

DOCTRINE OF GOD
Lesson 3: The God Who is Like Us
Communicable Attributes

I. KEY DISTINCTIONS

A. Transcendence/ Immanence

1. Transcendence: *God is above and separate from his creation. He is, therefore, incomprehensible.*
2. Immanence: *God is also within his creation, condescending in goodness and love. Therefore, while we cannot comprehend him, we can apprehend him.*

B. Archetypal/ Ectypal

1. Archetypal: *Archetypal knowledge is that knowledge which only God possesses. It is the original, perfect form of knowledge.*
2. Ectypal: *Ectypal knowledge is the copy of the original, which we possess and is incomplete, imperfect, and dependent on God's perfect knowledge.*

C. Analogical/ Univocal/ Equivocal

1. Analogical: *Creaturely knowledge is a copy of divine knowledge.*
2. Univocal: *The knowledge of God and his creatures is identical.*
3. Equivocal: *God's knowledge and our knowledge have nothing in common.*

D. Incommunicable/ Communicable

1. Incommunicable: *Certain of God's attributes are only predicated of him.*
2. Communicable: *Certain attributes can be predicated of both God and creatures (but only analogically and finite).*

II. OMNISCIENCE, OMNIPOTENCE: *The God who is all-knowing, all-wise and all-powerful.*

A. Omniscience (1 Sam. 23:10-13; Ps. 139:1-6; Mt. 11:21; Lk. 21:18; Acts 15:18)

1. Mode of God's knowledge: *God knows "all things perfectly, undividedly, distinctly, and immutably." (Turretin, p.207)*
This is because he knows all from his essence. He never learns from anything outside of himself. It is impossible for God not to know everything comprehensively.
2. Object of God's knowledge: *God knows everything about himself and all that exists outside of himself, including that which is possible or future.*
3. *His knowledge and wisdom are inseparable, so that the use of his knowledge brings truth. (Rom. 11:33; Eph. 3:10)*

- B. Omnipotence (Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:17; Mt. 19:26; Lk. 1:37)
1. Can God do everything? He cannot act contrary to his nature (2 Tim. 2:13; Heb. 6:18; Ja. 1:13) or the course of action he has chosen.
 2. God's absolute power: God is confronted with a whole array of options before him. He can actualize any of those possibilities.
 3. God's ordained power: Once he has chosen a particular course of action, his power is constrained by his will. (i.e., once he has decided to create the world, the option of not creating the world is set to one side.) [Alistair McGrath, Christian Theology: An Introduction, p.218]

III. OMNIPRESENCE: *The God who is with us.* (Ps. 139:7-10; Acts 17:28)

- A. God is unlimited in relation to space "and is present at every point of space with his whole being." [Grudem, Systematic Theology, p.173]
1. And yet, God "acts sovereignly not only *on* creation but *in* and *within* it." [Michael Horton, The Christian Faith, p. 264]
 2. Indeed, omnipresence is a condition of omnipotence, since "no power, however great, can be efficacious unless present to its object". [Wolfhart Pannenberg, quoted by Horton, p.264]
- B. God exists without size or dimension. He is spirit and therefore has no spatial constraints. Before there was space, he existed. There was no "where"; there was only "is".

IV. MORAL ATTRIBUTES

A. GOODNESS, LOVE, AND MERCY

- a. Again, God's attributes are identical with his essence. God doesn't just have love, he is love. (1 Jn. 3:1; 4:8,16) This is true of all his attributes.
- b. As a result, his love, goodness and mercy are uncoerced. "Only God can love in absolute freedom, desiring the other without needing the other." [Horton, p. 265] This is the heart of the gospel, since God loved us when we were "weak", "sinners", and "enemies". (Rom. 5:6,8,10)
- c. "God is love: this identity of God the Christian experiences in and through the God who is Love in Jesus Christ, the parable and face of God." [David Tracy, quoted in Horton, p.266]
- d. Love and goodness flow to the creation in varying states:
 - i. Love and goodness to all creation. (Mt. 6:26-30)
 - ii. Love and goodness to humanity in particular. (Ps. 36:7-9; Acts 14:17)

- iii. Love and goodness to the elect in particular. (Ps. Deut. 7:6-8; 73:1)
 - e. Since these attributes are necessary rather than contingent, they would be expressed and manifested even if there were no fall into sin or even a creation external to the triune God. And since that is true, God grace and mercy are not required to be shown to anyone. He is free to be merciful and gracious to whomever he chooses. (Ex. 33:19; Rom. 9:15)
- B. HOLINESS, RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND JUSTICE**
- a. Holiness: God is distinctly different from his creation both in his being (ontology) and his purity (ethics). In addition, his holiness becomes for those in Christ a source of delight rather than judgment, since God moves toward us and sets us apart from sin and judgment. (1 Cor. 1:30)
 - b. Righteousness: God always acts in accordance with his nature, and his nature determines what is “right”. The term, righteousness, is closely associated with justice.
 - i. For those outside of Christ, the righteousness of God is a threat since it is a revelation of God’s moral requirements that testify against our sin. They are known as the “unrighteous”. (Rom. 3:5-6, 9-20)
 - ii. In Christ, it becomes the grounds of our acceptance before God: Jesus’ faithful obedience satisfies God’s righteous judgment for the believer. (Rom. 1:17-18; 5:1; Phil. 3:7-9)