

God Is Great  
September 27, 2009  
Allen Power

In modern language we tend to “water down” words that mean much more than the way we use them. For example: the word “awesome”. We hear it used all the time, we use it ourselves:

- “That dinner was awesome!”
- “That new Corvette is awesome!”
- “That song you sang was awesome!”
  
- What does “awesome” really mean?
  - The dictionary says it means: “Inspiring awe”
- What does “awe” really mean?
  - According to Webster’s dictionary: “Fear mingled with reverence. To strike with fear and reverence.”

Can you imagine if we used that word “awesome” in the context of slang today:

- “That lasagna you made struck *me down with fear and reverence!*”
- “I am feeling *fearful and reverent* about how you sang that song!”

I’m not saying there’s anything wrong with using the word “awesome” to say that something is “impressive”.

But sometimes we need to slow down and remember what “awesome” really means.

- Your Corvette may be cool, but God IS AWESOME!

In his book “The Knowledge of the Holy” A.W. Tozer made this statement:  
*“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”*

Tozer also said:

*“We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God.”*

- We move TOWARD OUR MENTAL IMAGE OF GOD.

TRUTH: If we want to know who God REALLY IS...the ONLY source is what He has revealed about Himself in His Word!

Psalm 135 is a collection of lines and expressions from other scripture all about THE GREATNESS OF GOD. Let’s read verses 1-4:

Psalm 135 (New International Version)

Psalm 135

1 Praise the LORD. [a]

Praise the name of the LORD;  
praise him, you servants of the LORD,

2 you who minister in the house of the LORD,  
in the courts of the house of our God.

3 Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good;  
sing praise to his name, for that is pleasant.

4 For the LORD has chosen Jacob to be his own,  
Israel to be his treasured possession.

- Look at verse 3. What does it say motivates us to Praise The Lord?
  - God is GOOD!
  - Okay, a little testimony time: How has God been GOOD to you?
  - Chip Ingram in his book “God: As He Longs For You To See Him” gives these examples of how God reveals his GOODNESS to us:
    - Through natural blessings

Look at Psalm 145

9 The LORD is good to all;  
he has compassion on all he has made.

Jump down to verse 15:

15 The eyes of all look to you,  
and you give them their food at the proper time.

16 You open your hand  
and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

17 The LORD is righteous in all his ways  
and loving toward all he has made.

18 The LORD is near to all who call on him,  
to all who call on him in truth.

19 He fulfills the desires of those who fear him;  
he hears their cry and saves them.

20 The LORD watches over all who love him,  
but all the wicked he will destroy.

- God also reveals his GOODNESS through specific deliverance
  - In Psalm 107:
  - God redeems the helpless from their enemies
  - God rescues us from the shadow of death
  - God heals our diseases
  - God protects us from the storms of life

Quoting Tozer again:

*“The goodness of God is that which disposes Him to be kind, cordial, benevolent, and full of good will toward men... By His nature He is inclined to bestow blessedness and He takes holy pleasure in the happiness of His people.”*

- Don’t miss that line: “He takes holy pleasure in the happiness of His people”!
- Psalm 84:11 says:

*Psalm 84:11 (New International Version)*

*11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield;  
the LORD bestows favor and honor;  
no good thing does he withhold  
from those whose walk is blameless.*

- When you really think about the GOODNESS OF GOD you can’t HELP BUT PRAISE HIM!

But, God is not only GOOD...God is GREAT!

- Let’s look at verses 5-12.

5 I know that the LORD is great,  
that our Lord is greater than all gods.

6 The LORD does whatever pleases him,  
in the heavens and on the earth,  
in the seas and all their depths.

7 He makes clouds rise from the ends of the earth;  
he sends lightning with the rain  
and brings out the wind from his storehouses.

8 He struck down the firstborn of Egypt,  
the firstborn of men and animals.

9 He sent his signs and wonders into your midst, O Egypt,  
against Pharaoh and all his servants.

10 He struck down many nations  
and killed mighty kings-

11 Sihon king of the Amorites,  
Og king of Bashan  
and all the kings of Canaan-

12 and he gave their land as an inheritance,  
an inheritance to his people Israel.

- Look at verse 5. What does the Psalmist say about the Lord?
  - I KNOW the Lord is great!
  - What do the words “I KNOW” tell you?
    - Know (Hebrew word Yaw-Dah) indicates a PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE...this is a PERSONAL TESTIMONY
  - Look at that word GREAT.
  - In verses 6 – 12, how did the Psalmist describe God’s GREATNESS?
    - He does whatever He pleases. (Verse 6) God is not limited.
    - He rules over NATURE His CREATION (Verse 7)
    - He rules over HUMAN EVENTS
    - He used MIRACULOUS SIGNS AND WONDERS to deliver the children of Israel from bondage (VV. 8-9)
    - He struck down the wicked and gave His people the Promised Land (VV. 10-12) God judges the wicked and keeps His promises to His people.

J.I. Packer said:

*“How may we form a right idea of God's greatness? The Bible teaches us two steps that we must take. The first is to remove from our thoughts of God limits that would make him small. The second is to compare him with powers and forces which we regard as great.”*

- God has no limits
- In other words, no matter where I go...God is always there.

Psalm 139 says:

1 O LORD, you have searched me  
and you know me.

2 You know when I sit and when I rise;  
you perceive my thoughts from afar.

3 You discern my going out and my lying down;  
you are familiar with all my ways.

4 Before a word is on my tongue  
you know it completely, O LORD.

5 You hem me in—behind and before;  
you have laid your hand upon me.

6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,  
too lofty for me to attain.

7 Where can I go from your Spirit?  
Where can I flee from your presence?

- God is EVERYWHERE
- God knows EVERYTHING
  
- God has ALL POWER

Look at Isaiah 40 (God asks the question...)

25 "To whom will you compare me?  
Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One.

26 Lift your eyes and look to the heavens:  
Who created all these?  
He who brings out the starry host one by one,  
and calls them each by name.  
Because of his great power and mighty strength,  
not one of them is missing.

27 Why do you say, O Jacob,  
and complain, O Israel,  
"My way is hidden from the LORD;  
my cause is disregarded by my God"?

28 Do you not know?  
Have you not heard?  
The LORD is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He will not grow tired or weary,  
and his understanding no one can fathom.

29 He gives strength to the weary  
and increases the power of the weak.

30 Even youths grow tired and weary,  
and young men stumble and fall;

31 but those who hope in the LORD  
will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.

- You and I may be INTIMIDATED by forces of nature like WINDS and FLOODS.
- But if we really want to understand how powerful God is, we remember that He created it all and He controls it all!
- We may be FRIGHTENED by the events around us.
- But we know how powerful God is when we remember, He controls it all!
- And when you and I grow weary He provides strength. (Like charging a battery)

Back to Psalm 135 picking up at verse 13 and reading through verse 18:

13 Your name, O LORD, endures forever,  
your renown, O LORD, through all generations.

14 For the LORD will vindicate his people  
and have compassion on his servants.

15 The idols of the nations are silver and gold,  
made by the hands of men.

16 They have mouths, but cannot speak,  
eyes, but they cannot see;

17 they have ears, but cannot hear,  
nor is there breath in their mouths.

18 Those who make them will be like them,  
and so will all who trust in them.

- Verse 13 reminds us, the names of the idols of BAAL are long forgotten but God's name "endures forever".
- For thousands of years people have known who God is.

In the song "There's Something About That Name" Gloria Gaither wrote:

*"Emperors have tried to destroy it; philosophies have tried to stamp it out. Tyrants have tried to wash it from the face of the earth with the very blood of those who claimed it. Yet still it stands.*

*And there shall be that final day when every voice that has ever uttered a sound--every voice of Adam's race shall raise in one great mighty chorus to proclaim the name of Jesus--for in that day "every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord!!!"*

- Look at verse 14. What does verse 14 promise?
  - How will God deal with the wicked? As judge.
  - How will God deal with His people? With compassion.
  
- What do verses 15-18 talk about?
  - Idols
  - Whew! Aren't you glad we don't have to think about idols anymore! There are no idols today right?
  - What kind of idols do people worship today?
  
- We don't have time to fully develop the subject of idolatry, but here's one thought on it:
- One reason it's so important to focus on what the Bible says about God is so we don't make a very subtle mistake.

In Exodus 20:4-5 (New International Version) The Second of the Ten Commandments says,

4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,

- Remember earlier when we talked about worshipping a God we created in our own head?
- Just like we've watered down our words...many times (even with the best of intentions) we've watered down God.
- Sometimes people don't like God's "hard stand" on an issue and we'll hear them say: "I don't believe a loving God would...(fill in the blank)."
- We humans have a tendency to rewrite the creation story and without realizing it we create the God we want in OUR image.

J.I. Packer writes:

*How often do we hear this sort of thing: "I like to think of God as the great Architect (or Mathematician or Artist)." "I don't think of God as a Judge; I like to think of him simply as a Father." We know from experience how often remarks of this kind serve as the prelude to a denial of something that the Bible tells us about God. It needs to be said with the greatest possible emphasis that those who hold themselves free to think of God as they like are breaking the second commandment. At best, they can only think of God in the image of man—as an ideal man, perhaps, or a superman. But God is not any sort of man. We were made in his image, but we must not think of him as existing in ours. To think of God in such terms is to be ignorant of him, not to know him.*

- If we focus on God's attributes: Goodness; Justice; Power; Wisdom.
- We keep from the temptation of seeing God in "human qualities" and LIMITING who He is and creating our own version of God that suits us.

*"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."*

Here's the takeaway:

- God is not just GOOD, He's GREAT! Greater than we even know!
- To love Him we need to learn as much as we can about who God is
  - For further study: A link to Tozer's Knowledge of the Holy online: <http://tinyurl.com/y85fowb>
  - Also: I recommend Chip Ingram's book: God: As He Longs For You To See Him <http://store.lote.org/store/product/216>
- We need to make sure we don't create our own IDOLS in place of what the Bible says about who God is
- Here's the best part! Not only is God GREAT...He's also PERSONAL and he loves and wants to be our friend!

Max Lucado in his new book Fearless really "hit me between the eyes" with this:  
*"Why does he love you so much? The same reason the artist loves his paintings or the boat builder loves his vessels. You are his idea. And God has only good ideas."*  
 Eph. 2:10 NLT says *"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago"*.

Here's another quote from A.W. Tozer:

*"The whole outlook of mankind might be changed if we could all believe that we dwell under a friendly sky and that the God of heaven, though exalted in power and majesty is eager to be friends with us."*

God is GREAT and He wants to be your FATHER and your FRIEND...Now, THAT ought to make you want to PRAISE THE LORD!

Next week: When we need COMFORT. We'll study the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm.