

SHEPHERD'S COMMUNITY CHURCH

Sunday ABF – January 27

“The Knowledge of the Holy”

by A.W. Tozer

CHAPTER 2

God Incomprehensible

To whom, then, will you compare God? What image will you compare Him to? (Isaiah 40:18).

“He who forms the mountains, creates the wind, and reveals His thoughts to man, He who turns dawn to darkness, and treads the high places of the earth—the LORD God Almighty is His name” (Amos 4:13).

God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To Him be honor and might forever. Amen.

1 Timothy 6:15, 16

1) What does a handful of earth smell like after it's rained? Here's one possible description:

“The moist ground had a pungent but sweet smell, like chocolate, filling my nostrils with a lingering sense of nostalgia. There was the scent of childhood in this rich soil—earthworms, mud pies, and Tonka trucks painted with dirt.” How might you describe what wet dirt smells like? (Isn't easy, is it?)

Next consider Ezekiel's difficult job of describing the cherubim in Heaven. Please read Ezekiel 1:4-21. Does this description help you understand what cherubim look like???

Finally, consider the infinitely-more-difficult task of describing God, whose essence is ineffable! This is very humbling. If we have trouble describing the things of Heaven and Earth, how much more the things of God?

2) Please read the attached short article, “The Internal and External Glory of God.” Are you content with the fact that there are some things you may never know about God (Job 11:7-8)? Be also encouraged—as we dive deeply into the vast, infinite ocean of our Almighty, our hearts and minds will swell with unimaginably greater and greater joy and satisfaction in Him for all eternity! Our sweet knowledge of our Lord Jesus will forever increase! Continue to seek His glory with all your heart (Jeremiah 29:13) in humility.

“The Gospel according to John reveals the helplessness of the human mind before the great Mystery which is God, and Paul in First Corinthians teaches that God can be known only as the Holy Spirit performs in the seeking heart an act of self-disclosure.”

We might see our longing to know the character of our Heavenly Father as a type of “nostalgia,” as Tozer asserts, “the soul senses its origin and longs to return to its Source.”

3) Toward the end of his chapter Tozer hints at a widespread problem in Christendom today—attempts to know God simply through emotions or the intellect. There are many church “worship” services which are nothing more than arenas of emotional manipulation and which amount to a dead-end sensory pursuit of God. And there are many seminaries and institutions of “higher learning” (sound a bit Gnostic?) which do not approach God first through faith in Christ, but the arrogance of human imagination. This has led to the countless heresies of liberalism. Do you think, however, that Tozer is objecting to the use of our minds in understanding God, and allowing our emotions to be enraptured by His glory?

4) Quoting Michael (Miguel) de Molinos (1628–1697), Tozer rightly asserts that there is a knowledge of God, led by faith in Christ, which goes far deeper than the mind’s eye. For example, if we spy the beauty of a lovely flower—assuming we have no knowledge of botany—we can be drawn by the Holy Spirit into a deep worship of Christ and rightly conclude in our hearts that Jesus is infinitely more beautiful than that flower! A greater understanding of the ways Christ made the flower (its anatomy and physiology), however, as well as its interaction with our plants and animals (its ecology) should increase our amazement for how Christ created the flower and sustains it. But in worship, our hearts should be drawn far beyond our simple understanding.

But do you think that Molinos is right in saying that “all creatures are too rude to inform [the soul] and to conduct her to true knowledge of God?” Read Job 12:7-10. Can you think of other Scripture that might refute this idea?

CHAPTER 3

A Divine Attribute: Something True About God

*My son, if you accept my words
and store up my commands within you,
turning your ear to wisdom
and applying your heart to understanding,
and if you call out for insight
and cry aloud for understanding,
and if you look for it as for silver
and search for it as for hidden treasure,
then you will understand the fear of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God.
Proverbs 2:1-5*

1) Pastor Tozer states, “The study of the attributes of God, far from being dull and heavy, may for the enlightened Christian be a sweet and absorbing spiritual exercise. To the soul that is athirst for God, nothing could be more delightful.” Think of a time when you have experienced this delight. Consider sharing it with the class.

“an attribute of God is whatever God has in any way revealed as being true of Himself”

2a) What means (revelations) has God used to reveal Himself to us?

2b) “The idea that God reveals Himself in the creation is not held with much vigor by modern Christians; but it is, nevertheless, set forth in the inspired Word, especially in the writings of David and Isaiah in the Old Testament and in Paul’s Epistle to the Romans in the New, ” says Tozer. Why do you think the revelation of God in Creation is NOT held with much vigor today?

2c) What is greater than the Creation in unveiling the glory of God? What is the greatest revelation of God?

2d) Are there any contradictions between these three revelations (Science, Scripture, Savior)?

3) Tozer goes on to write, “Though God in this threefold revelation has provided answers to our questions concerning Him, the answers by no means lie on the surface. They must be sought by prayer, by long meditation on the written Word, and by earnest and well-disciplined labor.” What does this look like in our everyday lives?

4) Tozer warns that “we must break ourselves of the habit of thinking of the Creator as we think of His creatures.” Last week we saw that children may develop a view of God based on the adults in their lives. This may be well for children, but how do we adults break ourselves of the habit of thinking of God in human terms?

5) Pastor Tozer comments: “[God’s] substance is indivisible. He has no parts but is single in His unitary being.....God is simple, uncomplex, one with Himself.” To refer to the Almighty as “simple” and “uncomplex” may seem, at first, very strange to you. Explain in your own words, as best as you can, what Tozer is driving at here.

“The harmony of His being is the result not of a perfect balance of parts but of the absence of parts.
Between His attributes no contradiction can exist.
He need not suspend one to exercise another, for in Him all His attributes are one.
All of God does all that God does;
He does not divide himself to perform a work, but works in the total unity of His being.”

The Internal and External Glory of God

“The Sun is a beautiful illustration of *the radiance of God’s being: the “gravity” of God’s internal glory and the “shining forth” of His external majesty*. For years, theologians have described these two kinds of divine glory: God’s internal and external majesty. The internal glory of God is that which is shared between and enjoyed by the three Persons of the Trinity and is totally unknown to us. His external glory, however, has been revealed to us in Creation, the Bible, and in the Person of Jesus Christ.

“As an illustration, let’s compare the essence of *Who God Is* with *the mass of a star*. God’s internal glory could then be thought of as the unseen gravity a star produces because of its mass. This invisible glory of God is like the inner workings of a star because both are beyond our ability to see and experience, whereas the outward majesty of God is visible, like the blinding light and radiation shining forth from the star!

“When we explore nature we experience the glory of God everywhere (Isaiah 6:3). And when we read and study the Bible we come face to face with the beauty of Christ’s character flowing from its pages. This *external glory* can be understood as *the expression of all God’s revealed attributes*. Think of Christ’s glory as brilliant sunshine and picture God’s attributes (which are seen in His glory) as the rainbow of colors we see when white light is passed through a prism—the prism of the Gospel.”

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