

# Attributes of God - Wrath, Eternity, Infliity and Foreknowledge

by William MacDonald

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*The sermon explores the attributes of God, specifically the wrath, eternity, and infinity of God, and how they should affect our worship, prayer, and lives.*

**Duration:** 42:31

**Scripture:** 1 Kings 8:27, Jeremiah 23:24, John 5:24, Acts 15:18, Romans 1:18

**Topics:** "Attributes of God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the finite nature of human life and the infinite nature of God. They emphasize the privilege of serving God and encourage young people to dedicate their lives to Him. The speaker shares their personal journey of realizing that making money is not the ultimate purpose of life, but rather serving God. They also highlight the importance of recognizing the wrath of God and the need for repentance, while expressing gratitude for being saved from condemnation through Jesus Christ.

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## Transcript

Now this morning we're going to finish our little studies in the attributes of God, but we're not going to finish the subject. In fact, the subject will never be exhausted in time or in eternity. But first of all this morning we want to think about an attribute of God known as the wrath of God.

The wrath of God. And that says that God acts in retributive punishment on unrepentant sinners. God acts in retributive punishment on unrepentant sinners.

The wrath of God is just as much one of the divine perfections as his love, grace, or mercy. Sometimes I think we don't like to dwell on the wrath of God. It's pleasant to dwell on his grace, on his omnipotence, on his omniscience.

But when we come to the wrath of God, we have a tendency to soft peddle it. But I say again, the wrath of God is just as much one of the divine perfections as any other of the attributes of God. Let us read some scriptures that deal with this subject.

Romans chapter 1 and verse 18. Romans chapter 1 and verse 18. It says, for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

Now there are many other passages in the word of God that dwell on the wrath of God, but to me the most expressive, if I really want to take in something of the wrath of God, I have to turn to Psalm 22 and hear the blessed Christ of God hanging upon the cross of Calvary, bearing my sins, and crying out, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And I don't think that we're overstating the matter when we say that in those three awful hours of darkness, the Lord Jesus endured the terrible wrath of God against our sins. That all of hell, for all of eternity, was compressed into those three hours. After all, his death atoned for an infinite number of sins, of an infinite number of sinners, so what did he endure there for you and for me? We sometimes sing infinite wrath rolling over his head, infinite grace, for he died in my stead.

It's almost too much to think of God becoming man in the person of the Lord Jesus and enduring such suffering and torment to save people who really didn't care and who didn't deserve it. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some theologians today like to think that the Jehovah of the Old Testament was a God of vengeance and vindictiveness and wrath and that the Jesus of the New Testament is the meek and humble Jesus who only loves and shows grace and mercy, but nothing could be further from the truth. For the Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Jesus of the New Testament are one and the same and there is no conflict between God's wrath and his love.

No conflict whatever. They would like to think that God is only a God of love but such a God does not exist. I often hear people say, how could God sustain an everlasting hell? How could a God of love send his creatures to hell? Well, think of it this way.

God looks down and he sees a world plummeting down to hell, not because of anything on his part, but because of man's own sin and disobedience. To avert that terrible catastrophe, God sends his beloved Son into this world and men take him and by wicked hands crucify and slay him. And God says, I'll have the last word.

He's the Savior of the world and you bow your knee and you trust him as Lord and Savior and I'll give you everlasting life with me in heaven. And man looks up and says, I don't want it. I'd rather have my sins than have Christ.

I'd rather go my own way. Now I'd like to ask you the question, what is the alternative? If man won't accept God's salvation, what is left but his wrath? And actually, of course, it isn't God who sends men to hell. Men choose hell.

It's a deliberate choice on man's part. Hell was made for the devil and his angels. If anyone goes to heaven, it's completely the grace of God.

If anyone goes to hell, it's completely his own fault. Does that sound doctrine? I believe it is. I believe it is.

And God will be vindicated in this, in a coming day when every knee bows and every tongue confesses Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father. A judgment is God's strange work. We read that mercy rejoices against judgment.

But if man will not have God's salvation, there is no other alternative but his wrath. Now, are there any practical applications in each of the attributes of God? We have tried not just to stop with the doctrinal, but we've tried to make it practical in our own lives. Is there anything practical in this for me? Well, actually, there are a lot of practical things.

First of all, is there any place for wrath in my life? Well, I read in Ephesians chapter 4, be ye angry and sin not. Let not the sun go down upon your rod. When is it right for a Christian to be angry? Incidentally, anger is commanded in the word of God, isn't it? It says be ye angry.

It's commanded in the word of God. When is it right for a Christian to be angry? It's right for a Christian to be angry in God's cause, never in his own. We should be lions in God's cause and lambs in our own.

And I think you see this in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. He went into the temple. He found the temple court overrun with money changers.

They had turned the house of God into a place of mercenary traffic. And Jesus took a scourge of small courts and he drove out the money changers. And they, the disciples remembered that it was written of him, the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

It wasn't because of anything they did to the Lord Jesus that he drove out the money changers, but it was zeal for the house of God that drove him to do it. He was angry in God's cause, not in his own. In his own cause, he allowed men to take him and commit the worst crime of the universe in impaling him on a Roman gibbet.

And so there is a place for anger in my life, anger in the cause of God. Secondly, I believe there's a place in ministry today for a blazing prophetic indignation. And incidentally, it's something that's missing in the evangelical world.

Where are the prophets who cry out against sin? Sometimes I think Anita Bryant has more courage than most of us preachers. She put her career and reputation on the line. I don't necessarily defend everything she's done, but I'll tell you, you have to say this.

She was willing to put herself down on the line to cry out against sin. There's very little of it today. We have generally an attitude of soft peddling all that.

I believe that we would see more fruit for God if we preach the wrath of God in balance with the love of God. Sometimes I think that sinners today are giving the impression and they feel, well, here I am, you lucky Lord, this type of thing. I have such wonderful talents, you know, ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous.

Our general approach today is God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. But I tell you, that isn't the full story. The full story is that the wrath of God awaits the unrepentant.

Makes me think of Jonathan Edwards years ago, preaching that message back in Massachusetts, sinners in the hands of an angry God. And the people clung to the pillars that were holding up the roof for fear that the place would fall down upon them. Talk about conviction of sin.

Where is it today? Would you please tell me? Most of our modern evangelistic methods pass over sin very lightly. They heal the wound of the daughter of my people slightly. And I believe that we have to recapture the vision of the wrath of God.

And then I can find cause for worship when I study the wrath of God. You say, really? Yes. I praise God that I'll never know the wrath of God.

Shall not come into condemnation, John 5, 24, but is passed from death unto life. Isn't that wonderful? And there we can gather together and we can sing, death and judgment are behind me, grace and glory lie

before. All the billows rolled or Jesus, there they spent their utmost power.

We can sing, there is no condemnation, there is no hell for me, the torment and the fire, mine eyes shall never see. Finally, another practical result in our lives, and probably there are many more, but these are some that come to mind. If I really dwell upon the wrath of God and contemplate the horror of an eternal hell where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched, where the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever.

Dear friends, it'll give me love and compassion for the lost and a desire to go out and seek the one to the Lord Jesus. And maybe it'll lead me to write a letter to that unsaved loved one, to get down on my knees as I've never done before and storm the gates of heaven, pleading to God to speak to those people. What happens when we pray for the unsaved? Does God save people against their will? I don't believe he does.

Why do we pray for the unsaved? I'd like to share this with you. I believe that every time I pray for an unsaved person, God works in that person's life in some way. I think maybe that person walks down the street and someone hands him a track.

I think maybe that person turns on the radio or the TV and hears some word. Maybe he's driving along the countryside and sees a rock with a scripture text painted on it. In some way, I believe with all my heart that every time I pray for an unsaved person, God works in that unsaved person's life.

When I was in the Navy, I met an unsaved fellow. He was a pilot in our squadron, and I witnessed to him. And I have prayed for him since 1945.

The burden has never lifted. And it's interesting that from time to time, that fellow contacts me. He will not let the contact drop.

And sometimes he'll send me clippings from the newspaper in Miami of things that he thinks will be of interest to me because they concern Christianity. And I sent him a copy of the book *Born Again* by Charles Colson. I got a long-distance telephone call from me.

He said, hey, Mac, that was really a great book you sent. And he's just as unsaved as he can be today. But you know, I really believe that every time I pray for Douglas Danford, God speaks to him in some way.

And I say that as an encouragement to you to pray on. Pray on God. Now, I don't think God's going to save him against his will, but I'm asking God to break his will and bring him penitently to the feet of the Lord Jesus.

Well, the contemplation of the wrath of God should give us tender hearts for those who are unsaved. I think I quoted those lines before. Let me look on the crowd as my Savior did, till my eyes with tears grow dim.

Let me view with pity the wandering sheep and love them for love of him. The wrath of God. Another wonderful attribute of God is the eternity of God, the eternity of God.

Maybe we can just expand this little definition that we have this morning. Our definition says God is without beginning or end. You might like to add to that he transcends time.

He transcends time. Eternity is the lifetime of God. Now, dear friends, I think you've realized, you've felt as I have all through these studies that we're dealing with things that are really too great for the human mind,

aren't we? You and I can't understand eternity.

We can't. It's too big for these little minds of ours. You say, who made God? Who made God? God is without beginning or end.

He transcends time. Eternity is his lifetime. Turn, first of all, to Psalm 90 verses 1 through 4. Psalm 90 verses 1 through 4. You know, this psalm was written by Moses, wasn't it? Moses was in the wilderness and marching through the wilderness with the people, and it was like one long continuous cemetery.

The people were dropping off like flies. That generation of warriors, over 20 who came out of Egypt, they were dying one by one. And every day that they came to Moses with the Wilderness Gazette, it was just one long obituary column.

And he cries out to the Lord here in the 90th Psalm, Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hast formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. That's beautiful, isn't it? From everlasting to everlasting.

Thou art God. Thou turnest men to destruction and sayeth, return ye children of men. That is, I understand, return to dust.

You see one successive generation after another, and it's as if God, it's really poetic language, God is saying, return to dust. Well, this generation returns, and then another one comes along to take their place. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday, when it is past and as a watch in the night.

And then you don't have to turn to it, but Deuteronomy 33 and verse 27, it says, the eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. That's a wonderful bringing together of truth, isn't it? On the one hand, the greatness of God, the eternal God is thy refuge, and the other hand, the nearness of God, underneath are the everlasting arms. In the first part of the verse, you have God infinitely high.

In the next part of the verse, you have God intimately nigh. That's the kind of a God he is. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.

You read in Job 36, 26, neither can the numbers of his years be searched out. Neither can the numbers of his years be searched out. And Psalm 9, verse 7 says, the Lord shall endure forever.

Now, it's wonderful to me to come to the subject of the eternity of God and realize that I'm dealing with something that my mind can't take. I hurl my mind back and back and back before the world was made, before the stars were in their courses. Try to go back and back and back, and I can never get to the beginningless beginning.

In fact, you can't find words to describe it. God is without beginning or end. He transcends time.

Eternity is his lifetime. Perhaps you've heard this illustration of the difference between God in this respect and us. If you're down in Minneapolis and a parade is going by on one of those long straight streets, and you're standing there by the side of the road, you see the parade going by, but you only see the part of the parade that's passing you, don't you? Just that part.

But if you could get up in a very high building in Minneapolis, right by the parade route, it's conceivable that you would see the whole parade from beginning to end, isn't it? But dear friends, we're down here on

the earth, and we see the parade of human history going by, but we only see 60, 70, 80 years at a time. And God is high overall, and he looks down, and he transcends time, and he sees the whole parade from beginning to end. Which means that Calvary is an ever-present reality to him.

God doesn't live in a realm of time. He transcends time. And everything is present with God.

Mind you, he accommodates himself to us by using tenses of verbs. We wouldn't be able to understand otherwise. Mind you, he accommodates himself to us by using tenses of verbs.

We wouldn't be able to understand otherwise. But he sees it all. And I have no reason to doubt that when we get to heaven, he'll make it possible for us to see it all from beginning to end, too.

After all, those light waves are in the universe somewhere. Why couldn't God harness them and show us the creation? Show us Joseph in Egypt. Show us the Exodus.

Show us the history of the Old Testament period. And show us Calvary exactly as it took place. My, that'll be a worship meeting, won't it? That'll be a worship meeting when we look down and see the whole parade of human history from the beginning to end.

A saga of the love and faithfulness of God. God is without beginning or end. He transcends time.

Eternity is his lifetime. What effect does this have on me? How can I help but worship such a God? I'm so glad that he's presented in this way in the scripture, if he weren't, I'd know he wasn't God. And then secondly, not only worship, but the contemplation of the eternity of God teaches me, by contrast, how very short-lived we are down here.

And it makes me pray, teach me to number my days, that I may incline my heart to wisdom. My, we're just down here for a very little time, and it goes by so quickly. The days are evil, and we should redeem the time.

There are things that we can do for the Lord down here that we'll never be able to do in heaven. We should be about our Father's business. The eternity of God.

While another attribute of God is what we call his infinity, his infinity. And that means that his greatness is beyond calculation, measurement, or human imagination. His greatness is beyond calculation, measurement, or human imagination.

And you can add that he is unbounded. Limitless. The infinity of God.

Once again, we're dealing with a subject that our mind just won't stretch to take in. We can't understand infinity, but God is infinite. A lovely verse that I think bears this out is found in 1 Kings chapter 8. 1 Kings chapter 8, and it's verse 27, Solomon's blessing and prayer at the dedication of the temple.

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house that I have built. It's beautiful. The heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house that I have built.

And then Jeremiah chapter 23 and verse 24 says, do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord. The infinite God. You know, it really hurts me to hear, hear men talking about God today as if he were just someone like ourselves.

It really hurts. And mind you, it affects man's life because we become like what we worship. The greater our thoughts of God, the greater our spiritual stature will be.

David had great thoughts of God, and those thoughts are crystallized for us today in his psalms. Solomon had great thoughts of God here as he dedicated the temple. They should lead us to worship.

Secondly, they should teach us how very finite we are. Really, when I think of it, one day we're strong and healthy, and then a non-filterable virus somehow enters our system, and the next day we're as weak as a wet dishrag. You know, the strongest man.

Born but for one brief day. Very, very finite. But I link with this.

What a wonderful thing that God, the infinite God, will stoop down and take someone as finite and limited as we are and deign to use us in his service. Isn't that wonderful? I tell you, I'd like to say something to the young people here today. The greatest use of your life is to lay it at the feet of the Lord Jesus.

Spurgeon said to his son, my son, if God should call you to his full-time service, I should not like to see you dribble down into a king. You know, I was brought up in a godly Christian home, and I respect and revere my parents. Some of my most sacred memories of our family gathered around the kitchen table, those creaky old wooden chairs, my father reading the Bible, and we'd get down on our knees and pray as a family every day.

But I want to tell you something, too, and it's the truth. I don't remember our family, I don't remember ever having had the work of the Lord held before me as a desirable way to spend my life. My folks came over as immigrants from Scotland, and they were poor.

And there was this terrific drive to go ahead and make money, terrific drive. And I absorbed it very gladly and very readily. And I had the terrible delusion for many years that man was placed here on the earth for no higher reason than to make money.

And then God worked in his own wonderful way. Right when I was in the midst of the business world and on my way to retiring at 35, having made a quick kill in the stock market, I never got that far. But God intervened, and he set me on the road to higher dividends.

And I'd say to you young people today, man is here for bigger business than to make money. And your life is very short, you're just a finite creature. But God has given you the unspeakable privilege of turning over the control of your life to him and letting him choose the pathway for you.

Really, what could be better than that? These are thoughts that come to us as we contemplate the infinity of God, the tremendous privilege of serving such a God. I already believe the time. The foreknowledge of God.

I told you we were not going to finish, and it's true. The foreknowledge of God. Now some of you might not agree with this.

God knew certain persons from eternity and sovereignly decreed to bless them. This is very closely linked with the sovereignty of God. And we had it before we spoke of that verse in Ephesians 1, for chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.

Some people think of foreknowledge of God simply as God knew from the beginning everything would happen, but took a hands-off attitude. I believe the foreknowledge of God means that God knew certain persons from eternity and sovereignly decreed to bless them. But let me quickly add this.

Although I believe that with all my heart, I believe just as firmly that God has given man a will to choose. And I believe that God makes a bona fide offer of salvation to every man and woman, boy and girl in the world. And I don't believe there's a person living in the world today who couldn't be saved if he trusted the sinner's Savior.

Now you say, how can you put those two things together? How can you reconcile those two things? I can't reconcile them and I don't try, but I believe them both because they're taught in the Word of God. I read in the one hand in the Word of God, chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. And I read in the same Bible that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

And so I believe in the sovereign election, the foreknowledge of God, and I believe equally strongly in man's free will and that God is not playing with men. God is not mocking men. He's not playing games with them.

He's making a bona fide offer of salvation. And the only way you or I or anyone else can ever know if we're elect of God is by trusting the Lord Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Now people don't like that because there's a seeming conflict there.

Well let me tell you something, the seeming conflict takes place here in this mind and not in the mind of God. In His mind there's no conflict, whatever. Let's read a few verses about the foreknowledge of God.

Chapter 8 of Romans. Romans chapter 8. I'm looking in the Old Testament, that's how rattled I am. Romans chapter 8 and verse 29.

For whom He did foreknow. Here it is. Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Moreover, whom He did predestinate, then He also called. Whom He called, then He also justified. And whom He justified, then He also glorified.

Now doesn't it seem from that verse that the foreknowledge of God is determinative? Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate. If He foreknew a million, He predestinated a million. If He predestinated a million, He called that same million.

If He called that million, He justified them. And if He justified them, they'll be in heaven at last. And what that says is that if God foreknew one million, that million will be glorified at last.

Wonderful. Romans chapter 11 and verse 2. Romans chapter 11. God has not cast away His people which He foreknew.

Watch ye not what the scripture saith of Elias, how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets and dig down thine altars, and I am left alone, for they seek my life. God foreknew the nation of Israel. It was determinative.

Before eternity, He knew He was going to choose the nation of Israel as His earthly people. And 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 2. 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 2. Says, elect according to the foreknowledge of God

the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. I think that's a lovely verse because it begins back in eternity and comes right down to the time of your conversion.

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God. That took place long before you and I ever came into existence. Through sanctification of the Spirit.

I believe this sanctification of the Spirit is what I call pre-conversion sanctification. Before you were ever saved, the Holy Spirit started to set you apart. An unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife.

He set apart, and the Spirit was working to set me apart to the Lord. And then it says, through obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, and that's when I appropriate it to myself. So there you have a little panorama of a person's salvation in just a few words.

And then of course in Acts 15, 18, it says, known unto God are all his works. Known unto God are all his works. You say, what effect, what does the foreknowledge of God do in your life? Well, once again, it makes me a worshiper.

I think of that, the verse of that hymn we used to sing, Why hast thou made me hear thy voice? And enter father's room, while thousands make a wretched choice. They'd rather starve than come. I wonder if I should just read some of the others, just so you'll have a taste of it.

The time is gone, but just let me read them. Self-existence. Self-existence.

You and I had existence given to you, to us, God never did. God does not owe his existence to anyone or anything outside himself. The cause of his being is in himself.

God does not owe his existence to anyone or anything outside himself. The cause of his being is in himself. Don't you love him? Self-sufficiency.

God doesn't need anything outside himself. He doesn't, he doesn't need us, but he seeks our worship. He can live without it.

He's completely independent of us in that sense, but he seeks those who will worship him in spirit and in truth. I love this attribute of God. God is incomprehensible.

God cannot be fathomed by the human mind. Man can know of God only what he has chosen to reveal. God cannot be fathomed by the human mind.

All that we can know of him is what he has chosen to reveal to us in the sacred scriptures. And then finally the transcendence of God. God is exalted far above the created universe.

He existed long before there was such a thing as a created universe. This is our God. He will be our guide forever and forever.

Shall we pray? Father, we love you, and we love the son of your love, and we praise and worship you today. Praise and worship you for the Holy Spirit of God too, and for the Word of God that we have in our hands. And Lord, how grateful we are that you've given us minds to dwell upon these lofty and sacred themes.

Oh God, we pray that as we go away from this conference we might go away with a new appreciation of you, a new deep and abiding trust in you, hearts to worship you more than we've ever done before, and lives that are given over to you in service with no reserve, no retreats, and no regrets. We ask it in the Savior's worthy and precious name.

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