

Paradise Lost and Restored: Who is God? (Part 2)

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I. Introduction

Imagine the worst moment of your life when you are about to fall for the last time never to get up again. If God saw you falling, what do you think He would do? Can you imagine Him stepping down from His throne, coming down to earth, walking over to you and saying, "I'm here, take My hand. You don't ever have to fall again."....this is who God really is.

II. God is Indeed All-Powerful but He's not Up in the Sky, He's come to Earth.....to Help You

Be careful how you see God. Yes, He's all-powerful, but He's also ALL-LOVING, when we look at God through theology we can tend to miss just how loving He is. There are overwhelming words that describe God's greatness, words like omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence and immutability. When we add to these God's other attributes, like love and mercy, these more personal attributes can get lost in the greatness of God. That is, from this awe-inspiring theological stance we can turn God's love into a clinical and impersonal thing. Thus, we might say, "God's love is unmatched; it is perfect and boundless and no one will ever love as profoundly as God." True enough, but if this is where you leave it, then God's love remains up in the sky never to reach the earth. Yes, God's greatness is tremendous; it is truly too much for the human mind to comprehend. But we must never forget that all those "omni" words which describe God are all wrapped up in a very personal God who longs to live with us every second of our lives.

So, yes, God is love, but notice how God defines this attribute. When He had an opportunity to define it for us, He didn't give us a clinical textbook definition. Instead, He directed our attention to a very personal and most tragic event in His life: the crucifixion of His Son, Jesus Christ, 1 John 4:7–10. God in essence is saying to us, "Do you want to know what I mean when I say that I am love? I mean that I was willing to give up My only Son in order to save you, in order to have you by My side. That's what I mean when I say 'I am love'?" So, yes, God is at times incomprehensible but He is also deeply personal and very accessible. This is why He chose to become flesh; He wanted to meet us where we live and breathe. Thus, we shouldn't leave all those incredible attributes of God up in the sky somewhere. We need to bring them down to earth the way the Lord Jesus Christ did when He became flesh. We need to bring His omniscience and omnipotence down to where our problems live, the way Jesus did when He talked with us one on one:

John 4:1–30, God comes to earth to help a woman who thinks the answer to her problems is a husband, normally Jews did not travel through Samaria, but Jesus needed to go see a woman who lived there. She's surprised when He strikes up a conversation with her, something the custom of their day would forbid. But Jesus' doesn't care about His reputation in the eyes of the custom of their day. His intention with this conversation is to get her to see that He has the answer to her life's problems. Up to now, she's sought this answer in a husband. What's wrong with wanting a husband? Nothing, in fact, God made us to find a spouse who will complete what we're missing, Genesis 2:18–24. But our spouse (or anything else) is not supposed to be our source of life and identity, that place belongs to God alone. This woman sought to fill that void with a man and she's tried six, but it hasn't worked. In fact, her life has gotten worse: instead of drawing water in the cool of the day, she's having to do this physical labor while the sun beats down on her because the women of the town want nothing to do with her and she likely wants nothing to do with them. Her search for the answer has her isolated and miserable.

This is why Jesus went straight through Samaria and not around it. He wanted to tell her about His omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence, but in a personal way. He's in essence saying to her, "I was there when you tried to cover your nakedness and shame with the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th husband. And I was there when you tried with the sixth. But I'm here to tell you that I've got the power to end your thirst for a man." This hits too close to home, so she tries to change the subject by asking a religious question about worship. Jesus uses it to direct her attention right back to the answer: it will take more than religious truth to worship God; it will take His Spirit. Earlier she accepted Him as a prophet, but now she lets Him know that only Messiah can truly give her the answers she's looking for. Jesus says, "I who speak to you am *He*." At that moment she believed and ran back to town so that others could experience the thirst-quenching life-altering living water she just got from the God of the universe. Jesus stepped off His throne and purposely went through Samaria just to help her. Now the living water has become a fountain in her, John 4:14.

John 8:1–11, the God of the universe steps in front of a woman who's about to be stoned to death, Jesus is teaching in the Temple then some scribes and Pharisees bring Him a woman who was caught in adultery. By law this woman deserves death (and like Adam they think the woman is the problem, but the man involved also deserved death, Leviticus 20:10). They're trying to use this against Jesus, so they ask Him if she should be stoned. He ignores them, but they keep asking. Finally, He answers, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone." What does this tell us about how God sees us, even in our worst moments? This woman is about to die, but God steps in front of her and saves her life. Everyone was ready to condemn her yet the only One who truly had the right to take her life, the One who gave Israel the law about stoning adulterers, steps in and saves her! Does this look like a distant omnipotent God? No, He's come to earth to save you. And it's not that He doesn't care about your sin; He sees it, all of it. But He didn't become flesh to pick up a stone and kill you for your sin. Instead, He came to pay for your sin.

This is why, even though Jesus mentions her sin, the rest of the conversation between Him and her is not about condemnation; it's about love and mercy. After being convicted by Jesus' words, every individual who wanted to stone her left in shame. Jesus then asks her if there's anyone left to condemn her. She says, "No one, Lord." He replies, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." As God, one of Jesus' attributes is immutability; He does not change. So did Jesus change His mind about the sin of adultery? In Leviticus 20:10 He wants adulterers dead, but now He doesn't? Not at all. This woman's adultery will be paid for by death, but His death not hers.

And it's not that Jesus turned a blind eye to her sin. His omniscience told Him not just about this sin, but every other sin this woman had committed. But His omniscience was not there to condemn her; it was there to free her with the words, "go and sin no more." And this was not a threat; what Jesus is saying is this, "My dear child, this life of sin has left you naked and ashamed. But don't worry, I'm here to cover your shame. Here, take My righteousness. Now go and live the life I created for you, not the one Satan deceived you into with his lies."

When God comes to talk to you, He's not there to scold you nor is He there to talk theology. Oh, He wants you to know about His omnipotence, but not in abstract. He wants you to know it personally. He wants you to know that His immeasurable power is there to help you overcome your deepest struggles....He's saying, "Take My hand, get up. You don't ever have to fall again."

III. Conclusion

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.