


The Attributes of God

The Biblical Counseling and Discipleship Conference, 2016
Exam Track — Theology 8



"The god of this century no more resembles the Sovereign of Holy Writ than does the dim flickering of a candle the glory of the midday sun. The god who is talked about in the average pulpit, spoken of in the ordinary Sunday school, mentioned in much of the religious literature of the day, and preached in most of the so-called Bible conferences, is a figment of human imagination, an invention of maudlin sentimentality. The heathen outside the pale of Christendom form gods of wood and stone, while millions of heathen inside Christendom manufacture a god out of their carnal minds." [Pink, *Gleanings in the Godhead*.]

The Question

Explain each of the following attributes of God describing the practical implications of each attribute for life and counseling:

- Wrath
- Mercy
- Holiness
- Omnipotence
- Omniscience
- Omnipresence

Why the study of God is important

- The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 9:10).
- Knowing the truth of God will produce rest (and trust) in Him.
- Studying the attributes of God will allow us to know more about God — and to know *Him*.

How do we study God's attributes?

- The attributes are in harmony with one another.
- We recognize that all God's attributes are infinite: they are complete (not maturing or changing), they have always existed completely and always will exist completely.

What are God's Attributes?

"An attribute of God is whatever God has in any way revealed as being true of Himself....An attribute, then, is a part of God. It is how God is, and as far as the reasoning mind can go, we may say that it is what God is, though... exactly what He is He cannot tell us. Of what God is conscious when He is conscious of self, only He knows. 'The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.' Only to an equal could God communicate the mystery of His Godhead; and to think of God as having an equal is to fall into an intellectual absurdity." [Tozer]

What are God's Attributes?

"A divine attribute is a property that is intrinsic in God by which God is distinguished or identified. By abstract thinking God may be conceived apart from His attributes; but He is known by His attributes, and apart from them He would not appear to be what He is." [Walvoord, *Chafer's Systematic Theology*, 1: 141.]

The Wrath of God

- Definition:
 - God's wrath is a sub-category of God's righteousness and justice (Rom. 1:17-18).
 - "God's wrath...[is] his active, retributive response to sin, a judicial penalty, imposed in accordance with his personal, righteous hostility to everything that is evil." [*Pierced for Our Transgressions*]
 - God's wrath "is God's resolute action in punishing sin." [J. I. Packer]

The Wrath of God

- Key Passages in the OT:
 - Genesis 3:24
 - Genesis 6:5-7
 - Deuteronomy 32:39-41
 - The Psalmists spoke of God's wrath (Ps. 2:5, 12; 73:1-28; 76:6-7; 129:12-4)

The Wrath of God

- The prophets warned of God's wrath (Is. 9:19; Jer. 7:20; Ezk. 7:19; Jonah 1:2; Amos 1:2; Nahum 1:2-3).
- The consistent theme of the OT is that God is opposed to, angry with, and does and will punish all (Jew or Gentile) those who rebel against His will and live in opposition to Him.

The Wrath of God

- Key Passages in the NT:
 - John 3:36
 - Matthew 3:7, 12; Heb. 3:11; 4:3
 - Paul writes frequently of God's wrath — Eph. 5:5-6 (also 2:3); Col. 3:5-6; 2 Thess. 1:7-10.
 - Paul writes of God's wrath often in Romans (1:18-19; 2:5, 8; 3:4-6, 19-20; 5:9; 9:22).
 - A large portion of Revelation is related to the wrath of God (chs. 6-20). Cf. 6:2; 11:16-19; 14:9-11; 16:1ff; 19:1-3; 20:10-15.

The Wrath of God

- Implications for Life and Counseling
 - Unbelievers *will* face God's wrath if they do not repent.
 - Because God is wrathful, no one ever needs to take vengeance for sins committed against him.

The Mercy of God

- Definition — Mercy is God's kindness to unbelievers by which He withholds the judgment that they deserve.
- God's mercy is distinguished from His compassion and grace:
 - God's compassion is what compels Him to have pity on those who are estranged from Him through sin.
 - In His mercy, God withholds that judgment which the sinner rightly deserves.
 - In His grace, God gives His salvation and imputes Christ's righteousness to the undeserving sinner.

The Mercy of God

- Key Passages:
 - Exodus 25:17ff
 - Exodus 33:19 (Rom. 9:15)
 - Deuteronomy 13:17-18
 - Psalm 103:17 (Lk. 1:50)
 - A common way for unbelievers to appeal to Christ was for His mercy (Mt. 9:27; 15:22; 17:15; 20:30-31; Lk. 16:24)
 - Romans 9:23-24
 - 1 Timothy 1:16

The Mercy of God

- Implications for Life and Counseling
 - Counselees who come for counseling with burdens of sin need to hear the message that God delights to extend mercy to them (2 Pt. 3:8-9).
 - God *loves* to patiently extend mercy towards struggling sinners
 - Because believers have received much mercy from God, they must extend mercy towards others (Mt. 5:7; 18:33)

The Holiness of God

- Definition — God is “set apart, distinct,” that is, He is free from and set apart from sin and “devoted to seeking His own honor.” [Grudem, 202.]

The Holiness of God

- Key Passages:
 - Is. 6:1-8
 - Lev. 11:44-45; 1 Pt. 1:15-16
 - Hab. 1:13
 - God’s holiness is *transcendent* — indicating He is above all creatures in holiness (Ex. 15:11; Is. 57:15); His holiness is *ethical* — demonstrating He is separate from anything sinful or evil (Lev. 11:44-45; Ps. 11:4-6); it is *theological* — pointing to His glory (Eph. 2:21; Zech. 14:20-21).

The Holiness of God

“We cannot grasp the true meaning of the divine holiness by thinking of someone or something very pure and then raising the concept to the highest degree we are capable of. God’s holiness is not simply the best we know infinitely bettered. It stands apart, unique, unapproachable, incomprehensible, and unattainable. The natural man is blind to it. He may fear God’s power and admire His wisdom, but His holiness he cannot even imagine.” [Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*, 104.]

The Holiness of God

- Implications for Life and Counseling
 - The counselee's primary motive is to learn to glorify God by growing in sanctification and holiness.
 - The counselor's counsel must be holy — he must examine not only his teaching, but also his life and motives (1 Tim. 4:16).

The Omnipotence of God

- Definition — God can do anything that he wills to do and anything that is in harmony with His perfections.
- God cannot do anything in contradiction to His will or perfections:
 - God cannot lie (Heb. 6:18)
 - God cannot be unfaithful to Himself or His Word (2 Tim. 2:13)
 - God cannot sin (Hab. 1:13; Js. 1:13)

The Omnipotence of God

- Key Passages
 - Psalm 139:13-19
 - Matthew 19:26
 - Ephesians 3:20
 - Exodus 14:21-31
 - Daniel 4:35
 - Acts 4:27-28 (Prov. 21:31; Is. 5:26-27)
 - Genesis 18:14

The Omnipotence of God

- Revelation 20:2
- John 6:37-44
 - v. 37 — *all* that are given to Christ *will* come
 - vv. 38, 40 — redemption is the very reason for Christ's advent
 - v. 39 — *None* will be lost in the process
 - v. 44 — The Father draws and the Son raises
- Ephesians 5:22-33; 6:10-18

The Omnipotence of God

- Implications for Life and Counseling
- Our power and strength is derived from the power of God (2 Cor. 12:9)
- There is nothing that has happened to any individual (counselor or counselee) that is beyond the scope of God's power (it didn't happen "accidentally").
- God always has every ability to do everything we need in every circumstance.

The Omniscience of God

- Definition — God "has complete knowledge of everything." [Lambert, 115.]
- "Whatever omniscience is, only omniscience can know in the absolute cognition of it. Nevertheless, some portions of this marvelous divine reality may be comprehended and what cannot be known may be received by faith in God's Word." [Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, I: 192.]

The Omniscience of God

- Key Passages
 - Psalm 139:1-6
 - Psalm 90:4
 - Matthew 11:21
 - Daniel 2:36-43
 - Matthew 11:21, 23
 - Job 37:16

The Omniscience of God

- Implications for Life and Counseling
 - Every person is always at the forefront of God's knowledge.
 - Because God is infinite in knowledge and all things on this earth are finite, God is never overwhelmed in His mental duties.
 - The counselor may have limitations in His abilities; God is never limited.

The Omnipresence of God

- Definition — God is everywhere present and everything is immediately in his presence. He is not *in* everything (that is pantheism), but He *is* everywhere.
- "God, in the totality of his essence, without diffusion or expansion, multiplication or division, penetrates and fills the universe in all its parts." [Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 279; quoted in Enns, 200.]

The Omnipresence of God

- Key Passages
 - Psalm 139:7-12
 - Acts 17:24-28
 - Matthew 28:20
 - Revelation 14:10

The Omnipresence of God

- Implications for Life and Counseling
 - This is an encouragement to the believer — He is never alone (Ps. 23:4).
 - This is a warning to the unbeliever — He cannot escape His presence.
 - It is also a warning to a believer.
 - God's presence is as real as the presence of any human being.

The Omnipresence of God

"Living becomes an awesome business when you realize that you spend every moment of your life in the sight and company of an omniscient, omnipotent Creator." [J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 76.]

Resources

