

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

THE COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES

By: First Baptist Church Old Jonesboro

The Incommunicable Attributes

Self-Existence (Exodus 3:13-14)

Scriptures: Exodus 3:1-2, 13-14; Psalm 50:9-13; Acts 17:24-25

The Communicable Attributes: Holiness

Scriptures: Exodus 15:11; Psalm 99:5; Isaiah 6:3; 1 Peter 1:15-16; Revelation 15:4.

Holiness occupies a place second to none among the communicable attributes of God. Scripture places a chief emphasis on God's holiness. In fact, He is described by the word "holy" more than any other. It is the most central, epitomizing attribute of God's being. Only God is absolutely holy because only God is God. Men and angels only have derived holiness from Him. "There is no one holy like the Lord" (1 Samuel 2:2).

As God's power (omnipotence) gives strength and validity to each of His attributes, as immutability guarantees the continuance of each unchanged, so His holiness gives moral beauty and purity to each: His power is a holy power (Psalm 98:1), His word or promise is a holy promise (Psalm 105:42), His name which stands for all His attributes is a holy name (Isaiah 57:15), and His throne, is a holy throne (Psalm 47:8). And so it is with each of God's attributes, His wisdom, knowledge, mercy, grace, love, goodness, etc., all operate in concert with God's perfect holiness.

Righteousness and Justice

Scriptures: Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 11:7; 89:14; Isaiah 5:16; Daniel 4:37; Zephaniah 3:5.

Righteousness is that attribute of God which leads Him to always think and do what is right or act in perfect goodness in relation to men and angels. Righteous laws and principles proceed from God's righteousness to legislate and govern the affairs of men (cf. Deuteronomy 4:8).

Justice refers to that attribute of God which vindicates the righteousness of God, not vindictively or in vengeance, but in holy justice. Justice refers to the judgment which God, as a righteous God, must exercise against anything which falls short of His holy standards.

In righteousness we have the manifestation of God's love of what is right and good. In justice, we have the manifestation of God's hatred of sin (Genesis 18:16-33).

Benevolence, Mercy, and Grace

Scriptures: Exodus 34:6; Psalm 68:10; 107:9; 146:7-9; Romans 2:4.

Benevolence: This is the desire to do good for others. God's benevolent interest in His creatures and His care for them is manifested in different ways according to the nature and circumstances of the creature. All creatures are objects of His benevolence. Even animals are recipients of His benevolence (Matthew 6:26; Luke 12:6). Since man is rational, he has more capacity to enjoy the goodness of God. God manifests His benevolence to all men (Acts 14:17) even to unbelievers (Matt. 5:44-45; Luke 6:35). His benevolence is infinite being limited only by the capacity and characteristics of the creature (Genesis 1:6-8).

Mercy or Lovingkindness

Scriptures: Psalm 103:8; 136:1; Ephesians 2:4-5; 1 Peter 1:3.

Mercy or lovingkindness is God's benevolent compassion toward man as a sinner, especially in his misery as a sinner. Mercy sees man as miserable and weak without any capacity to help himself. It speaks to God withholding punishment that is justly deserved for the purpose of displaying his great patience and glory (Romans 9:15-24; 2 Peter 3:7-9).

Grace

Scriptures: Exodus 22: 26-27; Nehemiah 9:31; Psalm 116:5; Ephesians 1:4-6.

Grace is close to mercy, but differs in that it has reference to man as sinful and without the ability to gain any merit with God. Grace refers especially to the gifts of God which man can never deserve (Romans 4:4; 11:6). With grace the emphasis is more on God's person as being gracious. It is manifested especially to the believer (Acts 15:11; Ephesians 2:8-9).

Love

Scriptures: John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:8, 16

God's love is eternal and constant because it is an inherent part of His eternal essence. God's love, therefore, is without beginning or ending (Jeremiah 31:3). This means that God's love is also immutable; there is no variableness to His love. His love knows neither change nor diminishing because it depends on who He is and not on us. Though motivated by His mercy and grace, God's love is uninfluenced. By this we mean that there is nothing whatever in the objects of His love that caused or influenced His love—nothing in man to attract it (Deuteronomy 7:7-8; 1 John 4:10). His love is given and operates on the basis of grace and on the basis of God's person and eternal purposes. God's love, being eternal, is also infinite, without limits as in all other aspects of His divine essence (Ephesians 3:19).

Truth, Veracity

Scriptures: Numbers 23:19; Psalm 19:9; Isaiah 25:1; Daniel 4:37; John 14:6; Revelation 16:7.

That God is truth means He is absolutely dependable, without falseness of any kind. God's plan, principles, and promises are completely reliable, accurate, real, and factual.

Truth is (a) that which is real, as opposed to that which is fictitious or imaginary. The God of the Bible is the true God, while the gods of the heathen are vanity and nothing, mere imaginary beings, having neither existence nor attributes (Jeremiah 10:10). (b) The truth is that in which the reality exactly corresponds to the manifestation. God is true, because He really is what He declares Himself to be; because He is what He commands us to believe Him to be; and because all His declarations correspond to what really is (Numbers 23:19). (c) The truth is that which can be depended upon, which does not fail, or change, or disappoint.

In this sense also God is true as He is immutable and faithful. His promise cannot fail; His Word never disappoints (Isaiah 55:11). This attribute is the ground of all our assurance.

In Matthew 6:16 the Lord warned, "Be not as the hypocrites," because hypocrisy is so foreign to the very character of God that God's people are to emulate.