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Lecture Series: The Doctrine of God

Lecture 5: “The Attributes of God”

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

The attributes of God refer to the character of God. We must understand that each attribute is simply a way of describing one aspect of God’s total character or being. “The attributes of God describe equally the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They describe the nature of the Triune God and therefore each person of the Trinity” (Ryrie, *Basic Theology*).

Several different methods of classifying God’s attributes have been used. The most commonly used classification is that between the *incommunicable* and *communicable* attributes (see Berkhof). The *incommunicable* attributes of God are those attributes that God does not share or “communicate” to others. The *communicable* attributes of God are those God shares or “communicates” with us. Examples of the incommunicable attributes would be God’s eternity, unchangeableness, or omnipresence. Examples of the communicable attributes would be love, knowledge, mercy or justice.

In this study we will look very briefly at ten attributes of God. (See Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology* and Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, for further discussion of the attributes of God).

1. God is OMNIPOTENT.

He is all-powerful. He can do anything he wills, consistent with his nature. Another way of expressing it is HE CAN DO IT! (Jeremiah 30:2; Matthew 19:26).

Application: How does this affect me?

I can pray for the impossible

When I get weary, I can call upon him for strength

2. God is OMNIPRESENT

He is present everywhere. Another way of saying this is: HE IS HERE! (Psalm 139:7-9)

Application: How does this affect me?

God is the ever present One, and he is always available to help me (Deuteronomy 4:7; Psalm 46:1; 145:18; Matthew 28:20). I am never alone.

It is a warning that the sinner cannot escape from God (Psalm 139:7-10; Hebrews 4:13)

3. God is OMNISCIENT

God is infinite in knowledge. He knows everything that could, will or might happen, past, present or future. Another way of saying it is HE KNOWS IT! (Psalm 139:1-6).

Application: How does this affect me?

Satan cannot tell God anything about me God does not already know.

I don’t have to worry about my weaknesses

4. God is IMMUTABLE

Another way of saying this is: HE NEVER CHANGES! (Psalm 102:25-27). He has never changed and He never will change. “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever.” (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17). His power cannot diminish. His glory cannot fade. He is unchanging in his purposes (Psalm 33:1) and unchanging in his promises (Numbers 23:19).

Application: How does this affect me?

I can have confidence in prayer, because God never becomes less merciful, just or good. He always will be exactly what He was in Bible times.

Since good gifts have always come from God (James 1:17), I can be confident that only good gifts will come from him in the future, because his character never changes in the slightest degree.

5. God is INFINITE AND ETERNAL

This means that God is limitless. He is not limited by space or time. He is not subject to any of the limitations of humanity, or of creation in general. He has always existed and always will exist (Psalm 102:26-27; Psalm 90:2; Job 36:26).

Application: How does this apply to me?

This causes me to turn from my limitations to my God who has no limitations (Isaiah 26:4). As Christians we can live beyond our limitations.

God is greater than any problem or limitation I have (Isaiah 40:28; Psalm 33:11; Psalm 145:13). “In the eternal reign of God His people’s security is assured. This has made the saints of all ages invincible. They have faced scorn and oppression of the rulers of this world and seen them to be petty and ephemeral. They have faced the lions, the stake, and the labor camp, and known that the last word had not yet been spoken” R. T. France.

6. God is HOLY

God is separate from all moral evil and sin (Psalm 145:7; Leviticus 11:44; Isaiah 40:25; I John 1:5)

Application: How does this affect me?

It means God hates sin—even in Christians

It means that I must reflect the holy character of the One who has made me his own (I Peter 1:15-16)

It means I must approach him with reverence (Isaiah 6; Psalm 99:3,5,9)

7. God is RIGHTEOUS

The righteousness and justice of God is the aspect of God's holiness that is seen in his treatment of his creatures. He is totally fair and impartial (Genesis 18:24-26). The righteousness of God is revealed in his punishment of the wicked (Revelation 16:5-7); vindicating his people from evil doers (Psalm 129:1ff); forgiving those who confess their sins (I John 1:9); keeping His promises to His children (Nehemiah 9:7).

Application: How does this apply to me?

I must identify with justice, since this is what characterizes God.

I must be fair and true to my word

8. God is GOOD

His goodness is manifested in his mercy (Psalm 57:10). Mercy is his goodness toward those in misery or distress.

His goodness is manifested in his grace. Grace is God bestowing benefits on the undeserving (Ephesians 2:8-9).

His goodness is manifested in his benevolence. He deals tenderly and kindly with all his creatures (Psalm 145:9, 15).

Application: How does this apply to me?

It gives me a pattern for my life: mercy, grace and kindness should characterize my life.

9. God is LOVE

Hosea is the most dramatic Old Testament story about the love of God, especially God's love for his people. Hosea lavished his love on a worthless woman, and felt the bitterness of her desertion and adultery; yet his love still pursued her and took her back after it all. It is a great picture of the free and undeserved love of God.

Application: How does it apply to me?

I Corinthians 13: God wants me to reflect his love to others.

10. God is FAITHFUL

Psalm 119:90; Deuteronomy 7:9; II Timothy 2:13. God never forgets, he never falters, He never fails (Lamentations 3:22-23). Question: Are you expecting God to do for me all that he has promised? (Heb. 10:23)

Application: How does this apply to me?

Knowing he is faithful preserves me from worry (Job 15;19)

Knowing he is faithful causes me to have greater confidence in him

Conclusion

Those who know God will be greatly used by God. *“The people who know their God will be strong and do exploits”* (Daniel 11:32).

Jesus Christ possesses the five attributes that are uniquely and distinctly divine:

He is eternal (Micah 5:2; John 8:58)

He is omnipresent. He was in heaven while on earth (John 3:13) and he is on earth while he is in heaven (Matthew 18:20; 28:20)

He is omniscient. He knows all things (John 16:30; 21:17). He knew what was in man (John 2:24); and he knew the history of the Samaritan woman (John 4:29). Certain statements seem to indicate he was less than omniscient (Mark 13:32; 6:6) but we must recognize that in the days of his humiliation, Jesus surrendered the independent exercise of his divine attributes (Philippians 2)

He is omnipotent (Isaiah 9:6; Hebrews 2:3; Mark 4:35-41)

He is immutable (Hebrews 1:12; 13:8)

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