

Seeing Our God

I'm sure you have heard by now about the poor country pastor who was livid when he confronted his wife with the receipt for a \$250 dress she had bought.

"How could you do this?" he exclaimed. I mean \$250 for a dress is a lot of money, and on a country preacher's salary that's a big issue. "How could you do this?" he demanded.

"I don't know," she wailed, "I was standing in the store looking at the dress. Then I found myself trying it on. It was like the Devil was whispering to me, 'Gee, you look great in that dress. You should buy it.'"

"Well," the pastor persisted, "You know how to deal with him! Just tell him, "Get behind me, Satan!"

"I did," replied his wife, "but then he said 'It looks great from back here, too!'"

It's amazing what a different perspective can do for you! For this morning, I want us to simply see God the way God is. The fact of the matter is that all too often; our perspective of God is disoriented at best and fatally distorted at worst. Whatever the cause, we end up with a perception of God that is anything but biblically accurate. There is no way I could give you a complete picture of who God is this morning, I do want to share with you one perspective on God that I believe will help. It's the perspective I find Paul sharing in 2 Cor. 1:18-22...**prayer**. I find Paul telling us a few things we need to understand in order to see God clearly.

1) The fact is that you will never see God clearly or understand God accurately until you realize that God **means** what He **says**.

Paul says, *For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me and Silas and Timothy, was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes."* (2 Cor 1:19) What is Paul saying? He is saying that God means what He says, it's not yes one day and no the next. When God says "yes," he means, "yes." And when God says "no," he means, "no." The tablets Moses brought down from Mt. Sinai were not called the 10 suggestions, but rather the 10 commandments, because God means what he says. *I'm reminded of the young man who went to his pastor for some counseling. He was really broken up and crying. When the pastor finally got him calmed down enough to tell him what the problem was the young man explained that he had asked the girl he loved to marry him and she had turned him down.*

The pastor said in as wise of a voice as he could, "Oh, John, don't you realize that sometimes when a woman says 'No,' what she really means is 'yes?'"

The man began to sob again and said, "That's just it. She didn't say 'No.'" She said, "Phooey!"

Well, people may say one thing and mean another, but not God. God means what he says. He says what he means and He means what he says. And the reason we need to understand that is so that we won't waffle with this world on the standards of God. The culture in which we live is notorious for saying one thing and meaning another. Has anyone here not heard of false advertising? It's the standard practice of our culture. We've come to the point in this culture that people will say whatever they think will work in a particular situation. They will change their minds or their standards in a heart beat if they think he will get them what they want. I mean, we have spent years with politicians changing the meaning of words themselves in order to get out of trouble or get what they want. Our culture is one that will say whatever they think will get them what they want or keep them out of trouble, but that's not the case with God. He says what he means and he means what he says. We've all seen them by now – those God billboards, the ones that are signed, God. They began in Florida having been financed by an anonymous individual. Now, they are sweeping the country. They say things like:

Keep using my name in vain, I'll make rush hour longer. – God

You think it's hot here? -- God

Well, some of the ones I like best are the ones that say:

What part of "Thou Shalt Not..." didn't you understand? – God

And:

That "Love Thy Neighbor" thing ... I meant it. -- God

God says what he means and he means what he says. So when God says, "Thou shalt not lie," he means "Thou shalt not lie" even to your employer when you want to take the day off and call in sick. When God says, "Thou shalt not steal," he means thou shalt not steal – even on your income tax. When God says, "Sex is reserved for marriage" he means sex is to be a holy thing kept within the boundaries of a marriage covenant – no matter what the latest movie from Hollywood shows you. And when God says, "Honor the Sabbath" he means "Honor the Sabbath and make it a day of worship" not a day of playing and working on the house or whatever else it is that you do when you skip church. And when God says, "bring the whole tithe into my church" he means bring the whole tithe (10% of your earnings) into the church not whatever you feel like chipping into the offering plate after you've spent all you wanted on yourself. God says what he means and he means what he says, and if you are ever going to get to know God, then learn that. God really does mean what he says.

How many of you have heard of the book, "Conversation with God for Teens." It is not a Christian book, but it is being marketed to our teens and to our children as being the truth about God.

I want you to listen to one of these fictional conversations between a teenager and God and see just how far our society is going trying to change what God says into what they want God to say.

This particular fictional conversation is between God and a student named Susan, 19, who is living with a boyfriend. Susan says that her parents are trying to get them to get married and not just live together.

So Susan says to God, "They say that I should marry him. Point blank. In fact they say that if I don't marry him, I will be living in Sin."

And God says, "And just who will you be sinning against?"

"You, I guess. It's a sin against God." Says Susan.

"Really?" replies God. "You think that I will be offended if you are loving someone."

Folks, that is heresy, but it is being marketed to our children. By the way, it is being marketed through an organization that targets Christian schools. We live in a society that not only constantly changes what they say and what they mean in order to get what they want, but they are now also changing what God says in order to get what they want. If you are ever going to truly get to know God then understand this and understand it well: **God means what he says!** He says what he means and he means what he says.

2) In order to see God for who He is, we also have to understand God **does** what He **promises!**

Paul says there in vs. 20, *"For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God."* Paul was talking about who God is, and one of the things he wanted us to understand very clearly is that God does what he promises. Just look at Jesus, is what Paul is saying. God promised a messiah, and in Jesus that promise has come true. God promised deliverance – and Jesus has brought us that deliverance from sin. God promised his provision – and in Jesus all of our needs are met. All of the promises of God are "yes" and "amen" in Christ Jesus, because God does what he promises. And that ought to tell you something. It ought to tell you that **you can count on God even when you can't count on anything else.** Are you facing a terrible hardship? You can count on God. Are you struggling with a sin? You can count on God. Are you facing a tough decision? You can count on God. Are you wondering where the next meal is coming from? You can count on God.

No matter what the issue, no matter what the need, no matter what the problem; you can count on God. Others may break their promises to you, but you can be confident of this: **God does what he promises.** There may be times when we doubt it. There may be times when the difficulty or the sadness or the pain is so great that we just can see it, but the fact of the universe still remains: God does what he promises, and you will never understand who God is until you understand that God does what he promises.

3) Closely connected with that is that God **finishes** what He **starts!**

Paul says there in vs. 18, *"But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not "Yes" and "No."* The word that stands out to me is faithful. God is faithful. He always finishes what he starts. Paul also put it this way over in Philippians 1:6, *"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."* (Phil 1:6) **God won't let you down even when you feel let down,** even when others let you down, God won't. Even when you let yourself down, God won't. Even when you feel that God has let you down, He hasn't! God won't let you down. And the reason is simple: **God is faithful,** but we all are aware of the fact that God finishes what he starts on **His** time schedule not ours. *When we lived in Georgia, we as a family make a long migration to Indiana twice a year. We would go there to see family and friends. We travel through southern GA, up through Northern GA, onto Chattanooga, TN, then to Nashville, TN. Then we move into Bowling Green, KY onto Louisville, KY, then onto Indianapolis, IN up through Lafayette, IN and finally coming to rest in Northwest Indiana in my sister in Laws driveway. We travel right around 1000 miles each way.*

Now I cannot begin to tell you how many times on that trip I heard from the back seats? "Are we there yet?" or "How much farther."

It seems that kids just can't make it on a trip without asking those grating questions. We eventually do get there, but not on their time schedule, but we get there.

And God will get you there too. He always finishes what he starts, and that includes what he has started in your life. It may not be on your time schedule, but God will finish what he has started. You can bank on it.

4) Paul also share with us in this passage that God **strengthens** what He **loves.**

Look at vs. 21 real quick, *"Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ."* God gives us the strength to face whatever comes our way in this life. Why? It is because He loves us. He doesn't have to do it, but he does, because he loves us. God has promised that no matter what you face in life, you are going to make it. He is going to see you through. He is going to keep you going, because God is a God who strengthens what he loves. Kids can ask the strangest things about God. *I heard about one church where the pastor invited the children to come forward for a children's lesson. After they had seated themselves on the steps, he announced he was going to talk about frogs.*

He asked the group, "When I say 'frog' what's the first thing that comes to your mind?"

Promptly a child answered, "GOD."

Surprised, the pastor asked with obvious puzzlement, "Why do you think about God when I say 'frog'?"

The child replied, "Because I know you didn't bring us down here to talk about frogs."

Kids can say the strangest thing about God. One of the things I find kids ask me a lot about God is: ***How powerful is God? How much power does God really have?*** And the answer I give them is: Enough – and then some. We have all asked that question at some point and in some way in our lives: How much power does God have? Can he really take care of this problem? Can he really provide a job for my family? Can he really get me out of this mess? Can he really fix my marriage? Can He really...

How much power does God have - enough, and then some. He has enough for what you need – and then some. Because I know ***God is at work even when nothing is working.*** I know even when you can't figure out how to do what you have to do. I know even when you don't see anything working. God is still working. And He will see you through, because God strengthens what He loves. Do you know what? He loves you. You are going to make it – one way or the other. You are going to make it, because God strengthens what He loves. God is at work, even when nothing is working, because God strengthens what He loves.

5) In this passage Paul tells us a lot of things about God; however, he saves the best for last. Paul tells us that God **inhabits** what He **owns**.

Paul writes, *"He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come."* (2 Cor 1:21-22) Paul is saying that the Holy Spirit living in us, inhabiting us is God's seal of ownership in our lives. God himself, in the form of the Holy Spirit, is willing and wanting to live within me and within you, and that relationship is just a taste of what is to come! When you give God ownership of your life, there is an infilling with His Spirit, a seal of His presence placed on your life that will radically change how you live, and it's only a miniscule taste of the wonder of what is to come when we see Him face to face. ***God takes care of what belongs to Him.*** You knew that already, didn't you? God knows how to take care of what belongs to him. God knows how to protect and strengthen and encourage and lead and nurture and provide for what belongs to him. God inhabits what He owns! The key is to make sure that you belong to Him. God knows how to take care of what belongs to him. So make sure that you belong to Him. Can you see him more clearly today? Do you realize that He is in this room; with you right now? He is here to take care of what belongs to him. The only question is whether you **belong to Him today!**

Seeing Our God
2 Corinthians 1:18-22

A few things to understand about seeing God clearly:

1) God _____ what He _____.

For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me and Silas and Timothy, was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes." (2 Cor 1:19)

2) God _____ what He _____.

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. (2 Cor 1:20)

You can _____ on God even when you can't _____ on anything else.

3) God _____ what He _____.

*But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not "Yes" and "No." (2 Cor 1:18)
He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (Phil 1:6)*

God won't let you _____ even when you feel let _____.

4) God _____ what He _____.

Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. (2 Cor 1:21)

God is at _____ even when nothing is _____.

5) God _____ what He _____.

He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. (2 Cor 1:21-22)

God takes care of what _____ to Him.

Do you belong to Him?