

Russell Kelfer
Because
He Is

#1238-A

Series: The Character of God

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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Little Edgar struggled to find an answer. His Sunday School teacher had just asked the question of questions. She had inquired of the class, “How big is God?” There was dead silence. You could see little eyes widen as the children sought an answer.

“Bigger than heaven!” little Suzie responded. “That’s good”, the teacher replied. “But He’s even bigger than that!” “Bigger than a truck!” Benny quickly retorted, knowing that even heaven couldn’t be as big as that huge semi that was parked on the street by his house.

“Bigger than that!”, Mrs. Roseland replied, by now not sure when to stop. Finally, Edgar’s eyes lit up and he jumped to his feet. “As big as a Forty-niner”, he yelled at the top of his voice. Unfortunately, Mrs. Roseland was not a football fan. “A forty-what?” she asked. The class rolled with laughter. They figured that if she didn’t know what a forty-niner was, she sure couldn’t know much about God. Edgar knew all about football. His uncle was a defensive end, and if God was bigger than Uncle Ed, He was huge!

How would you have answered? How big is God? How grand is God? How powerful is God? Bigger than a Forty-Niner? Bigger than heaven? Bigger than the universe? How faithful is God? How gentle is God? How wise is God? You say, “I can answer that. God is bigger than...” and suddenly you trail off. You suddenly realize that *you can’t describe God at all.*

You might say, “He is my Lord, my Savior, my Redeemer, my King.” Yes, He is that. Indeed He is. But, Beloved, if you were to take all of the space on the earth, both land and sea, and all of the vast horizons of heaven, and begin writing of the nature and being of God, when you would have written upon every inch of every mountain, and inscribed descriptions of His nature upon the scrolls of the clouds; when you would have engraved on every rock, carved on every hillside more about His majestic Name, until there were not so much as an inch of space not written

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upon, you would have only begun to describe a ten-trillionth of who He is.

He is! And because He is...we are. Who He is and what He is are beyond description. We cannot describe God using human measuring sticks any more than we can describe heaven by taking pictures of earth. God is indescribable. You cannot capture the essence of His being with words any more than you can capture the snowflakes that fall. For, like those snowflakes, once you begin to use human words to define Deity, the words themselves melt into the atmosphere from which they came; and the beauty, the awesomeness, the wonder of it all is lost.

But God, once again, has done the impossible. He has taken human words, and by implanting them in His Word, where His Spirit can interpret them, He has given to us seeds of understanding. When they blossom, they reveal rich textured portraits of the I AM. Using human illustrations, He has given us tiny fragments of glory to whet our appetites for the glory which is to come.

So we embark on a journey into the land of divine revelation. We are seeking to find from God's Word (our only source of divine revelation), more and more and more about the God who is. But, Beloved, a study of the nature of God cannot be simply a doctrinal interpretation of the essence of God as compared to man. In fact, it cannot be simply a study of anything. A study of the nature of God must be a spiritual pilgrimage by which God's Spirit transforms us as He informs us more of who God is.

Therefore, before we can even begin, we must stop and bow in utter humility before our great God and worship. As we bow in His awesome presence, we must surrender and ask Him to change us. Truly, the more we know Him, the more we can become *like Him*; until that glorious day when John tells us "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." So our study must begin in prayer. James said,

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.
(James 1:5)

Let's ask God for wisdom...supernatural revelation of truth. Let's ask God to reveal Himself to us through Scripture in such a way that we will be nothing like our former selves when this pilgrimage is through.

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Dear God.

We worship you. But even as we do, we realize how little we know of the One we fall before. Our finite eyes cannot grasp the reality of who You are. And so we contrive images in our minds that cannot begin to describe the majesty that is Yours. Dear God, we ask for wisdom. Teach us in such a way that we will have been on a mountaintop like Moses, beholding your glory. Change us, even as you changed him, in ever-increasing splendor into your likeness. Reveal to us, we pray, more of the essence of your being, so we can surrender more fully, allowing that essence to flow through our lives, glorifying your name. Dear, Beloved God, like Moses, we pray...show us your glory. We yield to thee, oh, blessed God, and pray in Jesus' Name.

Amen.

Our journey will take us through the glorious land of the supremacy of God, the omnipotence of God, the omniscience of God, the immutability of God, the sovereignty of God, the mercy of God, the holiness of God, and the grace of God, to name just a few.

We must begin by understanding *what happens when we come to know God's nature*. That will be the objective of this study. Our title is Because He Is! Our outline for this study is:

- I- We can worship.
- II- We can be changed.
- III- We can obey.
- IV- We can be at rest.

BECAUSE HE IS...WE CAN WORSHIP

If someone were to ask you to define the most important thing you do as a Christian, what would you answer? Some would say pray. Some would answer witness. Others would respond study God's Word. There is obviously no simple answer. But the one answer that might be most conspicuous by its absence would be...worship.

On the day that the Ark of the Covenant was set in the midst of the tabernacle, David called the people together, and he began to sing for joy. Among those beautiful words were these:

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Give to the LORD the glory due His Name; Bring an offering, and come before Him. Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!

Tremble before Him, all the earth. The world also is firmly established, It shall not be moved.

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; And let them say among the nations, "The Lord reigns."

Let the sea roar, and all its fullness: Let the field rejoice, and all that is in it.

Then the trees of the woods shall rejoice before the Lord, For He is coming to judge the earth.

(1 Chronicles 16:29-33 NKJV)

The cardinal calling of the Christian is to worship. And, yet, if there is a missing ingredient in the average believer's life, it is here. I believe there are three reasons:

1- We confuse corporate worship with personal worship.

We think that if we go to church, sing, praise, pray, and be happy, we have completed our worship experience. Beloved, the call to worship is a personal call. In John, chapter nine, we read about a blind man to whom Jesus had given sight. The Pharisees were furious, because he had been healed on the Sabbath; they were so furious, in fact, that they excommunicated him. Finally, he returned to Jesus and the Master asked him:

"Do you believe in the Son of God?"

He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?"

And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you."

Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" And he worshiped Him.

(John 9:35b-38 NKJV)

The moment this man saw who Jesus was and placed his faith in Him, he worshiped. He suddenly realized that he was in the presence of God Himself, and he could do nothing less than fall to his knees in awe. How often do you, in your daily time alone with God, simply fall down before Him and acknowledge who He is and worship? Worship is not reserved for church, Beloved. Worship is a personal act of surrender to the nature of God.

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2- The second problem is that we often confuse worship with emotional, spiritual experiences.

If we have had an emotional experience that has warmed our hearts, we think God has been glorified. Sometimes yes. Sometimes no. Paul, as he stood before Felix, gave his defense this way:

But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.

I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. (Acts 24:14,15 NKJV)

Paul's confession was that he was a worshiper of God. As to how he worshiped, he further confessed that he worshiped by believing *all things which are written in the law*. His concept of God was framed from God's Word; therefore, he could worship God in spirit and in truth. Paul was not confessing to an experience, but to a conviction. Through that conviction, he worshiped. As we learn in his letter to the Corinthians, there were occasions when that worship resulted in a spiritual experience. But even then, he was careful not to exalt the experience, but rather the God of glory.

3- But most important of all, the missing ingredient in our understanding of worship is our failure to see the relationship between worship and the nature of God.

An interesting study, as a side trip to this series, would be for you to spend some time worshiping God through the Psalms, taking care to worship, in particular, through those passages which glorify an aspect of the nature of God. Real worship is exalting the nature of God. If you don't believe that, read and re-read Psalms again and again with that thought in mind. To worship is to acknowledge the "worth-ship" of God. And what makes God worth "worth-shiping" is His character, which separates Him from His creation.

Here is just a brief example:

Psalm 1 speaks of the omniscience of God.

Psalm 2 tells of the wrath of God.

Psalm 3 portrays the grace of God.

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Psalm 4 of the mercy of God.

Psalm 5 of the righteousness of God.

Psalm 6 of the mercy of God.

Psalm 7 of the justice of God

Psalm 8 of the supremacy of God.

Do your own study and see how the Psalmist's praises always focus on one of the aspects of the nature of God. Then begin to fashion your own time of worship the same way. Because He is we can worship, and worship is what we have been called upon to do.

BECAUSE HE IS...WE CAN BE CHANGED

Secondly, we study the nature of God because it is His character infused in us, that allows us to be transformed. We pray and ask God to change us, because that is what He is after. Have you ever stopped to ponder *where the new nature comes from?* Have you ever stopped to realize that every quality that God wants in your life has a corresponding attribute found only in Him? Therefore, if you want to be changed, begin worshipping God for those aspects of His nature that lead to the qualities you are praying for; and specifically ask God, claiming His Word, to change you into His likeness. Here is an example:

Are you praying for a spirit of contentment? Then begin to worship God that He is omnipresent. It is that aspect of His nature that gives you the grace to be content. That's precisely what the Holy Spirit said:

Let your conduct be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5 NKJV)

Are you seeking a spirit of purity or modesty? Then worship God for His holiness, because He is Holy, you can be holy, too. Is that not what He said?

But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

(I Peter 1:15,16 NKJV)

Are you seeking to become more courageous? More filled with boldness? Then worship God for His mercy. Because He is... mercy, we need not become discouraged. Paul said:

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...as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.

(II Corinthians 4:1b NKJV)

Want to become more humble? Then worship God for His supremacy. Read Job, chapters 38-41.

Here is a more complete list of some of the character qualities and the corresponding qualities of God:

Character Qualities	God's Nature
honesty	truth
gentleness	mercy
contentment	omnipresence
meekness	goodness
patience	longsuffering
power	grace
purity	holiness
humility	supremacy
self-control	immutability
tenderness	love
wisdom	omniscience
submission	sovereignty
obedience	righteousness
courage	mercy
confidence	love

BECAUSE HE IS...WE CAN OBEY

There is a third reason we must spend our days searching out the nature of God. It is because *every absolute of Scripture upon which we build our obedience is predicated on one of the aspects of the character of God.*

There is an absolute that says "thou shalt not lie". That absolute gives us clear parameters to govern our behavior. We are not to lie because God has given us an absolute spiritual law that will never, ever fail. That absolute was not just a whim of God. It was predicated on that divine attribute that applies only to Him. He is Perfect Truth. He is, according to John 14:6, the only Truth; and if He, through His Spirit, lives in us, then *we cannot ever defy that truth and be in His will.* Therefore, many of our decisions are already made. If we have to lie to make that deal, the decision is made. If we have to hide the truth to convince our children to do something, we are defying an absolute, and God

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won't honor it. God is Truth. Therefore, He cannot lie. And He, in us, cannot lie either.

There is an absolute that says,

For exaltation [promotion] comes neither from the east Nor from the west nor from the south.

But God is the Judge: He puts down one, And exalts another.
(Psalm 75:6,7 NKJV)

That absolute never fails. Never at any time does man decide, apart from God's intervention, who to exalt and who to abase. Oh, man *thinks he does*, but God's Word says otherwise. Even,

The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD,
Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.
(Proverbs 21:1 NKJV)

God is in control, Beloved, whether you realize it or not, but not by virtue of a changing fancy. He and only He is sovereign. Because He is sovereign, and because He is omniscient (He knows all things), only He can make the right choices every time. Therefore, *He sets up one and puts down another*. So every time God moves in your life, even if it is to take from you prestige or honor you thought was yours forever, like Joseph, worship Him... He is sovereign. That boss you so hate may have demoted or even fired you, but not without God's sovereign hand. So even those times are times to worship, not because of what has happened, but because of who He is!

There is an absolute that says, "The God of all comfort comforts you in *all your tribulation* that you may be able to comfort others with the same comfort with which God comforted you." That means God will comfort you through every sorrow, even if you don't feel comforted; and sometimes you don't. Nevertheless, God is comforting you. Absolutely. That absolute is based on the perfect mercy of God. Therefore, whenever you are suffering tribulation of any kind, it is time to worship God for his mercy. That mercy guarantees you the comfort of God. Always. He said in *all your tribulations*. So even life's difficulties reveal absolutes, and every absolute reveals a part of the character of God.

BECAUSE HE IS...WE CAN BE AT REST

So let's embark together on a study of the character of God. We realize as we do, that:

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1- Our goal is not information, but transformation. We want to become more and more like the God who is.

2- Our goal is to learn to worship God more effectively, by praying through the Word extolling the attributes of His Holy Name, as we praise Him *just because His is*.

3- Our goal is to learn to adore the character of God as we pray for the corresponding character qualities that His nature produces in us.

4- Our goal is to realize that each attribute of God spawns absolutes: clear, unchanging truths from God's Holy Word that are so perfectly set in the concrete of eternity that we can confidently obey, knowing that, based on who God is, they can never change.

5- Our final goal, however, may well be the most important of all. That is to come to the reality that the more we study the nature and attributes of God, the more we come to grasp the inevitable fact that it isn't up to us to be...to do...to become. *God lives in us, and God, in us, can do anything*. Therefore, we can be at rest. Therefore, every attribute of His nature gives us new confidence to live the Christian life. As we look at the following chart, we will see what each of God's attributes can mean in our lives, as we learn to put our trust and confidence in who He is.

His Attribute	This Means	Therefore...
He is omnipotent	There is nothing He cannot do.	We can learn to stop being afraid
He is omniscient	There is nothing He does not know.	We can learn to stop hiding
He is omnipresent	He is always everywhere.	We can learn to stop running
He is sovereign	There is nothing beyond His control.	we can learn to stop questioning
He is spirit	He is unhindered by human limitations	We can see life from His perspective
He is eternal	He is unhindered by time	We can learn to wait on His timing
He is self-existent	Without need of anything to be sustained.	We can learn to stop "rescuing" God
He is beyond comprehension	His ways are beyond our understanding	We can learn to stop limiting God

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His Attribute	This Means	Therefore...
He is omnipotent	There is nothing He cannot do.	We can learn to stop being afraid
He is perfect love	He gives Himself away with regard to response or worth	We can learn to let Him give Himself away through us
He is perfect patience	He never wearies of waiting for His own.	We can learn to forgive and learn to wait
His Word is immutable	Whatever He says will happen. His decrees are unchangeable.	We can learn to trust His Word rather than our emotions
He is perfect holiness	He cannot sin; be touched by sin; be tempted to sin; or tempt others to sin	We can learn that God cannot abide in the midst of deliberate impurity
He is perfect justice	His holiness is never compromised, yet His grace is never limited.	We can learn to let Him be the judge.
He is perfect truth	He cannot lie; cannot deceive, cannot vary from absolute truth.	We can learn to rest in God's absolutes and accept truth as normal
He is perfect order	His universe, His plan, His purposes are all ordained with supreme logic and maintained with majestic dignity.	We can learn to let the Spirit breathe through an order life
He is total availability	All that He is and all that He has is now available to all of His children.	We can learn to begin to let His life flow through our lives into the lives of others.

He is! And because He is...we are. Because He is, we can be at rest. We can let His life flow through ours, and by simply appropriating the incredible nature of our God, we can live lives free from fear, free from panic, free from discouragement, free from worry, free from selfishness, free from immorality, free from disorder and disarray. We can live lives that are available, gentle, loving, and pure. We can because He is.

The issue at stake is how well do we know our God? In one of his letters to Erasmus, Luther wrote, "your thoughts of God

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are too human”. And so it is with us. We, like the children in the opening illustration, tend to take the strongest thing we know of and assume that God is a little stronger. We take the purest thing we know about and assume that God is a little more holy. We take the grandest example of love we can find and imagine God’s love to be that and then some. We take the most patient person we know as a standard, and then add to that to measure the patience of God.

The problem is summed up in this verse as God speaks and says to us:

You thought that I was altogether like you;

(Psalm 50:21b NKJV)

Man has always wrongfully assumed that because God uses human illustrations and human terminology to describe Himself to man that He is describing the Creator as little more than His creation. Dear God, forgive us. Because we read of the “hand of God”, dare we envision God’s hands as little more than ours? Because we read of the “voice of God”, do we imagine His voice to be like ours, but louder? Beloved, the hand of God is big enough to carve the mountains out of the seas; the voice of God is strong enough to raise the dead. The love of God is deep enough to nail itself to a Roman cross and in agony do what man could never do...die for the sins of the world.

Ought we not to read Job 38 over and over and over? Ought not our days begin by reciting back to God those awesome words as though He were speaking, not to Job, but to us? Can’t you just hear God saying to you...

Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?
Tell Me, if you have understanding.

Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or stretched the line upon it?

To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy?
(Job 38:4-6 NKJV)

Where were you when God spoke the worlds into being? Where were you when the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy? Where were you? If you cannot create anything or sustain anything apart from God’s divine power, then who are you to question His will? Who are you to doubt

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His authority? Who are you to dishonor His Name by harboring a bitter spirit over something that happened that you “didn’t deserve”? What did you deserve, anyway? An eternity in the fires of hell, that’s what. But His immeasurable love reconciled you and redeemed you and transformed you and assured you of eternal, unending life in Glory.

Dare you question His wisdom? Dare you limit His grace? Dare you thwart His plan for you through unbelief? No, Beloved, God is! He always has been. He ever shall be. He is all-powerful. That does not even mean power that you and I would accept as perfect. It means power so complete, so awesome, that you and I cannot even find the words to describe it. We only experience a touch of it at Calvary, and our whole beings are made new. Can you imagine what that power will be like when the courts of eternity convene, and King Jesus banishes sin and sorrow and death forever? That’s power. Until we progressively come to see Him as He is, we will live in needless frustration and fear.

Travel with us in these next few lessons through the scrolls of Scripture for a look at the majesty of the God who is, and remember as you do, Beloved, that *the magnificence of a life of victory awaits you here, and the grandeur of eternity awaits you there.*

Just because He is!

Let’s pray.

Oh, dear Father,

There are not words that can even begin to describe how much we want to worship You. Our finite minds cannot fully grasp the realities of eternity. And we become so enmeshed in the things of this world and so tuned to the things of this world and so desirous of the things of this world that we lose sight of the concept of who God is.

Return our hearts, we pray, these next few weeks to Your Word and to Your Word alone. And from that Word may You lift from its pages by Your Spirit, beautiful portraits of who You are that our hearts might bow in utter adoration and praise...just because You Are.

In Jesus’ name we pray,

Amen

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A Challenge to Further Study

1- Spend some time alone with God this week asking Him to make Himself known to you in the weeks to come as you meditate upon who He is.

2- For the next two months, read two Psalms a day, keeping a notebook handy to record *which aspects of God's nature the Psalmist is exalting in each of the Psalms*. Once you have done this, you will have a permanent record to refer to, topically arranged, to help you worship God for each of the qualities of His being.

3- Make a list of the four character qualities most needed in your life. Find the corresponding attribute of God that makes that transformation possible. Worship God daily for that aspect of His nature. Watch God change you "into His likeness" as you do.

4- Find the greatest weakness in your life. Is it fear? Is it a refusal to remain in place? Is it an anxious spirit? Is it the absence of purity? Now take the aspect of God's character that guarantees you freedom from that bondage. Begin to claim that part of His nature as yours.

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