

The Attributes of God

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Introduction:

We are about to embark on one of the most important journeys of our lives—a quest to understand and know God.^[1] There is no greater pursuit. As God Himself says in [Jeremiah 9:23-24](#): *Thus says the LORD, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me.”* It is generally agreed that the best way to learn about God is to study His attributes. Before studying individual attributes of God, however, we must first understand what an attribute is. In this lecture, we will define what an attribute is, attempt to classify God’s attributes, and determine which, if any, of God’s attributes is the most basic one.

What is an Attribute?

Simply-put, an attribute is a word which describes what someone or something is like. We use the word “attribute” (n.) when describing what God is like because attributes are words which we “attribute” (v.) to God. To attribute is to ascribe or assign something to someone. We ascribe or assign various words to God which describe what He is like.^[2]

God’s attributes are not like the individual pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, which, when put together, make God what He is. Rather, each attribute completely describes what God is like. In other words, God is not part holy, part love, etc.; rather, He is completely holy and completely loving, etc.

God’s attributes are intrinsic to His being. In other words, they are that which make God what He is; He would cease to be God without them. God is what His attributes are.

“When we speak of the attributes of God, we are referring to those qualities of God which constitute what He is” (Erickson, p. 265).

“Attributes are qualities that are inherent to a subject” (Ryrie, p. 35).

“The attributes of God are those distinguishing characteristics of the divine nature which are inseparable from the idea of God” (A. H. Strong, quoted in McCune, p. 87).

Attributes are not that which God has, but that which God is.

Classification of God’s Attributes

In order to help us better understand God’s attributes, it may be helpful to classify or categorize them. God’s attributes can be divided into two distinct categories:

Attributes of greatness

Attributes of greatness are those attributes which God possesses exclusively. They are descriptive of God and God alone. Theologians sometimes refer to these as “incommunicable” because they cannot be communicated to (i.e., shared with) mankind. Examples include God’s sovereignty, omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence.

Attributes of goodness

Attributes of goodness are those attributes which God possesses to a perfect degree and which may be found to a limited degree in mankind. Theologians sometimes refer to these as “communicable” because they can be communicated to (i.e., shared with) mankind, though not to the same degree in which they are found in God. Examples include God’s wisdom, holiness, love, mercy, grace, and justice.

The Supreme Attribute

Theologians have debated for centuries as to whether or not God has a supreme attribute, i.e., one which is more basic to His character than all the rest. Though God possesses all of His attributes to a perfect degree, there does seem to be one attribute which best characterizes the person we call God and which governs or regulates the other attributes. It is the attribute of holiness. See [Isaiah 57:15a](#). Holiness “may be said to be a transcendental attribute, that, as it were, runs through the rest, and casts lustre upon them. It is an attribute of attributes” (John Howe, quoted in Pink, p. 42). As we will learn more fully in a later lesson, the basic idea behind the word “holiness” is that of separation. God is separate from everything else in both a metaphysical (what He is) and moral (what He does) sense (thus, holiness is in actuality both an attribute of greatness and goodness). There is a vast chasm between God and man. This gap is commonly referred to as the Creator/creature distinction (cf. [Psalm 50:21](#)). As mentioned above, God’s attributes of greatness are absolute—there is no human corollary to them. Furthermore, though God’s attributes of goodness are reflected in man, the reflection is so dim that it almost defies comparison. Thus, fundamental to a basic understanding of God and His attributes is a proper understanding of the attribute of holiness.

Summation

What is an attribute? An attribute is a word which describes what someone or something is like. God’s attributes can be classified into two categories: His attributes of greatness (not found in man) and His attributes of goodness (found in man, though to a very limited degree). The attribute of holiness is God’s most basic attribute.

[1] Because God is “incomprehensible,” we will never (not even in glory) fully understand and know Him. This is because God is “infinite,” while we are “finite.”

[2] A caveat is in order at this point. I am using the verb “attribute” in a certain, restricted sense. Technically, we don’t “attribute” anything to God. As Ryrie (p. 35) states: “God’s perfections are known to us through revelation. Man does not attribute them to God; God reveals them to man.”

The Attributes of God: Lesson 2: God is Sovereign

Sovereignty Defined

The word “sovereign” has as its root the verb “reign,” meaning to rule. The prefix *sove* is derived from *super*, meaning over or above. To say that God is sovereign is to say that He rules over all. He is the “God of gods” ([Deut 10:17](#)), the “King of kings” ([1 Tim 6:15](#), [Rev 17:14](#), [19:16](#)), and the “Lord of lords” ([Deut 10:17](#), [1 Tim 6:15](#), [Rev 17:14](#), [19:16](#)). As David exclaims in [1 Chronicles 29:11b-12a](#): “Yours is the dominion, O LORD, and You exalt Yourself as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all” (see also [Ps 22:28](#) and [103:19](#)).

To put it in even simpler terms, God is the “boss” of everything. By virtue of the fact that He has created all things, He has the right to rule over them (see [Rom 9:14-21](#)). God does as He pleases with His creation (see [Job 23:13](#), [42:2](#), [Psalm 2](#), [115:3](#), [135:5-6](#), [Isa 46:9-11](#), and [Dan 4:35](#)).

Some Things Over Which God is Sovereign

The weather (see [Job 36:32](#), [Jer 10:13](#), [Jonah 1:4](#), [4:8](#), and [Mark 4:41](#))

The animal kingdom (see [Isa 46:11a](#), [Jonah 1:17](#), [2:10](#), [4:7](#), and [Matt 10:29](#))

The plant kingdom (see [Jonah 4:6](#))

Human rulers (see [Prov 21:1](#), [Dan 2:21](#), [4:25](#), [Rom 13:1](#), and [Rev 17:17](#)). This is a case of the-greater-to-the-lesser, i.e., if God is sovereign over the greatest of human beings, He is sovereign over all human beings. All human sovereigns are given their authority

by the Sovereign and are merely instruments in His hand to accomplish His purposes (see [Isa 44:28-45:1](#) and [Rom 9:17](#)).

Some Implications of God's Sovereignty

Because God is sovereign, He has the right to tell us what to do.

Because God is sovereign, He has the right to tell us what we should do, when we should do it, where we should do it, how we should do it, with and to whom we should do it, and why we should do it. The only proper response to God's demands is unconditional obedience. This starts with surrendering oneself to God at salvation (lordship) and continues throughout one's Christian life by obeying the commands of Scripture.

Because God is sovereign, we can rest secure. God controls all things.

Nothing happens without His permission. There is no "maverick molecule" in the universe (McCune). This fact should give us great comfort. We don't have to worry about anything. It's all in His hands. Our only "concern" is to do what He tells us to do, leaving the results with Him.

Because God is sovereign, we should worship Him. Notice how God's sovereignty is the basis for David's worship in [1 Chronicles 29:10-13](#).

See also [Revelation 19:6](#), upon which are based the words to the AHallelujah@ chorus. "The doctrine of God's sovereignty has very often appeared, an exceeding pleasant, bright and sweet doctrine to me: and absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God" (Jonathan Edwards, quoted in Storms, p. 29).

"There is no attribute more comforting to His children than that of God's Sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe trials, they believe that Sovereignty has ordained their afflictions, that Sovereignty overrules them, and that Sovereignty will

sanctify them all. There is nothing for which the children ought more earnestly to contend than the doctrine of their Master over all creation—the Kingship of God over all the works of His own hands—the Throne of God and His right to sit upon that Throne. On the other hand, there is no doctrine more hated by worldlings, no truth of which they have made such a football, as the great, stupendous, but yet most certain doctrine of the Sovereignty of the infinite Jehovah. Men will allow God to be everywhere except on His throne. They will allow Him to be in His workshop to fashion worlds and make stars. They will allow Him to be in His almonry [money house] to dispense His alms and bestow His bounties. They will allow Him to sustain the earth and bear up the pillars thereof, or light the lamps of heaven, or rule the waves of the ever-moving ocean; but when God ascends His throne, His creatures then gnash their teeth. And we proclaim an enthroned God, and His right to do as He wills with His own, to dispose of His creatures as He thinks well, without consulting them in the matter . . . then it is that men turn a deaf ear to us, for God on His throne is not the God they love. But it is God upon the throne that we love to preach. It is God upon His throne whom we trust” (Charles Haddon Spurgeon, quoted in Pink, [pp. 32-33](#)).

Some Objections to God’s Sovereignty Answered

In spite of the fact that the Bible clearly teaches God’s sovereignty, some have attempted to deny it or at least “water it down,” finding it difficult to reconcile divine sovereignty with human freedom (How can a man be genuinely free if God is in complete control of him?) and the presence of evil (If God is both in control of everything and holy, why does evil exist?). In response to the former, Ryrie states:

“Sovereignty/freedom forms an antinomy (‘a contradiction between two apparently equally valid principles or between inferences correctly drawn from such principles’). Antinomies in the Bible, however, consist only of apparent contradictions, not ultimate ones. One can accept the truths of an antinomy and live with them, accepting by faith what cannot be reconciled; or one can try to harmonize the apparent contradictions in an antinomy which inevitably leads to overemphasizing one truth to the neglect or even denial of the other” (Ryrie, [pp. 43-44](#)) In spite of the fact that the Bible clearly teaches God’s sovereignty, some have attempted to deny it or at least “water it down,” finding it difficult to reconcile divine sovereignty with human freedom (How can a man be genuinely free if God is in complete control of him?) and the presence of evil (If God is both in control of everything and holy, why does evil exist?). In response to the former, Ryrie states: “Sovereignty/freedom forms an antinomy (‘a contradiction between two apparently equally valid principles or between inferences correctly drawn from such principles’). Antinomies in the Bible, however, consist only of apparent contradictions, not ultimate ones.

Storms; (pp. 177-178) makes the same point with a rhetorical question: “How is one to reconcile these apparently conflicting assertions? Should one accept both as equally inspired declarations and simply acquiesce to the resultant mystery, trusting in the sufficiency of an infinitely powerful and wise God to so constitute and orchestrate the created order such that both are true?” This is a “suprarational” matter, i.e., one which is above and beyond the human intellect’s ability to grasp (suprarational ? irrational, however). Scripture affirms both truths (compare Jonah 1:15 with Jonah 2:3; Luke 22:22a with Luke 22:22b; Acts 2:23a with Acts 2:23b; Acts 4:27 with Acts 4:28; and Phil 2:12 with Phil 2:13). In response to the problem of evil, Tozer writes: “In His sovereign wisdom God has permitted evil to exist in carefully restricted

areas of His creation, a kind of fugitive outlaw whose activities are temporary and limited in scope. In doing this God has acted according to His infinite wisdom and goodness. More than that no one knows at present; and more than that no one needs to know” (Tozer, p. 110).

Lesson 3: God is Omnipotent

Omnipotence Defined

The word “omnipotence” is a compound, consisting of the prefix “omni,” meaning all, and the root “potent,” meaning powerful. Put the two together and you have the literal meaning of the term: God is omnipotent, that is, He is all-powerful. He is “God Almighty” ([Gen 17:1](#), [Rev 19:6](#)).^[1] God has all power ([Ps 62:11](#)).^[2] His power is infinite, that is, without limit. He can do anything.

“I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.” – [Job 42:2](#)

“Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for you.” – [Jeremiah 32:17](#) (see also [Gen 18:14](#) and [Jer 32:27](#))

“For nothing will be impossible with God” – [Luke 1:37](#) (see also [Matt 19:26](#))

Technically-speaking, God cannot do anything. Because He is God, He cannot do anything that is inconsistent with His nature or character. For example, God cannot lie ([Titus 1:2](#), [Heb 6:18](#)). Furthermore, God only does that which is consistent with His will. For reasons known only to Himself, God has chosen not to do certain things. For example, God could have given personality to a stone ([Matt 3:9](#)). Jesus Christ, being God, could have summoned angels to rescue Him from the cross ([Matt 26:53](#)). “God can do all that He wills, but He will not do all that He can” (McCune, p. 93). Thus, when we say that God is omnipotent, we mean that God can do anything consistent with His nature and will.

God's Omnipotence Displayed

In Creation. See [Romans 1:20](#). Imagine being able to instantly produce something out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) simply by uttering a command. This is what God did.

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast. – [Psalm 33:6, 9](#) (see also [Genesis 1](#) and [2](#) in your bible.)

Note: As mentioned previously, God's power is never diminished. When He finished creating, He did not rest because He was weary. God does not get tired ([Isa 40:28](#)). He rested on the seventh day to set a pattern for us ([Ex 20:8-11](#)).

In preservation. God is powerful enough not only to create the universe, but also to sustain or preserve it.

In Him all things hold together. – [Colossians 1:17](#)

And He [the Son] is the radiance of His [the Father's] glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. – [Hebrews 1:3](#)

God's power to preserve the universe includes the power to sustain our very lives. Notice the words of Job:

If He should determine to do so, If He should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath, All flesh would perish together, And man would return to dust. – [Job 34:14-15](#)

In salvation. Perhaps the greatest display of God's power occurs when He supernaturally changes the very nature of the human heart at the

moment of salvation, transforming a rebellious, hell-bound sinner into a righteous, heaven-bound saint.

And Jesus said to His disciples, “Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, “Then who can be saved?” And looking at them Jesus said to them, “With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” – [Matthew 19:23-26](#)

In sanctification. God is powerful enough not only to save a soul, but also to keep a soul saved. Believers are eternally secure. Believers persevere in the faith.

And I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father=s hand.@ – [John 10:28-29](#)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance, which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. – [1 Peter 1:3-5](#) (see also [Rom 8:30](#) and [Phil 1:6](#))

In resurrection. Just as God’s power is able to raise the spiritual dead (see [Eph 2:5](#)), so His power is able to raise the physical dead.

Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power. – [1 Corinthians 6:14](#) (see also [2 Cor 13:4](#) and [Eph 1:19-20](#))

Some Implications of God's Omnipotence

Because God is omnipotent, we are totally dependent on Him. Were it not for God, we could not exist physically (see [Job 34:14-15](#), [Isa 42:5](#), [Matt 6:11](#), and [Acts 17:25](#)) or spiritually (see [Eph 2:8^{\[3\]}](#)). He deserves all the credit for our physical and spiritual well-being.

Because God is omnipotent, we should revere Him. God is awesome in power. The only proper response to His awesomeness is awe or reverence. This was the response of the Psalmist when describing God's power in Creation: *Let all the earth fear the LORD; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast* ([Ps 33:8-9](#)). God's power displayed in creation is all the more impressive when one considers such passages as [Job 26:14](#) and [Habakkuk 3:4](#). "To openly defy Him who is clothed with omnipotence, who can rend us in pieces or cast us into Hell any moment He pleases, is the very height of insanity" (Pink, p. 51).

Because God is omnipotent, we need not fret over any threat. The saying, "I would if I could, but I can't, so I won't" doesn't apply to God. God has the ability to deliver us from any physical (see [Ps 27:1-3](#) and [46:1-3](#)) or spiritual (see [1 Cor 10:13](#) and [1 John 4:4](#)) threat. "If God were stunted in might and had a limit to His strength we might well despair. But seeing that He is clothed with omnipotence, no prayer is too hard for Him to answer, no need too great for Him to supply, no passion too strong for Him to subdue; no temptation too powerful for Him to deliver from, no misery too deep for Him to relieve" (Pink, p. 51).

^[1]Almighty@ is used 56 times in Scripture, and all 56 refer to God (Tozer, p. 65; Ryrie, p. 40).

[2]“Not a creature in the entire universe has an atom of power save what God delegates” (Pink, p. 47). Though God *gives* power, He does not *give away* power (Tozer, p. 66). God’s power is incapable of being diminished. “All His acts are done without effort. He expends no energy that must be replenished” (Tozer, p. 67).

[3]Not surprisingly, the Greek verb translated “saved” in this verse is in the perfect tense. In Greek, the perfect tense describes a past action with continuing results. Because of God’s grace, we have been saved from the penalty of sin (justification), are being saved from the power of sin (sanctification), and will one day be saved from the very presence of sin (glorification).

Attributes of God: Lesson 4: God is Omniscient

Omniscience Defined

The word “omniscience” is a compound, consisting of the prefix “omni,” meaning all, and the root “science,” meaning knowledge. Put the two together and you have the literal meaning of the term: God is omniscient, that is, He is all-knowing. He “knows all things” (1 John 3:20; cf. John 21:17); “His understanding is infinite” (Ps 147:5; cf. Ps 139:6, Isa 55:8-9, and Rom 11:33); He is “perfect in knowledge” (Job 37:16). God has all knowledge; thus, He is the source of all the knowledge possessed by mankind.

God does not learn (Isa 40:13-14). He has always known all things—past, present, and future^[1] (Isa 42:9, 46:10a)—instantaneously. God knows all things in “one indivisible, simultaneous act of intuition” (McCune, p. 95).^[2] Thus, God has neither memory nor prescience (**the fact of knowing something before it takes place; foreknowledge**) (McCune, p. 99). God’s knowledge even includes possibilities. In other words, not only does God know what will happen, but also what could happen. Here are two examples:

Then David said, “O LORD God of Israel, Your servant has heard for certain that Saul is seeking to come to Keilah to destroy the city on my account. Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down just as Your servant has heard? O LORD God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant.” And the LORD said, “He will come down.” Then David said, “Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?” And the LORD said, “They will surrender you.” Then David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go. When it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the pursuit. – 1 Samuel 23:10-13

Then He [Jesus] began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. “Woe to you, Chorazin! (kor-AY-sihn) Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day.” – [Matthew 11:20-21, 23](#)

Some Things Which God Knows

The number and names of the stars. *He counts the number of the stars; He gives names to all of them ([Ps 147:4](#); cf. [Isa 40:26](#)).*

The number of hairs on your head. *But the very hairs of your head are all numbered ([Matt 10:30](#)).*

Man’s thoughts, words, actions, and motives. [Ps 139:1-4](#)

¹ O LORD, you have searched me and known me!

² You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.

³ You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.

. See also [Deuteronomy 31:21](#), [1 Kings 8:39](#), [1 Chronicles 28:9](#), [Job 31:4](#), [Proverbs 15:11](#), [Ezekiel 11:5](#), [Luke 16:15](#), and [Acts 1:24](#). God knows everything we think, say, and do, and why we think what we think, say what we say, and do what we do.

Some Implications of God’s Omniscience

The doctrine of divine omniscience is immeasurably relevant to the day-to-day experience of the believer. If ever there existed an

opportunity to shatter the silly notion that theology is barren and devoid of practical benefits, this is it@ (Storms, p. 82).

Because God is omniscient, we are accountable to Him. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account (Heb 4:13 in the NIV; see also Ps 33:13-15, Prov 5:21, 15:3, and Jer 32:19). Accountability for the Christian will ultimately take place at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:10).

Because God is omniscient, we should be motivated to forsake sin and pursue righteousness (1 Tim 6:11, 2 Tim 2:22). *I keep Your precepts and Your testimonies, For all my ways are before You (Ps 119:168).* There is both a negative and a positive aspect to God's omniscience. Negatively, God sees all the wickedness that we do (consider, for example, Cain's murder of Abel in Gen 4 and Achan's theft in Josh 7 and judges us accordingly (1 Sam 2:3, Ps 44:20-21, 90:8, 94:4-9, Isa 29:15, Jer 16:17, 17:9-10, Hos 7:2, Rev 2:23). This is a sobering thought. As Tozer states: "That God knows each person through and through can be a cause of shaking fear to the man that has something to hide—some unforsaken sin, some secret crime committed against man or God" (Tozer, p. 57). Stephen Charnock (quoted in Storms, p. 83) adds: "Temptations have no encouragement to come near him that is constantly armed with the thoughts that his sin is booked in God's omniscience." Positively, however, God also sees all the good that we do (Isa 40:27) and rewards us accordingly (Heb 6:10).

Because God is omniscient, we should invite His scrutiny. As we saw earlier, David begins Psalms 139 by declaring God's omniscience. Notice how he ends the very same Psalm: *Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way*

([Ps 139:23-24](#); cf. [Ps 26:2](#)). David realized that he could not possibly hide anything from God. Consequently, he invited God to “search him out” and reveal his shortcomings.

God’s omniscience is not only a cause for concern, but also for comfort. As the songwriter has written: “His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me” (see [Matt 10:29-31](#)). See also [2 Chronicles 16:9a](#). “To us who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope that is set before us in the gospel, how unutterably sweet is the knowledge that our Heavenly Father knows us completely. 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” (Tozer, p. 57).

^[1]God foreknows the future because He foreordained it (see, for example, [Acts 2:23](#)).

^[2]“[God] knows all that can be known. And this He knows instantly and with a fullness of perfection that includes every possible item of knowledge concerning everything that exists or could have existed anywhere in the universe at any time in the past or that may exist in the centuries or ages yet unborn” (Tozer, p. 56).

Lesson 5: God is Omnipresent

Omnipresence Defined

The word “omnipresence” is a compound, consisting of the prefix “omni,” meaning all, and the root “present”. God is all-present, everywhere, ubiquitous. Being infinite (unlimited), God is not limited by space (1 Kgs 8:27, 2 Chron 2:6).^[1] His entire presence (God does not “parcel Himself out”) fills the entirety of the universe at every moment.

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 lead me, And Your right 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. – Psalm 139:7-12

“Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?” declares the LORD. – Jeremiah 23:24

Though God is fully present everywhere in a *quantitative* sense, (relating to, measuring, or measured by the quantity of something rather than its quality.) He is not so in a *qualitative* sense. (relating to, measuring, or measured by the quality of something rather than its quantity.) ^[2] For example, His presence in the saved is qualitatively different from His presence in the unsaved (Rom 8:9, 1 Cor 6:19). In like manner, His presence in Heaven is qualitatively different from His presence elsewhere (Deut 26:15, 1 Kgs 8:30, Ps 33:13-14, Matt 6:9).^[3]

On Immanence and Transcendence

The direct or natural consequence or result of omnipresence are; immanence, and transcendence. God is immanent: that is, He is present within His creation. However, He is also transcendent, that is, He is present above, beyond, or apart from His creation. [Jeremiah 23:23](#) speaks of both: “Am I a God who is near,” declares the LORD, “And not a God far off?” An overemphasis on either of these truths leads to theological error. To emphasize God’s immanence to the neglect of His transcendence leads to pantheism (the belief that the universe is god, not that God is a person who created the universe and is, thus, separate from it).^[4] To emphasize God’s transcendence to the neglect of His immanence leads to deism (the belief that God is so separate from His creation that He is not personally involved in it).

Some Implications of God’s Omnipresence

God’s omnipresence is a cause for concern. Because God is omnipresent, we cannot escape from Him.^[5] “*Can a man hide himself in hiding places So I do not see him?*” declares the LORD ([Jer 23:24](#); see also [Job 34:21-22](#) and [Amos 9:2-4](#)). Like David in [Psalm 139](#), we must acknowledge that we cannot hide or run away from God. Adam and Eve tried ([Gen 3:8](#)), as did Jonah ([Jonah 1:3](#)). Rather than trying to run away from God, we should find ourselves running to Him.^[6] Unlike the teacher, God doesn’t leave the room.

God’s omnipresence is a comfort ([Ps 139:10](#)). God does not “have any difficulty dealing with needs and problems which arise in widely differing locations at the same time. He does not, however, move from one place to another as a sort of divine superman who flies at infinite speed. Rather, he simply has access to the whole of creation at all

times” (Erickson, p. 274). If you are a believer, not only is God *near* you, He’s *in* you ([1 Cor 6:19-20](#) ¹⁹ Or ²do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? ⁴You are not your own, ²⁰for you were bought with a price. ⁵So glorify God in your body.) This should be a source of great comfort, especially in times of difficulty ([Ps 23:4, 46:1](#)). “*And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age*” ([Matt 28:20](#)). “*I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU*” ([Heb 13:5](#)). There’s no such thing as a prayer that “doesn’t make it past the ceiling”—God is below the ceiling.

Think not thou canst sigh a sigh
And thy Maker is not by;
Think not thou canst weep a tear
And thy Maker is not near.

(stanza of poem by William Blake, quoted in Tozer, p. 58)

^[1]God does not have “size.” As Grudem (p. 175) states: “We should try to avoid thinking of God in terms of size or spatial dimensions. God is a being who exists *without* size or dimensions in space. In fact, before God created the universe, there was no “where” or space. But God still was! This fact makes us realize that God relates to space in a far different way than we do or than any created thing does. He exists as a kind of being that is far different and far greater than we can imagine.”

^[2]God is equally present everywhere “ontologically,” (Ontology is the study of existence) but not so “morally,” “spiritually,” or “ethically” (Feinberg, p. 250).

^[3]“God is present in a special way in heaven God manifests his presence more fully in heaven than elsewhere” (Grudem, p. 176).

[4]According to pantheism,(which is the belief that God is everything) God – the world = 0; according to the Bible, God – the world = God (Storms, p. 88).

[5]“How terrible should the thoughts of this attribute be to sinners! How foolish it is to imagine any hiding-place from the incomprehensible God, who fills and contains all things, and is present in every point of the world. When men have shut the door, and made all darkness within, to meditate or commit a crime, they cannot in the most intricate recesses be sheltered from the presence of God” (Stephen Charnock, quoted in Storms, p. 93).

[6]“There is no place at all whither you may flee. Will you flee from him? Flee unto him” (source unknown, quoted in Grudem, p. 177)

Attributes of God: Lesson 6: God is Holy

“Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts.” ([Isa 6:3](#); cf. [Rev 4:8](#))

What is Holiness?

The basic idea of the word “holy” is separation. To say that God is holy means that He is separate from everything else. He is unique, one-of-a-kind, in a class by Himself. This is true in two respects:

God is separate from everything else in a *metaphysical* sense. There is no other being like God. As [Exodus 15:11](#) declares: *A Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like you, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?*” (see also [1 Sam 2:2](#), [Ps 77:13](#), and [Isa 40:25](#), as well as [2 Sam 7:22](#), [Ps 71:19](#), [86:8](#), [89:6-8a](#), and [Isa 46:9](#)). God’s transcendent holiness is the basis for what has been called the Creator/creature distinction. God’s essence or being transcends that of His creation to an infinite degree. Any comparison that is made between ourselves and God is simply a finite representation of what is in reality an infinite chasm. God is so great that He defies comparison ([Isa 40:18](#), [46:5](#)).

God is separate from everything else in a *moral* sense. All of creation is tainted by sin to varying degrees (see [Rom 8:19-22](#)). God, however, is totally set apart from sin. “[God] is, as it were, allergic to sin and evil” (Erickson, p. 285). As [1 John 1:5](#) declares: *God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all* (see also [Hab 1:13a](#)). Holiness in God involves not only the absence of evil, but also the presence of good. Negatively, God never does anything wrong; positively, He always does everything right. He is perfectly pure.

Some Implications of God's Holiness

Because God is holy, we should glorify Him. Whatever the attribute, we should glorify God simply for who He is (not just for what He does). This is especially true when it comes to the attribute of God's holiness. *Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy* ([Rev 15:4](#); cf. [Psalm 99:5, 9](#)). We can glorify God for His holiness particularly through singing ([Ex 15:1a](#) & [11](#), [Rev 15:3a](#) & [4a](#)) and prayer ([1 Sam 2:1a](#) & [2](#)).

Because God is holy, we should acknowledge our unholiness. The reason why we don't fully understand just how sinful we are is because we don't fully understand just how holy God is ("You thought that I was just like you," [Ps 50:21](#)) or we forget that God is the standard^[1] ([Job 4:17](#), [Matt 5:48](#) and [1 Pet 1:15-16](#)). When one begins to comprehend just how holy God is, his response should be similar to that of Isaiah and Peter:

"Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" ([Isa 6:5](#)).

But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken ([Luke 5:8-9](#)).

Because God is holy, we should be holy ourselves. Remember, this includes not only the absence of *vice*, but also the presence of *virtue* (sin is not just a matter of *commission*, but also of *omission*). *But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY"* ([1 Pet 1:15-16](#); cf. [Matt 5:48](#)). God is perfectly pure.

We, as believers, should be characterized by “the relentless pursuit of perfection,” confident that, even though we won’t attain the goal in this life^[2], we will in the next: *Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:12-14; cf. 2 Cor 7:1). Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure (1 John 3:2-3).*

Holiness and Separation

(2 Cor 6:14-7:1, et. al.)

God’s holiness is the theological basis behind the doctrine known as “separation.” Because God is holy and, thus, separate from sin, we, His children, should take measures to separate ourselves from sin. Separation takes place on two levels: corporately (or ecclesiastically) and personally. Corporately, we as a church have a responsibility to separate from any individual or group which practices theological compromise (liberals) or which associates with one that does (evangelicals). Personally, we as individual believers have a responsibility to separate from evil by developing personal standards of conduct designed to prevent us and/or those around us from being tempted to sin in the first place.

[1]“When one measures one’s holiness, not against the standard of oneself or of other humans, but against God, the need for a complete change of moral and spiritual condition becomes apparent” (Erickson, p. 286).

[2]“Proper conduct can be tested by the simple question, Is it holy? This is the believer’s standard. While he does not always measure up to it, he must never compromise it” (Ryrie, p. 39).

Attributes of God: Lesson 7: God is Loving

What is Love?

Love is one of the most misunderstood words in the English language. According to most people, love is the warm, fuzzy feeling you get when you're with someone you really like. According to Scripture, however, love is something altogether different. Rather than a feeling, love is a choice; rather than an emotion, it is an act of the will ([Hos 14:4](#), [Matt 5:44](#)). In other words, love is not some passive feeling that suddenly and inexplicably comes over you. Rather, it is an active choice that is purposefully and thoughtfully made. Love is not something you "fall into"; instead, it's something you "jump into." All of this does not imply, however, that love is devoid of feeling. Feelings are a natural by-product of the choice to love, but they are not love itself.

God's Love Declared

God is love ([1 John 4:8](#), [16](#)).

Love is part of God's very nature or essence. It is essential to His being. It is impossible for God to be unloving. If he was, He wouldn't be God. Everything God does can be characterized as loving.

God's Love Described

God's love is unconditional. God's love for the believer comes with "no strings attached." He does not love us only if or when we meet certain criteria. He loves us regardless of who we are or what we do. He loves us because He has chosen to love us. Period. This was the basis of His election of the nation of Israel: *The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you* ([Deut 7:7-8](#); cf. [Hos 14:4](#)). It is also the basis of His election

of believers ([Eph 1:4-5](#)). God's love cannot be earned, nor can it be forfeited.

God's love is unstoppable. There is nothing you can do, believer, to cause God to stop loving you. *Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord* ([Rom 8:35, 38-39](#); cf. [Ps 103:17a](#) and [Jer 31:3](#)).

God's love is unusual. After Christ stilled the storm in [Matthew 8:26](#), the disciples exclaimed: *What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?* ([Matt 8:27](#)). The same Greek adjective, translated "what kind of" in [Matthew 8:27](#), is used to describe God's love for believers in [1 John 3:1](#): *See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God.* The love of Christ for us "surpasses (literally "to throw beyond") knowledge" ([Eph 3:19](#)). "The New Testament writers had to introduce what was virtually a new Greek word, *agape*, to express the love of God as they knew it" (Packer, p. 124). What makes God's love so unusual is that He showed it not to the lovely—His "friends" ([John 15:13](#)), the "righteous" ([Rom 5:7a](#)), or the "good" ([Rom 5:7b](#)), but to the unlovely—the "ungodly" ([Rom 5:6](#)), "sinners" ([Rom 5:8](#)), His "enemies" ([Rom 5:10](#)), those who didn't love Him ([1 John 4:10](#)). "God loved what is the antithesis of himself; this is its marvel and greatness" (John Murray, quoted in Storms, p. 144). No wonder why [Ephesians 2:4](#) calls God's love "great," and Charles Wesley (in his beloved hymn, "And Can It Be?") called it "amazing!"

God's Love Demonstrated

God demonstrates His love for us in a variety of ways. The supreme expression ([Rom 8:32](#)) of His love, however, was the sending of His Son to die for our sins. *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son ([John 3:16](#)). But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us ([Rom 5:8](#)). Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends ([John 15:13](#)).* See also [Galatians 2:20](#), [Ephesians 5:2, 25](#), and [1 John 4:9-10](#). “Almost invariably the New Testament Epistles expound God’s love for us by reference to the cross. To eliminate the death of Christ for sinners would eviscerate the very heart of divine love as portrayed in the New Testament” (Carl F. H. Henry, quoted in Storms, p. 132). “[Christ] was bound to the cross not by the nails of the military executioner, but by the >cords of love=” (John Eadie, quoted in Storms, p. 141). “Calvary is the supreme demonstration of Divine love. Whenever you are tempted to doubt the love of God, Christian reader, go back to Calvary” (Pink, p. 81).

Not only was God’s love demonstrated in the accomplishment of redemption, but also in its application, as [Ephesians 2:4-5](#) attests: *But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).*

God's Love Defined

Love is that in God which moves Him to do what is best for His creatures. Because God is loving, He does (action) what is best for us (selfless). “>This is true love to any one,= said Tillotson, >to do the best for him we can.= This is what God does for those he loves—the best he can” (Packer, p. 126).

Some Implications of God's Love

Because God is loving, we should praise Him. *Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise you* ([Ps 63:3](#)).

Because God is loving, He disciplines us. “*FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES*” ([Heb 12:6](#); cf. [Prov 3:11-12](#) and [Rev 3:19](#)). Contrary to popular thinking, love is not permissive¹¹; rather, it is protective. A permissive parent (one who tends to avoid disciplining his child for sinful behavior) does not truly love his child ([Prov 13:24](#)). A parent who truly loves his child will discipline him for sinful behavior in order to prevent that child from persisting in such behavior and suffering the consequences that go along with it ([Prov 19:18](#), [23:13-14](#)). Likewise, God disciplines us in order to protect us from sin and its consequences. Though painful, divine discipline is for our ultimate good ([Heb 12:10-11](#)).

Because God is loving, we ought to be loving. *This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you* ([John 15:12](#)). *Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another* ([1 John 4:11](#)). See also [Matthew 5:43-48](#), [John 13:34](#), [Ephesians 5:1-2](#), [25](#), and [1 John 4:19](#). Because they are the only ones who truly understand what love is, Christians ought to be the most loving people on the face of the earth ([John 13:35](#)). Our lives must be characterized by love—doing what is best for others.

Because God loves us, we can rest secure in His love. If God has chosen to make you a special object of His love, nothing (nothing you do or anyone else does) can prevent Him from loving you, nor stop Him from loving you. God is Afor@ you ([Rom 8:31](#)). Meditate long and hard on [Romans 8:31-39](#).

[\[1\]](#) God's love is not permissive. The heresy of universalism (the belief that, when all is said and done, God will give everyone a free pass to heaven) misunderstands God's love. God's love is a holy love. Holiness is the track on which the engine of love must run" (A. H. Strong, quoted in McCune, p. 109). God punishes every sin—the sin of the unbeliever in Hell, the sin of the believer on the Cross.

Attributes of God: Lesson 8: God is Merciful

What is Mercy?

In [Luke 18](#), Jesus taught a parable (“an earthly story with a heavenly meaning”) about a Pharisee and a tax collector. In the parable, the Pharisee proudly boasted about his “righteousness,” while the tax collector humbly confessed his sinfulness. The tax collector’s plea was: “God, be merciful to me, the sinner!” ([Luke 18:13](#)). This man understood that because of his sin, he deserved nothing but God’s displeasure. However, he also understood that God is merciful ([Ps 86:15](#), [145:8](#), [2 Cor 1:3](#)), that is, He doesn’t always give us what we deserve ([Ezra 9:13](#), [Ps 103:10](#)). Therefore, the tax collector appealed to God’s mercy, begging God not to give him what he deserved. As a result, God mercifully withheld His judgment ([Luke 18:14](#)).

Like the tax collector, we deserve nothing but God’s judgment for our sin. [Romans 6:23](#) tells us that “the wages of sin is death.” Because we are sinners, we deserve death, both physical and spiritual. Every breath we take is a testament to God’s mercy (see [Lam 3:22](#) in the NIV, KJV, and NASB margin) . Because of our sin, we don’t deserve to live another day ([Luke 13:1-5](#)). Yet, God in His mercy doesn’t give us that which we deserve. Even more amazing is God’s mercy in salvation. All of us deserve to spend eternity in Hell because of our sin, yet God mercifully spares some therefrom ([Eph 2:4](#), [Titus 3:5](#), [1 Pet 1:3](#)).^[1] No wonder God’s mercy is called “great” ([2 Sam 24:14](#), [1 Pet 1:3](#))!

Related Concepts

Grace. Whereas mercy may be defined as not getting what one deserves, grace may be defined as getting what one does not deserve. In other words, mercy is the withholding of deserved cursing (such as Hell), while grace is the bestowing of undeserved blessing (such as

Heaven). Grace goes one step beyond mercy. We will examine God's grace more thoroughly in our next lesson.

Pity and compassion. Pity may be understood as the emotional aspect of mercy, while compassion may be viewed as its volitional aspect. Because God is merciful, He "feels sorry" for us in our miserable condition. His compassion is that which causes Him to do something about it. In His mercy, He relieves the misery caused by our sin. *The Lord is full of compassion and is merciful* ([Jas 5:11](#)).

Longsuffering. To be longsuffering is to be patient with people. Because God is merciful, He patiently "puts up with" sinners ([Rom 9:22](#), [1 Tim 1:16](#), [1 Pet 3:20](#), [2 Pet 3:9](#)). He is "slow to anger" ([Ex 34:6](#), et. al.). It is God's longsuffering which prevents Him from immediately unleashing His justice on sinners.

Forgiveness. God in His mercy forgives or pardons those who have offended His holiness by their sin. *If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You* ([Ps 130:3-4a](#)).

Some Implications of God's Mercy

Because God is merciful, we should be merciful. Believers are to make every effort to reflect God's attributes of goodness. Thus, we should be merciful because God is merciful ([Luke 6:36](#)). Jesus emphasized this very point in a parable He taught in [Matthew 18:23-35](#). Though shown great mercy by his master, the wicked servant showed no mercy to a fellow servant. In like manner, we have been shown great mercy by our Master. May we respond by freely showing mercy to others. *Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you* ([Eph 4:32](#); see also [Col 3:13](#)).

Because God is merciful, we should be grateful. Being a recipient of God's mercy is a privilege, not a right ([Rom 9:15](#)). God in His mercy unconditionally saves some, sparing them from the calamitous consequences of their sin.^[2] If this fact does not produce in the believer an "attitude of gratitude," nothing will. "We should be amazed that we suffer so little for the consequences of our sin" (Dan DeHaan, *The God You Can Know*, p. 56). The question isn't: Why do bad things happen to good people? There aren't any good people ([Mark 10:18](#), [Rom 3:10-12](#)). The question is: Why does anything good ever happen to bad people, i.e., anyone? The answer: Because God is merciful.

Because God is merciful, we should be humble. Like the tax collector in the parable referred to earlier, we should be humbled by the thought of God's mercy. The more we fully understand what mercy is all about, the more humbled we should be that God has chosen to shed it upon us so abundantly. Thomas Hooker, one of the Puritans, was told by his friends while on his deathbed: "Brother Hooker, you are going to receive your reward shortly." Hooker's response was this: "No, no, I go to receive mercy" (Dan DeHaan, *The God You Can Know*, p. 58).

When . . . we children of the shadows reach at last our home in the light, we shall have a thousand strings to our harps, but the sweetest may well be the one tuned to sound forth most perfectly the mercy of God@ (Tozer, p. 90).

^[1]"That any are saved at all is, however, the amazing thing. If God gave to all what they deserve, none would be saved. Everyone would be lost and condemned" (Erickson, p. 295).

^[2]The "calamitous consequences of sin" are seen most vividly in the Tribulation and in Hell.

Attributes of God: Lesson 9: God is Gracious

Declaration

Gracious is the LORD. ([Ps 116:5](#); cf. [Ex 34:6](#), [Neh 9:17](#), [Ps 86:15](#), [103:8](#), [111:4](#), [145:8](#), [Joel 2:13](#), and [1 Pet 5:10](#))

Definition

God's grace is His unearned ([Rom 11:6](#)) and undeserved ([Rom 3:23-24](#), [6:23](#)) favor shown toward sinners. Because God is gracious, He sometimes gives us what we don't deserve.

Display

In society. God's grace is displayed in both a general and specific sense. It is displayed toward all men in general ("common grace"^[1]) and toward believers in particular ("special grace").^[2] God in His common grace 1) creates and sustains physical life ([Acts 17:25](#)—"He Himself gives to all people life and breath"; cf. [Isa 42:5](#)); 2) acts kindly toward His creatures ([Ps 145:9](#)—"The LORD is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works"; [Matt 5:45](#)—"causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous"; [Luke 6:35](#)—"He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men"; cf. [Ps 65:9-13](#), [104:10-30](#), [145:15-16](#), and [Acts 14:17](#)); 3) restrains sin and its effects^[3] via such things as human government and the presence of the Holy Spirit in believers ([Matt 5:13](#), [2 Thess 2:6-7](#)^[4]); and 4) gives unsaved men the ability to do cultural or civic good ([Luke 6:32-34](#)).^[5]

In salvation. Just as God graciously gives physical life, so He graciously gives spiritual life. *But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the*

heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God ([Eph 2:4-8^{\[6\]}](#); see also [Rom 3:24](#), [Eph 1:7](#), [2 Tim 1:9](#), and [Titus 3:7](#)).

In sanctification. Not only is salvation “all of grace”^[7], but so is sanctification. Just as God graciously sustains physical life, so He graciously sustains spiritual life. The ability and desire to do right after one is saved is a gracious gift from God ([Eph 2:10](#), [Phil 2:12-13](#)). *But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me* ([1 Cor 15:10](#)). *It [the grace of God] teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age* ([Titus 2:12, NIV](#)).^[8] Al need not torment myself with the fear that my faith may fail; as grace led me to faith in the first place, so grace will keep me believing to the end. Faith, both in its origin and continuance, is a gift of grace@ (Packer, p. 136). “‘Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home” (from stanza 3 of “Amazing Grace@).

In service. Paul understood that it was only by God’s grace that he was in the ministry. The ability^[9] and opportunity to serve in the local church is a great privilege! *I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all God’s people, this grace was given to me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ* ([Eph 3:7-8, NIV](#); cf. [Rom 15:15-16](#)).

In suffering. According to Paul, suffering for the cause of Christ is a privilege: *For to you it has been granted^[10] for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake* ([Phil 1:29](#); cf. [Acts 5:41](#)).

When we do suffer, it is God's grace which sustains us: . . . *there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you"* ([2 Cor 12:7-9](#)). [God] gives grace to the afflicted ([Prov 3:34b](#)).

Some Implications of God's Grace

Because God is gracious, we should be gracious. Believers are expected to emulate God's attributes of goodness, graciousness being one of them. Remembering how gracious God has been to us, His enemies ([Rom 5:10](#)), we should be gracious to everyone, including our enemies (see [Matt 5:43-48](#)).

Because God is gracious, we should be humble. There is nothing that we have done, are doing, or ever will do to earn God's grace. . . . *What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?* ([1 Cor 4:7](#)). Remember, it is by the grace of God that we are what we are ([1 Cor 15:10](#)).

Because God is gracious, we should be grateful. God is not obligated to show grace to anyone ([Ex 33:19](#))^[11]. If He was, it would no longer be grace ([Rom 11:6](#)).^[12] Grace and gratitude go hand-in-hand.^[13] "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" ([2 Cor 9:15](#)).

Because God is gracious, we should praise Him. [Ephesians 1:3-14](#) is a hymn of praise for God's grace in salvation.^[14] Some of our most beloved hymns have God's grace as their focus (*Amazing Grace*^[15]; *Grace! 'Tis a Charming Sound*; *Only a Sinner*; *Wonderful Grace of Jesus*). Praise God, His grace is rich ([Eph 1:7](#)), surpassingly so ([Eph 2:7](#)), and abundant ([Rom 5:17, 20](#))!

Because God is gracious, we should be motivated to serve Him more, not less, fervently. Some discourage teaching and preaching on God's grace, fearing it will squelch commitment, service, etc. However, several passages in Scripture indicate otherwise. Consider, once again, Paul's words in [1 Corinthians 15:10](#): "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; **but I labored even more than all of them**, yet not I, but the grace of God with me" (see also [Eph 2:10](#), [Phil 2:12-13](#), [Titus 2:11-12](#)).

Great God of wonders! all thy ways
Display the attributes divine;
But countless acts of pardoning grace
Beyond thine other wonders shine:
Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?
In wonder lost, with trembling joy,
We take the pardon of our God;
Pardon for crimes of deepest dye,
A pardon bought with Jesus' blood:
Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?

O may this strange, this matchless grace,
This God-like miracle of love,
Fill the wide earth with grateful praise,
As now it fills the choirs above!
Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?
(Samuel Davies, recited in Packer, p. 134)

^[1]John Murray (quoted in Storms, [pp. 119-120](#)) defines common grace as "every favour of whatever kind or degree, falling short of salvation,

which this undeserving and sin-cursed world enjoys at the hand of God.”

[2]“The biblical way of putting this distinction would be to say that God is good to all in some ways and to some in all ways” (Packer, p. 162).

[3]“God places restraint upon the workings of human depravity and thus prevents the unholy affections and principles of men from manifesting all the potentialities inherent in them. He prevents depravity from bursting forth in all its vehemence and violence”(John Murray, quoted in Storms, p. 120).

[4]This is one of the reasons why the Tribulation will be so devastating—as believers are removed from the earth at the Rapture, so will the Holy Spirit’s restraining influence.

[5]Though God enables unsaved men to do “good” in a cultural or civic sense, such “goodness” is not meritorious, i.e., it does not in any way earn God’s favor ([Prov 15:8a](#)//21:27, [Isa 64:6](#)), the reason being that unsaved men never do “good” for the right reason, to glorify God.

[6]God’s grace as set forth in this passage is magnified all the more in light of the groundwork Paul lays in verses 1-3, showing how we were spiritually dead (v. 1), spiritually dominated (vs. 2-3a), and spiritually doomed (v. 3b). BUT GOD (v. 4)! All is precisely because people today have lost sight of the depths of human depravity that they think so little of divine grace. What makes Paul’s declaration that we are ‘saved by grace’ so significant is his earlier declaration that we were ‘dead’ in trespasses and sins” (Storms, p. 124).

[7]The title of a book on salvation by Charles Spurgeon.

[8] Sadly, there are some who believe that God's grace gives the believer a license to sin. However, [Romans 6:1-2](#) and [Titus 2:11-12](#) clearly teach that grace and godliness are inseparable.

[9] "Spiritual gifts" are just that—gifts! "We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us" ([Rom 12:6](#); cf. [Eph 4:7](#) and [1 Pet 4:10](#)). One of the NT words used to describe spiritual gifts is *charismata*, the root of which is *charis*, the Greek word for grace.

[10] The Greek verb translated "it has been granted" is *charizomai*, the noun form of which is *charis*, the Greek word for grace.

[11] "Only when it is seen that what decides each man's destiny is whether or not God resolves to save him from his sins, and that this is a decision which God need not make in any single case, can one begin to grasp the biblical view of grace" (Packer, p. 132).

[12] "Although God *is* gracious in His eternal being, He need not *be* gracious or shower His grace upon anyone. If grace were at any time an *obligation* of God, it would cease to be grace" (Storms, p. 126).

[13] "It has been said that in the New Testament doctrine is grace, and ethics is gratitude; and something is wrong with any form of Christianity in which, experientially and practically, this saying is not being verified" (Packer, p. 137).

[14] The structure of the hymn is as follows: Stanza 1 focusing on God the Father's role in salvation (vs. 3-5), chorus (v. 6), Stanza 2 focusing on God the Son's role in salvation (vs. 7-11), chorus (v. 12), Stanza 3 focusing of God the Holy Spirit's role in salvation (vs. 13-14a), chorus (v. 14b).

[15] John Newton, who wrote the hymn *Amazing Grace*, once said: “If I ever reach heaven I expect to find three wonders there: First, to meet some I had not thought to see there. Second, to miss some I had thought to meet there. And third, the greatest wonder of all, to find myself there!”

Attributes of God: Lesson 10: God is Wise

Description

God is wise ([Job 9:4](#), [12:13](#), [Dan 2:20](#), [Rom 11:33](#), [16:27](#)).^[1] What exactly does this mean? In order to answer this question, we must first distinguish between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge is the possession/*accumulation* of facts. Wisdom goes a step further. Wisdom is the proper use/*application* of facts. Knowledge describes *mentall*/intellectual ability, wisdom *morall*/ethical ability. One can possess a lot of knowledge and yet be unwise. Likewise, one can have relatively little knowledge and yet be wise.^[2] This does not imply, however, that knowledge is unimportant. We should make every effort to acquire as much knowledge as possible, for it is only by possessing knowledge that we can make proper use of it. God is both omniscient and wise. He perfectly knows all facts and how to perfectly use them ([Rom 11:33](#)). Being omnipotent, He has the ability to perfectly use them (see [Job 9:4](#), [12:13](#), and [Dan 2:20](#), where God's wisdom is conjuncted with His power). "God applies His knowledge in such a way that the best means are employed to achieve the highest ends in order to glorify Him the most" (McCune, p. 102). Tozer (p. 60) defines God's wisdom as "the ability to devise perfect ends and to achieve those ends by the most perfect means."

God makes no mistakes. Everything He does is perfect. Nothing God does can be improved upon. Nothing can be added to or taken away from what God does in order to make it better ([Ecc 3:14](#)). Thus, AT EVERY MOMENT, IT IS THE BEST OF ALL POSSIBLE WORLDS (McCune).

Display

God's wisdom is displayed in creation. *O LORD, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all* ([Ps 104:24](#); cf. [Prov 3:19](#), [Jer 10:12](#), [51:15](#)).

God's wisdom is displayed in salvation. *So that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places* ([Eph 3:10](#)). See also [Romans 11:33](#), regarding which Grudem (p. 193) states: "At the end of eleven chapters of reflection on the wisdom of God's plan of redemption, Paul bursts forth into spontaneous praise: 'O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!' ([Rom. 11:33](#))."

Design

God's glory. *I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him* ([Ecc 3:14, NIV](#)). The primary reason why God does anything is to bring honor and glory to Himself. Being God, He has no other choice but to do so. He would be unjust were He not to give Himself the honor and glory which He so richly deserves.^[3]

Our good. *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose* ([Rom 8:28](#)). God does not do things *to* us, so much as He does things *for* us.

"All God's acts are done in perfect wisdom, first for His own glory, and then for the highest good of the greatest number for the longest time" (Tozer, p. 60). A prime example of this two-fold design of God's wisdom is seen in the raising of Lazarus from the dead ([John 11](#)). Obviously,

Lazarus's resurrection was very beneficial to several individuals (especially to Lazarus). Notice, however, the ultimate reason for this great miracle, as declared by Christ prior to the fact: "This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it" ([John 11:4](#); cf. [John 9:3](#)).

Some Implications of God's Wisdom

Because God is wise, we should glorify Him. *To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen* ([Rom 16:27](#)). See also Paul's doxology in [Romans 11:33-36](#).

Because God is wise, we should never question what He does. Whenever we consider what God does, we must remember that we are looking at such from a very limited perspective. Being finite, we do not know all that God knows. Therefore, we should be careful not to question God's character by accusing Him of being unwise in His dealings with us (the reason why God takes the sin of complaining so seriously—cf. [1 Cor 10:10](#)). No matter how "bad" something might seem to us, it is in reality a good thing. Though we may not immediately (if ever) understand how, God is being glorified and man is being benefitted by it.

Because God is wise, we should trust Him. Just as a child must trust the wisdom of his parents to know and do what is best for him, so must we trust the wisdom of our Heavenly Father to know and do what is best for us. See [Proverbs 3:5](#) and [1 Peter 4:19](#).

^[1]God's wisdom is sometimes referred to as His "omnisapience" (*omni*, all + *sapience*, wisdom).

[2]“The Bible’s assessment of a smart person without God is ‘fool’ ([1 Cor 1:20](#)), and the humblest, least literate, untutored, but pious person is, in God’s eyes, truly wise. How reversed we usually have it!” (*Proverbs: A Commentary on an Ancient Book of Timeless Advice* by Robert Alden, p. 22).

[3]“God must choose his own glory ahead of all else. As the only infinite being, this is what he must do. To put something else in the primary place would in effect be a case of idolatry” (Erickson, p. 288).

Attributes of God: Lesson 11: God is Just

Exclamation

All His ways are just; A God . . . without injustice, Righteous and upright is He. ([Deut 32:4](#); cf. [Gen 18:25](#), [Ps 7:11](#), [11:7](#), [129:4](#), [145:17](#), [Dan 4:37](#), [9:14](#), [Rom 9:14](#), [2 Tim 4:8](#), [Rev 16:5](#))

Explanation

In [Leviticus 19:35-36](#), God said to the Israelites through Moses: “You shall do no wrong in judgment, in measurement of weight, or capacity. You shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin” (cf. [Deut 25:13-16](#)). A “just” unit of measurement was one which was right or fair because it conformed to a standard. To say that God is just is to say that He is right or fair because He conforms to a standard. The standard is God Himself. “Everything in the universe is good to the degree it conforms to the nature of God and evil as it fails to do so” (Tozer, p. 87). There is no standard of righteousness or fairness external to God to which He must conform. If there was, it would be God.^[1] Since God is the standard, everything God does is right or fair. God doesn’t do things because they are right; they are right because He does them. God is never unrighteous or unfair in His dealings, though it may sometimes seem so to us. However, our perspective is limited. Asaph realized this truth in [Psalm 73](#). From Asaph’s limited perspective, it seemed like God was being unjust in allowing the wicked to prosper^[2] (verses 3-12) and the righteous to suffer (verses 13-14). However, once he understood God’s unlimited perspective, his doubts were dispelled (verses 16-28).

Execution

Because God is just, He deals justly with men, punishing or rewarding them in accordance with what they deserve (unless He decides to act

in mercy by not giving them what they deserve or in grace by giving them what they don't deserve).^[3] See [Psalm 9:8](#), [96:13](#), [Acts 17:31](#), [Romans 2:5](#), [Revelation 16:7](#), and [19:2](#). *There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil . . . but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good* ([Rom 2:9-10](#)).

God executes His justice by punishing disobedience. Theologians call this God's "retributive justice." *As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come on us; yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Your truth. Therefore the LORD has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us; for the LORD our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done, but we have not obeyed His voice* ([Dan 9:13-14](#); cf. [Neh 9:33](#), [Gal 6:8a](#), and [Rev 16:4-7](#)). God is the standard; since God is perfect, the standard He demands is perfection ([Matt 5:48](#)).^[4] Since we fail to meet this standard ([Rom 3:23](#)), God is perfectly just in punishing us for our sin to the ultimate degree.^[5]

God executes His justice by rewarding obedience. Theologians call this God's "remunerative justice." *For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints* ([Heb 6:10](#); cf. [1 Sam 26:23](#), [Gal 6:8b](#), and [Eph 6:8](#)). When we think of God's justice, we usually think of it only in negative terms, i.e., God punishing disobedience. However, His justice also has a positive side. Because God is just, He rewards obedience. If He didn't, He wouldn't be just. Here's the incredible thing: Though He is the One who works within us to give us the desire and ability to do right ([Phil 2:13](#)), we get the blessing that results from doing right ([Ps 19:11](#), [119:1-2](#), [Luke 11:28](#), [Jas 1:25](#)).

When does God execute His justice? Sometimes, God chooses to execute His justice upon men during their earthly lifetimes. This was especially true with the Jews during the theocracy. In the theocracy, there was an immediate cause-and-effect relationship between actions and their consequences. The effects of our actions, however, are often far removed from their causes. Nevertheless, the consequences usually come sometime during our earthly existence. However, God is not obligated to execute His justice upon an individual while that individual is still alive on this earth. He has all eternity to execute His justice. This means that even though all wrongs may not be righted in this life, they will be eventually. God's justice demands an eventual reconciliation between men's actions and their consequences. As Erickson (p. 289) states: "The justice of God must not be evaluated on a short-term basis. Within this life it will often be incomplete or imperfect. Earthly life is not all there is, however. There is a life beyond, and in the scope of all eternity, God's justice will be complete." *For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil* ([Ecc 12:14](#)). "Pay Day–Someday"⁶¹ ([2 Thess 1:6-9](#)). For the believer, God's justice will be meted out at the "Judgment Seat of Christ" ([1 Cor 3:10-15](#), [2 Cor 5:10](#)); for the unbeliever, at the "Great White Throne Judgment" ([Rev 20:11-15](#)).

Some Implications of God's Justice

Because God is just, we should do right. From a negative standpoint, God's justice should motivate us to forsake sin, as we realize that God will punish every act of disobedience. "If we know that retributive judgment faces us at the end of the road, we shall not live as otherwise we would" (Packer, p. 143). From a positive standpoint, God's justice should motivate us to pursue righteousness, as we realize that God will also reward every act of obedience ([Gal 6:9](#)).

Because God is just, we should not take justice into our own hands. Because God is just, He will eventually right all wrongs (see, for example, [2 Thess 1:6](#)). This is His responsibility, not ours. No matter how tempted to do so, we should never take justice into our own hands. *Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, AVENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,*” says the Lord ([Rom 12:19](#)).

[1]“It is sometimes said, ‘Justice requires God to do this,’ referring to some act we know He will perform. This is an error of thinking as well as of speaking, for it postulates a principle of justice outside of God which compels Him to act in a certain way. Of course there is no such principle. If there were it would be superior to God” (Tozer, p. 87).

[2]“In the past we often heard the slogan ‘crime does not pay.’ But crime frequently does pay, and sometimes quite handsomely! Leaders in organized crime often accumulate huge amounts of earthly wealth” (Erickson, p. 289).

[3]Because God is just, every sin must be punished. God cannot overlook sin. Either the sinner Himself pays the price (in Hell) or Jesus pays the price for him (on the Cross). See [Romans 3:21-26](#).

[4]Do you have to be perfect to go to heaven? YES! “The righteousness He requires is the righteousness His righteousness requires Him to require.” The only way to Heaven is through Christ ([John 14:6](#), [Acts 4:12](#)), for only Christ met the standard of perfection demanded by God ([Matt 3:15](#)). At the moment of salvation, Christ’s righteousness is imputed to the believer (placed on his account), causing God to declare the believer righteous positionally (justification), providing passage into Heaven.

[5]The “ultimate degree” is eternity in Hell. The reason why Hell is such a stumbling block to so many is because so many minimize the severity of sin. The punishment for a crime is proportionate to the value of the victim. For example, killing a human warrants a stiffer penalty than killing an animal. Because sin’s “victim” is God ([Gen 39:9](#), [1 Sam 12:23](#), [2 Sam 12:13](#), [Ps 51:4](#), [Luke 15:18](#), [Acts 5:4](#)), and God is infinite, sin’s punishment must be infinite. Furthermore, since the unbeliever’s rebellion against God will never end, neither can God’s punishment for it.

[6]The title of a famous sermon preached by Robert G. Lee (a sermon which he preached an incredible 1,275 times).

Attributes of God: Lesson 12: Other Attributes

Attribute: **Infinite**

Definition: God is unlimited and unlimitable^[1]

Scripture: [1 Kgs 8:27](#), [Job 11:7-9](#)

Explanation: God is not limited by time (He is eternal). God is not limited by space (He is omnipresent). God is unlimited in knowledge (He is omniscient). God is unlimited in power (He is omnipotent). God is unlimited in authority (He is sovereign). Only God is infinite; everything else is finite (limited). There is an infinite gap between God and everything else.^[2]

Attribute: **Incomprehensible**

Definition: God cannot be fully comprehended

Scripture: [Judg 13:18](#)^[3], [Job 11:7-9](#), [37:5](#), [Ps 139:6](#), [145:3](#), [Isa 55:8-9](#), [Rom 11:33-34](#)

Explanation: Though God cannot be fully known, He can be truly known.^[4] Eternal existence in heaven will help us know God better, but never exhaustively, for the finite will never fully comprehend the infinite. “God is a subject of study that we will never master” (Grudem, p. 151). The only conduits of revelation we have about God, the world ([Ps 19:1-6](#)) and the Word ([Ps 19:7-11](#)), are finite and, therefore, incapable of comprehensively communicating the greatness of God.

Attribute: **Immutable**

Definition: God is unchanging and unchangeable

Scripture: [Mal 3:6](#), [Heb 13:8](#), [Jas 1:17](#)

Explanation: God does not change, nor can He. He is perfect.^[5] “He cannot change for the better, for He is already perfect; and being perfect, He cannot change for the worse” (Pink, p. 37). God will always be what He has always been. God neither grows nor decays (McCune, p. 103). God’s person is unchanging, the claims of “process theology” notwithstanding.^[6] God’s plans are unchanging.^[7] God’s promises are unchanging ([Josh 23:14](#), [Heb 6:13-19](#)). God is a Rock ([Deut 32:4](#), [Isa 26:4](#)).

Attribute: **Eternal**

Definition: God has no beginning or end

Scripture: [Deut 33:27](#), [Ps 90:2](#), [Isa 9:6](#), [Rom 16:26](#), [1 Tim 1:17](#)

Explanation: What a “mind-boggling” attribute! God was never born and He will never die. There was never a time when He was not. God is ([Exod 3:14](#)). He exists in one indivisible present (McCune, p. 102). He is timeless/atemporal, transcending time. God neither has “age” (n.) nor does He “age” (v.).^[8] God created time. Time is inconsequential to God ([Ps 90:4](#), [2 Pet 3:8](#)).

Attribute: **Free**

Definition: God is independent of everyone and everything else

Scripture: [Job 41:11](#), [Isa 40:13-14](#), [Acts 17:25](#)

Explanation: God is the only one who can do what He wants, when He wants, where He wants, how He wants, to whom He wants, for whom He wants, and for whatever reason(s) He wants ([Job 23:13](#), [42:2](#), [Ps 115:3](#), [135:5-6](#), [Isa 46:9-11](#), [Dan 4:35](#)).^[9] God doesn't have to do anything,^[10] including create ([Rev 4:11](#)) or save. God is not indebted to us; God doesn't owe us anything. Only God is truly free. Finitude limits human freedom. Slavery to sin limits human freedom ([John 8:34](#), [Rom 6:16-22](#), [Titus 3:3](#)). God is self-existent^[11] ([John 5:26](#)) and self-sufficient.^[12]

^[1]God does have some limitations, but they are self-imposed. He is limited by His nature and will.

^[2]"The difference between God's being and ours is more than the difference between the sun and a candle, more than the difference between the ocean and a raindrop, more than the difference between the arctic ice cap and a snowflake, more than the difference between the universe and the room we are sitting in: God's being is *qualitatively different*" (Grudem, p. 162).

^[3]"Wonderful" in this verse means incomprehensible (see NASB marginal note).

^[4]"Agnosticism" erroneously contends that God is incapable of being known.

[5] Accordingly, His attributes are sometimes referred to as His “perfections.”

[6] Process theology is the belief that God is in the process of becoming. For refutations of this heresy, see pgs. 166-168 of Grudem, pgs. 172-179 of Feinberg, and Appendix B in Storms.

[7] Much has been made of passages such as [Exodus 32:9-14](#) (verse 14 states: “So the LORD changed His mind”; cf. [Isa 38:1-5](#) and [Jonah 3:10](#)), especially in light of such passages as [1 Samuel 15:29](#) (“the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind”; cf. [Num 23:19](#)). Much has been made of passages such as Exodus 32:9-14 (verse 14 states: “So the LORD changed His mind”; cf. Isa 38:1-5 and Jonah 3:10), especially in light of such passages as 1 Samuel 15:29 (“the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind”; cf. Num 23:19). This “tension” is satisfactorily resolved in Ryrie, p. 38; Erickson, p. 279; Grudem, pp. 164-165; Packer, p. 80; Storms, pp. 112-116; and Feinberg, pp. 274-276. McCune (p. 104) explains: “An unchangeable God must change in His dealings with changeable men in order to remain changeless in His character. Immutability does not mean immobility.” God is stable, not static (Erickson, p. 279).

[8] “The question, How old is God? is simply inappropriate. He is no older now than a year ago, for infinity plus one is no more than infinity. He simply is not restricted by the dimension of time” (Erickson, p. 274).

[9] “Can we imagine the Lord God of Hosts having to request permission of anyone or to apply for anything to a higher body? To whom would God go for permission? Who is higher than the Highest? Who is mightier than the Almighty? Whose position antedates that of the

Eternal? At whose throne would God kneel? Where is the greater one to whom He must appeal” (Tozer, p. 109)?

[10]Technically-speaking, God does have to do that which is consistent with His nature, as well as that which He has chosen to do. Both of these “limitations,” however, are self-imposed.

[11]“some theologians use the word *aseity* to denote self-existence; i.e., God depends *a se*, on Himself” (Ryrie, p. 37).

[12]“People have sometimes thought that God created human beings because he was lonely and needed fellowship with other persons. If this were true, it would certainly mean that God is not completely independent of creation” (Grudem, p. 161).