



# Foundations of

# FAITH

## God, Our Father

### Lesson 3

The disciples once asked Jesus to teach them to pray. Jesus replied, “When ye pray, say, Our father which art in heaven ...” (Luke 11:2) This beginning of the model prayer stresses the emphasis in the New Testament on the fatherhood of God. While God is known to the patriarchs as “God Almighty” and to the Jews as “Yahweh”, we know him primarily as “Our Father.” Of course, he is still as much “God Almighty” and “Yahweh” as he ever was, but the expression “Father” tells us that he is a moral God. In a previous lesson we learned that God is unlimited – in time, in space, in power, in knowledge. These attributes do not by themselves make God good, but the moral characteristics which enable us to address him as “Our Father” show us that he is good. In this lesson we shall study three of these – his holiness, his love and his mercy.

**HIS HOLINESS.** The prophet Isaiah saw a vision in which a heavenly creature cried out, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.” (Isaiah 6:3) A similar picture is described in Revelation 4:8 in which the heavenly beings exclaim, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.”

What is the holiness of God? It is that characteristic of his being which takes pleasure in everything pure and holy, and hates everything which is morally evil. Just as God is unlimited in other ways, so he is unlimited in his goodness. Since there is nothing in his being which is evil or which sanctions evil, it is impossible for him to be impure because this would be contrary to his divine nature. James declares, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am

tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.” (James 1:13) It is his perfect holiness which makes it impossible for sin to tempt him.

The holiness of God is also the basis of his abhorrence of evil. Habakkuk declares, “You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity.” (Hab. 1:13) The Psalmist sings to God, “You hate all workers of iniquity.” (Psalm 5:5) What is a small sin to man is a great sin to God. A beautiful woman dressed in her finest clothing detests dirt far more than a digger of ditches. And why? Because the former is clean while the latter is contaminated by the soil. Even so God hates sin with a hatred which man, who is polluted with it, can hardly appreciate. The more one frees oneself from the shackles of sin, the more one abhors its presence. And since God is completely holy, his loathing of evil is the greatest of all. The destruction of the world by the flood, the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the final destruction of the earth by fire are all expressions of God’s hatred of sin because of his perfect holiness.

The holiness of God should cause us to praise him. David sings, “Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy.” (Psalm 99:5) A part of prayer to God which is too often neglected is such praise as that expressed by Jesus in the model prayer when he said, “Hallowed be thy name.” (Luke 11:2)

The Christian derives his holiness from God. Peter admonishes disciples of Christ, “As children of obedience, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in the times of your ignorance but

like as he who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living: because it is written, You shall be holy; for I am holy." (I Peter 14-16 A.S.V.) In Christ, God has given us the perfect pattern of holiness and as we conform our lives to his we become holy and in truth partake of the divine nature. (See II Peter 1:3-4) We may then be called "saints" which simply means "Holy ones". Every child of God who is living a holy life is a saint.

**HIS LOVE.** Probably no scriptural topic has been the basis of more sermons and essays than the love of God. A subject of such infinite depth can only be touched on here. It is extremely difficult to define love, but we shall describe it as the ardent affection which one holds for another which in the case of divine love reaches its highest form.

Love cannot be separated from the personality of God. Although we read that God is merciful and just, we are never told that he is mercy or justice. But John informs us, "**God is love.**" (I John 4:8) Therefore we know that the extent of his love is so great that his actions are motivated by this characteristic. When we read in John that "God so loved the world...", we conclude that the giving of his Son to save men was the result, not just of love, but of overwhelming love. Other attributes of God, such as his mercy, have their basis in this phase of his personality.

God's love is contrasted with that of human beings in that it is always intelligent. Sometimes we are moved by blind passion or silly infatuation. Not so with God. His infinite wisdom always governs his love, and that love therefore always works for our best interests.

The objects of God's love are many. He, of course, loves Christ. Jesus told his disciples, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." (John 15:9) Christ and the heavenly creatures may be considered worthy of the love of God because they have not sinned. But the measure of God's love also extends to those who are wholly unworthy of his benevolence. It includes the whole world as the golden text of the Bible informs us, "**God so loved the world...**" (John 3:16) This, therefore, means that God loves sinners who by their actions might be thought to have alienated his affections.

The contrast between human and divine love is expressed by Paul. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet

peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:6-8) Truly, such a love cannot be measured in human terms. Furthermore, if God loves sinners he also loves his children. Jesus taught, "For the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." (John 16:27) God's love is manifested to us in many ways. We think first of the giving of Christ. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (I John 4:9-10) Further, those who accept Christ are adopted into the family of God. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." (I John 3:1) Still another expression of divine love is that of repeated forgiveness. It was this which caused Hezekiah to sing, "But you have in love for my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; for you has cast all my sins behind my back." (Isaiah 38:17) Each time the Christian sins, and with a penitent heart asks forgiveness, he may be assured that God will grant it.

The providence of God in caring for the saints is a blessing resulting from divine love. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." (Romans 8:28) Even the chastening of God to make us do right is an expression of his love. "For whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives." (Heb. 12:6) Finally, the promise of an eternal home as a reward for faithful service is a blessing stemming from God's love. Jesus promises, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:2, 3)

God's love for us should cause us to love him. "We love him, because he first loved us." (I John 4:19) This in turn will make us love our brother. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." (I John 4:11) And if we have the love for him that we ought to have, we will obey him. Jesus taught the disciples, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15)

**HIS MERCY.** As already suggested, God's love is the basis of his mercy as is shown in John 3:16. "For

God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” It was his love for men that caused him to extend his mercy. The mercy of God is the disposition of his nature which leads him to help us when we are in misery and to pardon us when we have offended him. Mercy and grace are closely akin in meaning, grace implying unmerited favour. God extends grace because he is merciful.

Many passages teach the mercy of God. “And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.” (Exodus 34:6-7) Paul teaches, “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace you are saved;) and hath raised us up together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” (Eph. 2:4-7) God’s mercy is rich and abundant as David declares, “Many, O Lord my God, are the wonderful works which you have done, and your thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order

unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.” (Psalm 40:5)

The grandest expression of the mercy of God is found in the offering of his Son to atone for our sins. Even as he answers our prayers when we offend him, and forgives us freely, we are receiving his mercy. Since he “is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish.” (II Peter 3:9) he expresses his mercy as he patiently bears with us in our weaknesses. Of course, God’s mercy does not contradict his justice as will be shown in the next lesson.

**OUR FATHER.** Because God is holy, loving and merciful, he is truly a father to us. He cares for our material and spiritual needs. He answers our prayers, always in accordance with what is best for us. When we are in trouble, we may go to him for comfort and strength. In return he expects obedience of us and sometimes chastises us for our own good. We must honour him in godly living and worship, as a faithful child honours his parents. And in the end if as children we have been faithful, we shall receive our Father’s inheritance and shall hear the king say, “Come you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Matt. 25:34).

### TEST ON LESSON 3

Write in each blank the attributes of God (**holiness, love or mercy**) which BEST enable us to draw the following conclusions:

1. God hates sin. ....
2. God extends unmerited favour to man. ....
3. God cannot be tempted. ....
4. God chastens us. ....
5. God is worthy of praise. ....
6. The Christian should be pure in life. ....
7. All things work together for good for the Christian. ....
8. God helps us when we are in misery. ....
9. Christians are saints because they are patterned after the divine nature. ....

List **six** ways in which the love of God is manifested toward us:

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....
6. ....

After reading each scripture below, underline the phrase which best express what is taught in that passage about the **holiness, love or mercy** of God:

1. Psalm 136:26 teaches that:  
(a) the love of God endureth forever; (b) God's mercy is everlasting; (c) God loves the righteous.
2. Psalm 103:17-18 teaches that the Lord is merciful to:  
(a) those who fear and obey him; (b) those who are merciful to others; (c) those whom he loves.
3. I John 1:5 teaches us that God is: (a) merciful; (b) loving; (c) holy.
4. In I John 4:7-20 we are told that God is: (a) holiness; (b) mercy; (c) love.
5. In the same verses we learn that we ought to love one another because:  
(a) others love us; (b) it is our duty; (c) God loved us.
6. Because God is holy, the song of Revelation 15:3-4:  
(a) thanks him for blessings; (b) praises him; (c) asks for his care.
7. The parable found in Matthew 18:23-35 teaches us that:  
(a) God's mercy is unconditional; (b) God's mercy is conditioned on our forgiveness of others;  
(c) God will save only the perfect.
8. John 15:9-10 teaches that the Father loves: (a) Christ; (b) the sinner; (c) the disciple of Christ.
9. Romans 8:28-39 teaches that nothing can separate us from:  
(a) God's love; (b) Christ Jesus our Lord; (c) things to come.
10. In Hebrews 12:10 we learn that God desires that we partake of his holiness and therefore:  
(a) he praises us; (b) he chastens us; (c) he loves us.

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## Lesson 3

### Answers

These lessons are based on the King James Version, so if you are using another translation the words employed may vary slightly. Sometimes an alternative answer is possible. The following is a useful guide.

- Section 1 –
1. Holiness
  2. Mercy (love)
  3. Holiness
  4. Love
  5. Holiness
  6. Holiness
  7. Love
  8. Mercy (love)
  9. Holiness

- Section 2 –
- Giving of Christ
  - Adoption (or family of God)
  - Forgiveness
  - Divine providence
  - Chastening
  - Eternal home or life.
- (Order unimportant – other answers possible).

- Section 3 -
1. (b)
  2. (a)
  3. (c)
  4. (c)
  5. (c)
  6. (b)
  7. (b)
  8. (a)
  9. (a)
  10. (b)

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