really don't understand why. Why he should lavish such love on me. Well, there's another question that arises with regards to the sovereignty of God, and that is this, If God is sovereign, and if God is in complete control of this universe, why did he allow sins to enter? That's a good question.

It's a valid question. When you think of the havoc that sin has wrought, and you think of all the misery, the pain, the suffering, the sickness, the death, the cemeteries, the hospitals, and you think of it, it can be very discouraging. Could God have stopped it? Why did he allow sin to enter? Well, first of all, let me just say that God could have created angels and man without any will of their own.

He could have created man, for instance, like robots, that would salam every hour on the hour. You know? Bow down and worship him every hour on the hour. Automatic! Like a machine.

Would there have been any glory for God in that? No, whatever. A child playing with a doll can make it in that. There's no glory to the child in that.

So God made a choice in a bygone eternity that he would create man and angels as free moral agents with a will to exercise that will to worship him. Ah, the glory of God in that. And you know what happened.

God created Adam and Eve as free moral agents and the world was plunged into sin. The tempter came to Eve one day and said, Please, be my guest. Have some fruit.

She said, No, no, we can't do that. I can't eat the fruit of that curse. Who told you that? God told me that.

He said, Forget it. You go ahead and eat. You won't die.

And Eve had a tremendous decision to make. Eve had to decide whether God was lying or whether Satan was lying. And she decided that God was lying.

She had low thoughts of God, didn't she? She apparently had high thoughts of Satan and low thoughts of God. And she decided that God was lying. Now the world was plunged into sin.

But God will always have the last word. God is the sovereign of the universe. And God is not going to be outwitted by sin.

God said, I will have the last word in this matter. 1900 years ago, he sent his lovely son down to this world to die as a substitute for sinners on the cross of Calvary. And then he sends out the gospel invitations of all the world.

He said, Look, my son has died. Satisfaction for sin has been made. Come and believe on him.

Accept the good of what he has done. And I'll give you eternal life. But all over the world and all down through the centuries men have been coming, women have been coming in simple, trusting faith.

Reaching out the empty hand of faith and saying, Lord Jesus, I take you as my only Lord and Savior. And these people worship God out of free heart and out of full heart. God does get worship.

And do you know that more glory has come to God through the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross of Calvary than if sin had never entered? Go back in your minds just for a minute and think, now supposing sin had never entered the Garden of Eden, what would have... Well, Adam would have just continued living on earth until he did sin. And if he never sinned, he just would have continued living on earth forever, that's all. Adam never had the hope of heaven.

He had never the hope of being in Christ, accepted and a beloved, redeemed by the precious blood, an heir of God, a joint heir with Jesus Christ. No, no. He was an innocent person in the Garden.

And as long as he didn't sin, he would continue to live there indefinitely. But it was always the sword of Damocles hanging over his head, the possibility of sinning and ruining it all. And I want to tell you that in Christ God has got more glory than if sin had never entered into the world through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we have got more blessing than we ever would have had in an unfallen Adam. A poet said, In Christ, the sons of Adam boast more blessing than their father-in-law. That's absolutely true.

We're better off in Christ today than we ever could have been in an unfallen Adam. So God always has the last word. If sin enters his beautiful creation, he superabounds over it.

For sin abounded, grace is much more abound. He superabounds over it and is never frustrated by it. Marvelous, isn't it? How God can harness his purposes even to the sinfulness of man.

That doesn't excuse man's sinfulness, but it magnifies his sovereignty. So I'd like to suggest to you today that sovereignty is a lovely attribute of God. Don't be afraid of it.

Rest in it. Enjoy it. Worship him for it.

But allow God to be God. The hymn writer said, Reigning, guiding, all-commanding, ruling, myriad worlds of light now exalting, now abasing, none can stay thy hand of might. Yet we see thy power and wisdom in thy sovereign grace unite.

May the Lord bless his word to our hearts this morning. Amen. Thank you, Brother Bill.

I couldn't help but think of the law of the trespass offering as Brother was saying he saw through it. He said he wanted to trespass against God and because he did he had to pay a penalty amount. And then he had to pay a double tithe or the added pay of the debt.

And as that Brother had said in the final analysis God received more to cause man to sin than he could ever do to save man out of sin. And when you think of that trespass offering in relation to man and sin against man and the sensible amount that would be restored from the double tithe of that and receive more than he could ever do after he had not taken place. And the Lord Jesus Christ restored that to him.

He did not allow it. God received more glory than he could ever do to save him from there. Amen.

Amen. Let's turn to the fact that in the fact cover how good is the God we adore. Amen.

Let's end it. How good is the God we adore Our faithful and changeable friend Good to love Him and pray at His power And not even measure nor error

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