

This is our tenth study of the “Attributes of God.”

We are using Attributes of God, by A. W. Pink as the platform for this series of studies.

Published by

Chapel Library

2603 West Wright St. • Pensacola, Florida 32505 USA

*Sending Christ-centered materials from prior centuries worldwide*

**Worldwide:** please use the online downloads worldwide without charge.

**In North America:** please write for a printed copy without charge.

*We do not ask for donations, send promotional mailings, or share the mailing list.*

Attributes of God

by A. W. Pink

### **Contents**

Preface 2

Chapter 1 The Solitariness of God 2

Chapter 2 The Decrees of God 4

Chapter 3 The Knowledge of God 6

Chapter 4 The Foreknowledge of God 8

Chapter 5 The Supremacy of God 10

Chapter 6 The Sovereignty of God 12

Chapter 7 The Immutability of God 14

Chapter 8 The Holiness of God 15

Chapter 9 The Power of God 18

Chapter 10 The Faithfulness of God 20

Chapter 11 The Goodness of God 23

Chapter 12 The Patience of God 24

Chapter 13 The Grace of God 26

Chapter 14 The Mercy of God 28

Chapter 15 The Lovingkindness of God 30

Chapter 16 The Love of God 32

Chapter 17 The Love of God to Us 34

Chapter 18 The Wrath of God 36

Chapter 19 The Contemplation of God 38

Index of Authors Quoted 40

*The Attributes of God*, by A. W. Pink. First Printing 1930. First Chapel Library edition 1993. Printed in the United States of America.

© Copyright 1993 by Chapel Library (this edition), Pensacola, Florida. Permission is expressly granted to reproduce this material by any means, provided:

- 1) it is not charged for beyond a nominal sum for cost of duplication
- 2) this copyright notice and all the text on this page is included.

A **Study Guide** is also available for this text, either in print or with this paperback text for online download from our web site. For copies or information on other Bible correspondence courses, please contact Mount Zion Bible Institute at the same address.

### **About the Author**

**Arthur W. Pink** was born in Nottingham, England in 1886, and born again of the Spirit of God in 1908. He studied at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, USA for only six weeks before beginning his pastoral work in Colorado. From there he pastored churches in California, Kentucky and South Carolina before moving on to Sidney, Australia for a brief period, preaching and teaching. In 1934, He returned to his native land, England, and in 1940 took up permanent residence on the Isle of Lewis, Scotland, remaining there until his death twelve years later in 1952. Most of his works, including *The Attributes Of God*, first appeared as articles in the monthly *Studies In The Scriptures* published from 1922 to 1953.

**Lesson 8 Goodness and Patience of God**

## Chapter 11

**The Goodness of God***God's goodness revealed*

“THE GOODNESS OF GOD ENDURETH CONTINUALLY” (Psa 52:1). The goodness of God refers to the perfection of His nature: “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1Jo 1:5). There is such an absolute perfection in God’s nature and being that nothing is wanting to it or defective in it and nothing can be added to it to make it better.

He is originally good, good of Himself, which nothing else is; for all creatures are good only by participation and communication from God. He is essentially good; not only good, but goodness itself: the creature’s good is a super-added quality, in God it is His essence. He is infinitely good; the creature’s good is but a drop, but in God there is an infinite ocean or gathering together of good. He is eternally and immutably good, for He cannot be less good than He is; as there can be no addition made to Him, so no subtraction from Him (Thomas Manton).

God is *summum bonum*, the highest good.

The original Saxon meaning of our English word *God* is “The Good.” God is not only the greatest of all beings, but the best. All the goodness there is in any creature has been imparted from the Creator, but God’s goodness is underived, for it is the essence of His eternal nature. As God is infinite in power from all eternity, before there was any display thereof, or any act of omnipotency put forth, so He was eternally good before there was any communication of His bounty, or any creature to whom it might be imparted. Thus, the first manifestation of this divine perfection was in giving being to all things. “Thou art good, and doest good” (Psa 119:68). God has in Himself an infinite and inexhaustible treasure of all blessedness, enough to fill all things.

All that emanates from God—His decrees, His creation, His laws, His providences—cannot be otherwise than good: as it is written, “And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good” (Gen 1:31). Thus, the goodness of God is seen, first, in creation. The more closely the creature is studied, the more the beneficence of its Creator becomes apparent. Take the highest of God’s earthly creatures—man. Abundant reason has he to say with the Psalmist, “I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well” (139:14). Everything about the structure of our bodies attest to the goodness of their Maker. How suited the hands to perform their allotted work! How good of the Lord to appoint sleep to refresh the wearied body! How benevolent His provision to give to the eyes lids and brows for their protection! And so we might continue indefinitely.

Nor is the goodness of the Creator confined to man; it is exercised toward all His creatures. “The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing” (Psa 145:15-16). Whole volumes might be written, yea have been, to amplify this fact. Whether it be the birds of the air, the beasts of the forest, or the fish in the sea, abundant provision has been made to supply their every need. God “giveth food to all flesh, for His mercy endureth for ever” (Psa 136:25). Truly, “The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD” (Psa 33:5).

The goodness of God is seen in the variety of natural pleasures which He has provided for His creatures. God might have been pleased to satisfy our hunger without the food being pleasing to our palates—how His benevolence appears in the varied flavors which He has given to meats, vegetables, and fruits! God has not only given us senses, but also that which gratifies them; and this too reveals His goodness. The earth might have been as fertile as it is without its surface being so delightfully variegated. Our physical lives could have been sustained without beautiful flowers to regale our eyes with their colors, and our nostrils with their sweet perfumes. We might have walked the fields without our ears being saluted by the music of the birds. Whence, then, this loveliness, this charm, so freely diffused over the face of nature? Verily, the tender mercies of the Lord “are over all His works” (Psa 145:9).

The goodness of God is seen in that when man transgressed the Law of His Creator a dispensation of unmixed wrath did not at once commence. Well might God have deprived His fallen creatures of every blessing, every comfort, every pleasure. Instead, He ushered in a regime of a mixed nature, of mercy and judgment. This is very wonderful if it be duly considered, and the more thoroughly that regime be examined the more will it appear that “mercy rejoiceth against judgment” (Jam 2:13). Notwithstanding all the evils which attend our fallen state, the balance of good greatly preponderates. With comparatively rare exceptions, men and women experience a far greater number of days of health than they do of sickness and pain. There is much more creature-happiness than creature-misery in the world. Even our sorrows admit of considerable alleviation, and God has given to the human mind a pliability which adapts itself to circumstances and makes the most of them.

Nor can the benevolence of God be justly called into question because there is suffering and sorrow in the world. If man sins against the goodness of God, if he despises “the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering,” and after the hardness and impenitence of his heart treasureth up unto himself wrath against the day of wrath (Rom 2:4-5), who is to blame but himself? Would God be “good” if He punished not those who ill-use His blessings, abuse His benevolence, and trample His mercies beneath their feet? It will be no reflection upon God’s goodness, but rather the brightest exemplification of it, when He shall rid the earth of those who have broken His laws, defied His authority, mocked His messengers, scorned His Son, and persecuted those for whom He died.

The goodness of God appeared most illustriously when He sent forth His Son “made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal 4:4-5). Then it was that a multitude of the heavenly host praised their Maker and said, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luk 2:14). Yes, in the Gospel the “grace [which word in Greek conveys the idea of benevolence or goodness] of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” (Ti 2:11). Nor can God’s benignity be called into question because He has not made every sinful creature to be a subject of His redemptive grace. He did not bestow it upon the fallen angels. Had God left all to perish it would have been no reflection on His goodness. To any who would challenge this statement we will remind him of our Lord’s sovereign prerogative: “Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with Mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?” (Mat 20:15).

***Praise the Lord for His goodness.***

“Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!” (Psa 107:8). Gratitude is the return justly required from the objects of His beneficence; yet is it often withheld from our great Benefactor simply because His goodness is so constant and so abundant. It is lightly esteemed because it is exercised toward us in the common course of events. It is not felt because we daily experience it. “Despisest *thou* the riches of His goodness?” (Rom 2:4). His goodness is “despised” when it is not improved as a means to lead men to repentance, but, on the contrary, serves to harden them from the supposition that God entirely overlooks their sin.

The goodness of God is the life of the believer’s trust. It is this excellency in God which most appeals to our hearts. Because His goodness endureth for ever, we ought never to be discouraged: “The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth them that trust in him” (Nah 1:7).

When others behave badly to us, it should only stir us up the more heartily to give thanks unto the Lord, because He is good; and when we ourselves are conscious that we are far from being good, we should only the more reverently bless Him that He is good. We must never tolerate an instant’s unbelief as to the goodness of the Lord; whatever else may be questioned, this is absolutely certain, that Jehovah is good; His dispensations may vary, but His nature is always the same (C.H. Spurgeon).

## The Patience of God

FAR LESS HAS BEEN WRITTEN UPON THIS THAN THE OTHER excellencies of the divine character. Not a few of those who have expatiated at length upon the divine attributes have passed over the patience of God without any comment. It is not easy to suggest a reason for this, for surely the longsuffering of God is as much one of the divine perfections as is His wisdom, power, or holiness, and as much to be admired and revered by us. True, the actual term will not be found in a concordance as frequently as the others, but the glory of this grace itself shines forth on almost every page of Scripture. Certain it is that we lose much if we do not frequently meditate upon the patience of God and earnestly pray that our hearts and ways may be more completely conformed thereto.

Most probably the principal reason why so many writers have failed to give us anything, separately, upon the patience of God was because of the difficulty of distinguishing this attribute from the divine goodness and mercy, particularly the latter. God's longsuffering is mentioned in conjunction with His grace and mercy again and again, as may be seen by consulting Exodus 34:6, Numbers 14:18, Psalm 86:15, etc. That the *patience* of God is really a display of His *mercy*, that it is indeed one way in which it is frequently manifested, cannot be denied. But that patience and mercy are one and the same excellency, and are not to be separated, we cannot concede. It may not be easy to discriminate between them, nevertheless, Scripture fully warrants us in affirming some things about the one which we cannot about the other.

### *God's patience prevails*

Stephen Charnock, the Puritan, defines God's patience, in part, thus:

It is part of the divine goodness and mercy, yet differs from both. God being the greatest goodness, hath the greatest mildness; mildness is always the companion of true goodness, and the greater the goodness, the greater the mildness. Who so holy as Christ, and who so meek? God's slowness to anger is a branch...from His mercy: "The Lord is full of compassion, slow to anger" (Psa 145:8). It differs from mercy in the formal consideration of the object: mercy respects the creature as miserable, patience respects the creature as criminal; mercy pities him in his misery, and patience bears with the sin which engendered the misery, and is giving birth to more.

Personally, we would define the divine patience as that power of control which God exercises over Himself, causing Him to bear with the wicked and forbear so long in punishing them. In Nahum 1:3 we read, "The Lord is slow to anger and great in power," upon which Mr. Charnock said:

Men that are great in the world are quick in passion, and are not so ready to forgive an injury, or bear with an offender, as one of a meaner rank. It is a want of power over that man's self that makes him do unbecoming things upon a provocation. A prince that can bridle his passions is a king over himself as well as over his subjects. God is slow to anger because great in power. He has no less power over Himself than over His creatures.

It is at the above point, we think, that God's patience is most clearly distinguished from His mercy. Though the creature is benefited thereby, the patience of God chiefly respects Himself, a restraint placed upon His acts by His will; whereas His mercy terminates wholly upon the creature. The patience of God is that excellency which causes Him to sustain great injuries without immediately avenging Himself. He has a power of patience as well as a power of justice. Thus the Hebrew word for the divine longsuffering is rendered "slow to anger" in Nehemiah 9:17, Psalm 103:8, etc. Not that there are any passions in the divine nature, but that God's wisdom and will is pleased to act with that stateliness and sobriety which is becoming to His exalted majesty.

In support of our definition above let us point out that it was to this excellency in the divine character that Moses appealed, when Israel sinned so grievously at Kadesh-Barnea, and there provoked Jehovah so sorely. Unto His servant the Lord said, "I will smite them with the pestilence and disinherit them." Then it was that the mediator Moses, as a type of the Christ to come, pleaded, "I beseech thee, let *the power* of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken saying, The LORD is longsuffering" (Num 14:17). Thus, His "*longsuffering*" is His "power" of self-restraint.

Again, in Romans 9:22 we read, "What if God, willing to shew His wrath, and to make His *power* known, endured with much *longsuffering* the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." Were God to immediately break these reprobate vessels into pieces, His power of self-control would not so eminently appear; by bearing with their wickedness and forbearing punishment so long, the power of His patience is gloriously demonstrated. True, the wicked interpret His longsuffering quite differently—"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecc 8:11)—but the anointed eye adores what they abuse.

"The God of patience" (Rom 15:5) is one of the divine titles. Deity is thus denominated, first, because God is both the Author and Object of the grace of patience in the saint. Secondly, because this is what He is in Himself: patience is one of His perfections. Thirdly, as a pattern for us: "Put on therefore, as the *elect of God*, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, *longsuffering*" (Col 3:12). And again, "Be ye therefore followers [emulators] of God, as dear children" (Eph 5:1). When tempted to be disgusted at the dullness of another, or to be revenged on one who has wronged you, call to remembrance God's infinite patience and longsuffering with yourself.

### ***God's patience—then and now***

The patience of God is manifested *in His dealings with sinners*. How strikingly was it displayed toward the antediluvians. When mankind was universally degenerate, and all flesh had corrupted its way, God did not destroy them till He had forewarned them. He "waited" (1Pe 3:20), probably no less than 120 years (Gen 6:3), during which time Noah was a "preacher of righteousness" (2Pe 2:5). So, later, when the Gentiles not only worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, but also committed the vilest abominations contrary even to the dictates of nature (Rom 1:19-26) and thereby filled up the measure of their iniquity, yet, instead of drawing His sword for the extermination of such rebels, God "suffered all nations to walk in their own ways," and gave them "rain from heaven and fruitful seasons" (Act 14:16-17).

Marvelously was God's patience exercised and manifested *toward Israel*. First, He "suffered their manners" for forty years in the wilderness (Act 13:18). Later, when they had entered Canaan, but followed the evil customs of the nations around them, and turned to idolatry, though God chastened them sorely, He did not utterly destroy them, but in their distress, raised up deliverers for them. When their iniquity was raised to such a height that none but a God of infinite patience could have borne them, He spared them many years before He allowed them to be carried down into Babylon. Finally, when their rebellion against Him reached its climax by crucifying His Son, He waited forty years ere He sent the Romans against them, and that, only after they had judged themselves "unworthy of everlasting life" (Act 13:46).

How wondrous is God's patience *with the world today*. On every side people are sinning with a high hand. The divine Law is trampled under foot and God Himself openly despised. It is truly amazing that He does not instantly strike dead those who so brazenly defy Him. Why does He not suddenly cut off the haughty infidel and blatant blasphemer, as He did Ananias and Sapphira? Why does He not cause the earth to open its mouth and devour the persecutors of His people, so that, like Dathan and Abiram, they shall go down alive into the Pit? And what of apostate Christendom, where every possible form of sin is now tolerated and practiced under cover of the holy name of Christ? Why does not the righteous wrath of Heaven make an end of such abominations? Only one answer is possible: because God bears with "*much* longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction."

And what of the writer and the reader? Let us review our own lives. It is not long since *we* followed a multitude to do evil, had no concern for God's glory, and lived only to gratify self. How patiently He bore with our vile conduct! And now that grace has snatched us as brands from the burning, giving us a place in God's family, and has begotten us unto an eternal inheritance in glory, how miserably we requite Him. How shallow our gratitude, how tardy our obedience, how frequent our backslidings! One reason why God suffers the flesh to remain in the believer is that He may exhibit His "longsuffering to *us-ward*" (2Pe 3:9). Since this divine attribute is manifested only in this world, God takes advantage to display it toward "His own."

### ***The school of holy experience***

May our meditation upon this divine excellency soften our hearts, make our consciences tender, and may we learn in the school of holy experience the "patience of saints," namely, submission to the divine will and continuance in well doing. Let us earnestly seek grace to emulate this divine excellency. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Mat 5:48). In the immediate context of this verse Christ exhorts us to love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us. God bears long with the wicked notwithstanding the multitude of their sins, and shall we desire to be revenged because of a single injury?

## **Study Questions: Lesson 8**

### **Chapter 11 The Goodness of God**

*First please read chapter 11 in the text.*

#### **RESPONSE**

*God's goodness revealed*

1. List several of the characteristics of God's goodness, along with Scripture references and key points when provided.
2. In what is God's goodness seen? Please include Scriptures and key points.

*Praise the Lord for His goodness*

3. a. What is the just return to God for His rich goodness?  
b. Why is it often withheld?

### **Chapter 12 The Patience of God**

*First please read chapter 12 in the text.*

*God's patience prevails*

4. What is the definition of *divine patience*? Include Scripture and key point.
5. What is the meaning of the Hebrew word for *divine longsuffering*? List two Scriptures where this usage appears.
6. What are the three reasons that God is called the God of patience? Include Scripture references and key points when provided.

*God's patience – then and now*

7. How is the patience of God manifested? Please include examples and Scriptures.

*The school of holy experience*

8. a. What is the meaning of the *patience of the saints*?  
b. What does Scripture direct the saints to do?  
c. What does Christ exhort the saints to do in the context of this Scripture?

#### **REFLECTION**

9. Refer to the last two paragraphs of the chapter. Consider the unparalleled assurance that God provides when we trust in His goodness. Spend some time in prayerful conversation with the Lord, praising and thanking Him for His steadfast goodness.

As a result of this lesson, do you feel a sense of renewal regarding a specific issue or situation that you face in your life? Write your thoughts.

10. If God were omnipotent and sovereign but not *good*, what would be the consequences?

#### **MAKING IT PERSONAL**

11. Pink suggests that we lose much if we do not frequently meditate on the patience of God. Take some time to think about one or two instances where God has been patient with you recently, and then write about what occurred.

Did you realize, at the time, that God's patience prevailed in the situation? Please explain.

Will you take time to meditate on God's patience frequently in the future?