

Systematic Theology Pt. 11

Theology Proper (B)

“The Attributes of God”

I. Definition of attributes: What do we mean by the attributes of God?

- Charles Ryrie - *“A property intrinsic to its subject and by which the subject is distinguished or identified.”*
- Paul Enns - *“The attributes of God may be defined as those distinguishing characteristics of the divine nature which are inseparable from the idea of God and which constitute the basis and ground for his various manifestations to his creatures.”*

II. Classifying God’s Attributes

- They are somewhat arbitrary!
- I want to use a common classification. The incommunicable attributes of God and the communicable attributes of God.

1. The Incommunicable Attributes of God

- That is, those attributes that God does not share or “communicate” to others.
- Also know as “non-moral attributes”.

A. Omnipresence

These first three attributes are compound words using the Latin prefix omni, meaning “all.” So it means “present everywhere at once.”

- Scripture - Ps. 139:7-11
- Jer. 23:23-24, *“Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.*
- 1 Kings 8:27, Isa. 66:1, Acts 7:48, 17:24.
- Omnipresence does not mean that God’s being is diffused throughout the universe as if part of Him is here and part of Him there. His whole being is every place.
- It’s not “pantheism” because God is Spirit.
- Some ramifications - Immanuel Matt. 1:23

B. Omniscience

God is infinite in knowledge. He knows himself and all other things perfectly from all eternity.

• Charles Ryrie - *“Omniscience means that God knows everything, things actual and possible, effortlessly and equally well.”*

• A.W. Tozer - *“God knows instantly and effortlessly all matter and all matters, all mind and every mind, all spirit and all spirits, all being and every being, all creaturehood and all creatures, every plurality and all pluralities, all law and every law, all relations, all causes, all thoughts, all mysteries, all enigmas, all feeling, all desires, every unuttered secret, all thrones and dominions, all personalities, all things visible and invisible in heaven and in earth, motion, space, time, life, death, good, evil, heaven, and hell. Because God knows all things perfectly, He knows no thing better than any other thing, but all things equally well. He never discovers anything, He is never surprised, never amazed. He never wonders about anything nor (except when drawing men out for their own good) does He seek information or ask questions.”*

1. God knows all things that exist in actuality (Ps. 139:1-6; 147:4; Matt. 6:8; 10:28-30). The psalmist recognized the omniscience of God in that God knew his actions, his thoughts, his words before he even spoke them, and his entire life (Ps. 139:1-4).

2. God knows all the variables concerning things that have not occurred. Jesus knew what Tyre and Sidon would have done had the gospel been preached to them. (Matt. 11:21).

3. God knows all future events. Because God is eternal and knows all things in one eternal act, events that are future to man are an “eternal now” to God. He knew the nations that would dominate Israel (Dan. 2:36-43; 7:4-8), and He knows the events that will yet transpire upon the earth (Matt. 24-25; Rev. 6-19).

4. God’s knowledge is intuitive. It is immediate, not coming through the senses; it is simultaneous, not acquired through observation or reason; it is actual, complete, and according to reality.

Also, Acts 15:18, “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”

Applications.

A. Omniscience and security. Nothing can ever come to light in the believer’s life that would surprise God and cause Him to cast him out. “No talebearer can inform on us, no enemy can make an accusation stick; no forgotten skeleton can come tumbling out of some hidden closet to abash us and expose our past; no unsuspected weakness in our characters can come to light to turn God away from us, since He knew us utterly before we knew Him and called us to Himself in the full knowledge of everything that was against us”.

B. Omniscience and sensitivity. Every warning God gives comes from an omniscient Being, so we should be extremely sensitive to them. He does not warn us on the basis of only guessing what might happen. He knows.

C. Omniscience and solace. When faced with those inexplicable circumstances in life we invariably take refuge and find solace in the omniscience of God. Not only does He know what actually happened, but He knows what might have happened. He always knows what ultimate good and glory will come from events which we cannot understand.

D. Omniscience and sobriety. Sobriety ought to characterize all when they realize that they must stand before an all-knowing God (Heb. 4:13).

C. Omnipotence

The term *omnipotence* signifies that God is all powerful. However, it does not suggest that because God is all powerful He can and does do anything or everything at random. A proper definition states: ‘God is all powerful and able to do whatever he wills. Since his will is limited by his nature, God can do everything that is in harmony with his perfections. In other words, the question, “Can God create a stone so large that He could not lift it?” is not legitimate question, God can do all things that are in harmony with His nature and Person.

The name Almighty means “the mighty one” and is probably derived from the verb meaning “to be strong” (cf. Gen. 17:1; 28:3; Isa. 13:6; Ezek. 1:24; Joel 1:15). Because God is Almighty, all things are possible (Matt. 19:26). He created the heavens (Jer. 32:17) He can do all things; nothing is too hard for Him. He does as He pleases (Ps. 115:3) and decrees all things in accordance with His will (Eph. 1:11).

God cannot do things that are not in harmony with His nature. he cannot go back on His word (2 Tim. 2:13); He cannot lie (Heb. 6:18); He has no relationship to sin (Hab. 1:13; James 1:13). Since God is able to do as He pleases, the doctrine of God’s omnipotence becomes a source of great comfort for the believer (cf. Gen. 18:14; 1 Pet. 1:5).

Seen in Christ resurrection:

Our Salvation

Our Security

Our Bodily Resurrection

