

# Week Seven

Communicable Attributes of God (1)

# How is God Like Us in His Being and in Mental and Moral Attributes?

- Part 1
  - Attributes describing God's being
  - Mental attributes
  - Moral attributes
- Part 2
  - Attributes of purpose
  - "Summary" attributes
- The division into various attributes is not a matter of great doctrinal significance but is something that must be based on one's judgment concerning the most effective way to present the biblical material

# Communicable Attributes of God (1)

1. Attributes describing God's being
  1. Spirituality
  2. Invisibility
2. Mental attributes
  3. Knowledge (or Omniscience)
  4. Wisdom
  5. Truthfulness (and Faithfulness)
3. Moral attributes
  6. Goodness
  7. Love
  8. Mercy, Grace, Patience
  9. Holiness
  10. Peace (or Order)
  11. Righteousness (or Justice)
  12. Jealousy
  13. Wrath

# Spirituality

- God exists as a being that is not made of any matter, has no parts or dimensions, is unable to be perceived by our bodily senses, and is more excellent than any other kind of existence
- “God is spirit” (John 4:24)
- God forbids us to make anything that is to be representative of Him (Exodus 20:4-6)
- God’s being, His essential mode of existence, is different from everything that He has created

# Spirituality – What it Means to Us

- We must worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24)
  - Location is irrelevant
  - We have direct access to Him at all times
- God’s jealousy of His honor prohibits us from making any images of Him
  - “for I the Lord your God am a jealous God...” (Ex 20:5)
  - His honor is diminished when we try to emulate Him with an image (He’s exists in spirit!)
- We have been given spirits to worship Him (John 4:24)
- We are united with the Lord’s spirit (1 Cor 6:17)
- Our spirit will pass into the Lord’s presence when we die (Luke 23:46, Eccl. 12:7, Heb 12:23, etc.)

# Invisibility

- God's total essence, all of His spiritual being, will never be able to be seen by us, yet God still shows Himself to us through visible, created things
- “No one has ever seen God” (John 1:18)
- “Not that any one has seen the Father except Him who is from God; He has seen the Father” (John 6:46)
- “To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever.” (1 Tim 1:17)
- “No man has ever seen God” (1 John 4:12)

# Didn't Some People See God?

- Examples
  - Moses spoke “face to face” (Exodus 33:11)
  - Moses saw the back of God’s glory (Ex 33:21-23)
  - Jesus is God (even on earth)
- God’s total essence will never be able to be seen by us
- Theophany
  - An appearance of God
  - Examples – God appears to:
    - Abraham (Gen 18:1-33)
    - Jacob (Gen 32:28-30)
    - People of Israel (Ex 13:21-22)
    - Manoah and his wife (Judg 13:21-22)
    - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 3:25) ...

# Invisibility – What it Means to Us

- God has revealed parts of Himself, but we will never see His essence completely
- We will be able to see God in heaven
  - “Face to face” (1 Cor 13:12)
  - “We shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2)
  - “They shall see His face” (Rev 22:3-4)
  - The nature of this “seeing” will not be known until we reach heaven
  - This is something to truly look forward to

# Knowledge (or Omniscience)

- God fully knows Himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act
- “who is perfect in knowledge” (Job 37:16)
- “knows everything” (1 John 3:20)
- No one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God (1 Cor 2:10-11)
- “no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him...” (Heb 4:13)
- “Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him” (Matt 6:8)
- “Even the hairs of your head are all numbered” (Matt 10:30)

# What Would Have Been

- Not only does God know what will happen, but He also knows “all things possible”
  - What would have happened if...
  - God tells David what will happen if he makes one of two choices (1 Sam 23:11-13)
  - Jesus stated that Tyre and Sidon would not have been destroyed if they had repented (Matt 11:21)
  - Elisha tells Joash what would have happened if he had struck the ground five or six times with the arrows (2 Kings 13:19)
- God has made an incredibly complex and varied universe. But there are thousands upon thousands of other variations or kinds of things that God could have created but did not. God’s infinite knowledge includes detailed knowledge of what each of those other possible creations would have been like and what would have happened in each of them! (pg 191)

# Knowledge – What it Means to Us

- God is aware of everything
  - He can not learn anything
  - He is never surprised
- What about my sins? Doesn't He forget those?
  - “I will not remember your sins” (Is 43:25)
  - He will never again let the knowledge of these sins play any part in the way He relates to us: He will “forget” them in His relationship to us (pg 192)
- The relationship between this and predestination / freewill will be discussed in chapter 16

# Wisdom

- God always chooses the best goals and the best means to those goals
- “the only wise God” (Rom 16:27)
- God is “wise in heart” (Job 9:4)
- “With Him are wisdom and might; He has counsel and understanding” (Job 12:13)
- Christ is the “wisdom of God” to those who are called (1 Cor 1:24,30), but “foolishness” to those who reject Him (1 Cor 1:18-20)
- Remember – these are the best goals and means from His perspective

# Wisdom – What it Means to Us

- God's wisdom is shown to angels and demons when people from different racial and cultural backgrounds are united in Christ in the church (Eph 3:10)
- “We know that God works all things together for good for those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose” (Rom 8:28)
  - The ultimate goal He has for our lives is that we be like Christ and thereby bring glory to Him (pg 194)
  - It's not always (ever?) easy → Paul's thorn in the flesh (2 Cor 12:7)
- “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5)
- “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Ps 111:10)
- The possession of wisdom will result in humility – NOT PRIDE (Prov 11:2, James 3:13)

# Truthfulness (and Faithfulness)

- He is the true God, and all His knowledge and words are both true and the final standard of truth
- “The Lord is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King...The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens.” (Jer 10:10-11)
- He is “the only true God” (John 17:3)
- God in His own being or character is the one who fully conforms to the idea of what God should be: namely, a being who is infinitely perfect in power, in wisdom, in goodness, in lordship over time and space, and so forth (pg 195)

# Truthfulness – What it Means to Us

- All of God’s knowledge is true and is the final standard of truth
  - The standard of true knowledge is conformity to God’s knowledge
  - God’s words are both true and the final standard of truth
- He is “a God of faithfulness” (Deut 32:4)
  - God’s faithfulness means that God will always do what He has said and fulfill what He has promised (Num 23:19)
  - His words about Himself and about His creation completely correspond to reality
- We are commanded to speak the same standard of truth
  - “Do not lie to one another” (Col 3:9)
  - “...putting away falsehood, let everyone speak the truth with his neighbor” (Eph 4:25)
  - “Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are His delight (Prov 12:22)

# Goodness

- God is the final statement of good, and that all that God is and does is worthy of approval
  - Good → worthy of approval
  - God's being and actions are perfectly worthy of His own approval – He is therefore the final standard of good (pg 198)
- “And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen 1:31)
- “You are good and you do good; teach me your statutes” (Ps 119:68)
- “Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above” (James 1:17)
- “in everything God works for good with those who love Him..” (Rom 8:32)

# Goodness – What it Means to Us

- Even His discipline is a manifestation of His love and is for our good (Heb 12:10)
- Our response should be
  - “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal 6:10)
  - “Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing upon earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Ps 73:25-26)

# Love

- God eternally gives of Himself to others
  - “God is love” (1 John 4:8)
  - Jesus speaks to His Father of “My glory which You have given Me in Your love for Me and before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24)
  - “In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10)
  - “God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8)
  - Paul speaks of “the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal 2:20)

# Love – What it Means to Us

- Response

- “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind...You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 22:37-38)
- If we love God, we will obey His commandments (1 John 5:3)
- We will love God, not the world (1 John 2:15)

- Results

- In doing so, we can give God joy (Isa 62:5, Zeph 3:17-18)
- “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jon 13:35)
- The love of our enemies is especially reflective of God’s love (Matt 5:43-48)

# Mercy, Grace, Patience

- Definitions
  - Mercy – God’s goodness toward those in misery or distress
  - Grace – God’s goodness toward those who deserve only punishment
  - Patience – God’s goodness in withholding of punishment toward those who sin over a period of time
- Often mentioned together
  - “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Ex 34:6)
  - “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love” (Ps 103:8)

# Mercy – What it Means to Us

- We know God is merciful
  - “I am in great distress; let us fall into the hand of the Lord for His mercy is great” (2 Sam 24:14)
  - Two blind men cried “Have mercy on us, Son of David” (Matt 9:27)
  - Paul speaking about God comforting during affliction says: “Father of mercies and God of all comfort” (2 Cor 1:3)
- We are also to be merciful – “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Matt 5:7)

# Grace – What it Means to Us (1)

- We know God is usually gracious, but God is never **obligated** to give grace in any one particular situation
  - “Turn to me and be gracious to me, after Thy manner with those who love Thy name” (Ps 119:132)
  - “The God of all grace” (1 Peter 5:10)
  - “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious , and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy” (Ex 33:19, Rom 9:15)
- We are saved by grace
  - “Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:23-24)
  - Not by works!

# Grace – What it Means to Us (2)

- The appropriate response to grace is **faith**
  - “That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace...” (Rom 4:16)
  - Faith is devoid of self-reliance or attempts to gain righteousness by human effort (pg 201)
- The entire living of the Christian life can be seen to result from God’s continuous bestowal of grace
  - Paul can say “by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Cor 15:10)
  - Paul’s letter readers often received the apostolic blessing of grace (Rom, 1 Cor, 2 Cor, Gal, etc.)
  - We can only have good gifts because of God’s grace

# Patience – What it Means to Us

- God is patient
  - “slow to anger” (Ex 34:6; Num 14:18; Ps 86:15, 103:8, 145:8; Jonah 4:2; Nah 1:3; etc.)
  - Paul speaks of God’s “kindness and forbearance and patience” (Rom 2:4)
  - Jesus displayed His “perfect patience” toward Paul (1 Tim 1:16)
- We are to imitate God’s patience
  - “slow to anger” (1 Peter 2:20)
  - We are to lead a life “with patience” (Eph 4:2)
  - Patience is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22)
- As with most of the attributes of God that we are to imitate in our lives, patience requires a moment-by-moment trust in God to fulfill His promises and purposes in our lives at His chosen time (pg 202)

# Holiness

- God is separated from sin and devoted to seeking His own honor
  - There was a veil in the tabernacle to separate the world from the “holy place” (Ex 26:33)
  - The place where God Himself dwells is holy (Ps 24:3)
- God is holy
  - The “Holy One of Israel” (Ps 71:22, 78:41, etc.)
  - The seraphim around God’s throne cry “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory” (Is 6:3)
  - “The Lord our God is holy” (Ps 99:9)

# Holiness – What it Means to Us

- God commands
  - “You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy” (Lev 19:2)
  - “You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex 19:4-6)
  - “strive...for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14)
  - “Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God” (2 Cor 7:1)
- Zechariah prophesied of the day when everything on earth will be “holy to the Lord” (Zech 14:20-21 or pg 203)

# Peace (and Order)

- In God's being and in His actions He is separate from all confusion and disorder, yet He is continually active in innumerable well-ordered, fully controlled, simultaneous actions
  - “The God of peace” (Rom 15:33,16:20; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 5:23; Heb 13:20)
  - “‘There is no peace’, says the Lord, ‘for the wicked’” (Is 48:22, 57:21)
- Peace does not mean inactivity
  - “the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up” (Acts 9:31)
  - God is one who “will never slumber or sleep” (Ps 121:4)
  - He is continually working (John 5:17)

# Peace (and Order) – What it Means to Us

- For those He loves:
  - Promises to lead them forth in “peace” (Is 55:12)
  - The proclamation of god’s plan of redemption contains the promise of peace to God’s people (Ps 29:11, 85:8, 119:165, etc.)
- God’s peace deals with ordered and controlled activity
  - A.k.a. self-control
  - It is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)
- This should be our response:
  - We will find that the kingdom of God is “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17)
  - We will say of the path to God’s wisdom “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Prov 3:17)

# Righteousness (or Justice)

- God always acts in accordance with what is right and is Himself the final standard of what is right
  - In both Hebrew OT and Greek NT, the words for righteousness and justice are the same word
  - “All His ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is He” (Deut 32:4)
  - “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen 18:25)
  - “The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart” (Ps 19:8)
  - “I the Lord speak the truth, I declare what is right” (Is 45:19)
- As a result of God’s righteousness, it is necessary that He treat people according to what they deserve. Thus, it is necessary that God punish sin, for it does not deserve reward; it is wrong and deserves punishment (pg 204)

# Righteousness & Justice – What it Means to Us

- Whatever conforms to God’s moral character is right
- We are in no place to question, but obey
  - “But who are you, a man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, ‘Why have you made me thus?’ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for beauty and another for menial use?” (Rom 9:20-21)
  - God answered Job with questions declaring His majesty and power (Job chapters 38-40)
- We ought to continually thank and praise God for who He is, “for all His ways are justice” (Deut 32:4)

# Jealousy

- God continually seeks to protect His own honor
  - Paul said “I feel a divide jealousy for you” 2 Cor 11:2 – jealousy = earnestly protective or watchful
  - “for I the Lord your God am a jealous God” (Ex 20:5)
  - “For you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God” (Ex 34:14)
- It is not wrong for Him to seek His own honor as He deserves it fully

# Jealously – What it Means to Us

- Jealously for our own honor as human beings is almost always wrong
  - We don't deserve it
  - God does (1 Cor 4:7, Rev 4:11)
- “My glory I will not give to another” (Is 48:11)
- God deserves all honor and glory from His creation, and that it is right for Him to seek this honor. He alone is infinitely worthy of being praised. To realize this fact and to delight in it is to find the secret of true worship. (pg 206)

# Wrath

- God intensely hates sin
  - “I have seen this people...; now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them” (Ex 32:9-10)
  - “Remember and do not forget how you (Israel) provoked the Lord your God to wrath in the wilderness...Even at Horeb you provoked the Lord to wrath and the Lord was so angry with you that He was ready to destroy you” (Deut 9:7-8)
  - “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him” (John 3:36)

# Wrath – What it Means to Us

- Note that wrath and patience are mentioned several times together
  - “The Lord is...slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will He keep His anger forever.” (Ps 103:8-9)
  - God delayed the execution of His wrath for the purpose of leading more people to repentance (Rom 2:4)
- This is an attribute we should praise God for
  - It is in fact a virtue to hate evil and sin (Heb 1:9, Zech 8:17, etc.)
  - Christians are protected from God’s wrath because of Jesus, “who delivers us from the wrath to come” (1 Thes 1:10)

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# Reading For Next Week

- Chapter 13
  - Communicable Attributes of God (2)
    - Homework – all questions