

Foundation: Attributes of God (Part One)

INTRO: *Our aim in studying the Godhead must be to know God Himself better. Our concern must be to enlarge our acquaintance, not simply with the doctrine of God's attributes, but with the living God who attributes they are. As He is the subject of our study, and our helper in it, so He must Himself be the end of it. We must seek, in studying God, to be led to God. It was for this purpose that revelation was given, and it is to this use that we must put it. J.I. Packer*

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 (AH Strong; Systematic Theology). God's attributes are to be distinguished from His works. God's attributes do not add anything to God; they reveal His nature. In the study of God's attributes it is important not to exalt one attribute over another. It is all the attributes of God taken together that provide an understanding of the nature and Person of God.

Fourth question in the Westminster Shorter Catechism: What is God?

The answer: "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth."

This week: Attributes belonging to God exclusively. There is nothing resembling them in a created being or spirit.

Sovereign – Sovereign means chief, highest of supreme. He is the ruler of the universe. He has supremacy in all things.

Psalm 103.19: *The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all.*

Psalm 115.3: *But our God is in the heavens; he does whatever He pleases.*

Ephesians 1.4-5: *just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will.*

Acts 2.23: *this Man (Jesus), delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.*

READ Acts 9.15-24

Eternal – God is infinite in relation to time; He is without beginning or end; He is the cause of time; He is free from all succession of time. He has no past, no present, no future, all things are equally and always present to Him. He is above all temporal limitations. This is not to suggest that time unreal and non-existent with God. While God sees everything as an eternal now, He nonetheless, in relation to man and creation, sees a succession of events in time. He stood before creation and held eternity in His hand!

Psalm 90.2: *Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.*

Psalm 102.12: *But You, O LORD, abide forever, and Your name to all generations.*
-God's eternity extends backward to infinity and forward to infinity.

1 Timothy 1.17: *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever.*
Amen.

Revelation 22.13: *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."*

Application: He lasts forever. He creates us with a soul that does, but physically we do not. Our soul either will live on forever in Hell or in Heaven (the Kingdom of God).

In the next three attributes the prefix omni comes from the Latin word omnis, meaning “all.”

Omniscience – God has all knowledge. He knows all things (perfectly): actual or possible; past, present, future; hidden, revealed; from all eternity; immediately; simultaneously; exhaustively...He knows it all without having need for it to be revealed to Him. He has infinite knowledge. He also has perfect wisdom, meaning His perfection whereby He applies His knowledge in the attainment of His ends in a way that glorifies Himself.

Psalm 139.1-6: *O LORD, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize (winnow) my path and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O LORD, You know it all. You have enclosed me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me ; it is too high, I cannot attain to it.*

Matthew 24.25: *Behold, I have told you in advance. (He knows the future.)*

Hebrews 4.15: *For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.*

Application: For believers- God knows your heart and knows you better than you know yourself, He knows what the real situation is. No secrets. For unbeliever – God knows your heart and mind, you can't hide a thing from Him. No secrets.

Omnipresence – God is everywhere present simultaneously in His universe. He is infinite in relation to His creation and creatures.

Psalm 139.7-12: *Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Your hand will lay hold of me. If I say, “Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, and the light around me will be night,” even the darkness is not dark to You, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You.*

Application: For believer – no place where God is not there with you (that is why the Hebrew writer says, *let us draw near – Hebrews 4.16*). There is no “God forsaken place.” For the unbeliever – no place where God won't find you, you can't run away from Him...you can run, but you can't hide.

Omnipotence – God is all powerful. He is able to do whatever He wills to do. This will is always in harmony with His perfections (for God cannot look on sin or iniquity, God cannot deny Himself, God cannot lie, God cannot sin).

Genesis 17.1: *The LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty.”*

Genesis 28.3: *May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of people.*

-The name *Almighty* means *the mighty one* and is probably derived from the verb meaning *to be strong*. Because God is Almighty, all things are possible.

Psalm 147.5: *Great is our Lord and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite.*

Application: For believers – God's power is always available. Nothing that He wants to have happen will or can be stopped.

Acts 1.8: But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witness both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. For unbelievers – God’s plans and purpose cannot be stopped.

Immutability is that perfection of God by which He is devoid of all change, not only in His Being, but also in His perfections, and in His purposes and promises. He cannot diminish nor grow (He has no need to), nor can He decay. He is unchangeable in essence, attributes, consciousness and will (unalterable).

Malachi 3.6: For I, the LORD, do not change;

James 1.17: Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

Hebrews 13.8: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Application: For believers – God won’t change His will; especially important for salvation (John 3.16 stays the same).
For non-believers – God won’t change His will; especially important for their lack of salvation.

Holiness – The basic meaning of holiness is *set apart* or *separation*. God is absolute perfection in all His attributes, absolutely separate from moral evil and sin. He is purity of being and purity of willing. Many see holiness as the foremost attribute of all because holiness pervades all the other attributes of God and is consistent with all He is and does.

Exodus 15.11: Who is like You among the gods, O Lord? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders?

This has a transcendent emphasis, indicating “He is absolutely distinct from all His creatures and is exalted above them in infinite majesty.” (Berkhof, Systematic Theology).

So a few questions:

Because God is sovereign, what thoughts, attitudes, and actions does He desire for me today?

What do I need to trust Him with and not be anxious or worry about?

What do we need to turn over to Him and not try to control?