

## Theology Proper

### Part 2 - The Communicable Attributes of God

- **Who is God and What is He like?**

A) God is a Spirit. He is infinite, eternal and unchangeable. He is perfect in His being and in holiness.

**B) He is perfect in wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.**

“There is but one, and only one, living and true God. He is self-existent and infinite in His being and His perfections. None but He can comprehend or understand His essence. He is pure spirit, invisible, and without body, parts, or the changeable feelings of men. He alone possesses immortality, and dwells amid the light insufferably bright to mortal men. He never changes. He is great beyond all our conceptions, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty and infinite. He is most holy, wise, free and absolute. All that He does is the out-working of His changeless, righteous will, and for His own glory. He is most loving, gracious, merciful and compassionate. He abounds in goodness and truth. He forgives iniquity, transgression and sin. He rewards those who seek Him diligently. But He hates sin. He will not overlook guilt or spare the guilty, and He is perfectly just in executing judgment.”<sup>1</sup>

#### God is perfect in **Wisdom** and **Truth**.

Psalm 139:1-6 – “O LORD, *you have searched me and known me!* You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you *discern my thoughts from afar*. You search out my path and my lying down and are *acquainted with all my ways*. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, *you know it altogether*. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

Hebrews 4:13 – “And no creature is hidden from his sight, but *all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account*.”

1 John 3:19-20 – “By this we shall know that we are of the truth and *reassure our heart* before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, *God is greater than our heart*, and he knows everything.

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<sup>1</sup> 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith

<sup>2</sup> Pink, A. W. *The Attributes of God: Omniscience*

“God Is Omniscient. He knows everything; everything possible, everything actual; all events, all creatures, of the past, the present, and the future. He is perfectly acquainted with every detail in the life of every being in heaven, in earth, and in hell. "He knoweth what is in the darkness" (Dan. 2:22).

Nothing escapes His notice, nothing can be hidden from Him, nothing is forgotten by Him. Well may we say with the psalmist, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it" (Ps. 139:6).

His knowledge is perfect. He never errs, never changes, never overlooks anything. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to give an account" (Heb. 4:13). Such is the God with whom we "have to do!"<sup>2</sup>

### **God is perfect in Power.**

Matthew 19:26 – “But Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Nahum 1:1-10; Jeremiah 51:15; 1 Chronicles 29:10-13

“WE CANNOT HAVE a right conception of God unless we think of Him as all-powerful, as well as all-wise. He who cannot do what he will and perform all his pleasure cannot be God. As God has a will to resolve what He deems good, so He has power to execute His will.

The power of God is that ability and strength whereby He can bring to pass whatsoever He pleases, whatsoever His infinite wisdom may direct, and whatsoever the infinite purity of His will may resolve . . . As holiness is the beauty of all God’s attributes, so power is that which gives life and action to all the perfections of the Divine nature.

How vain would be the eternal counsels, if power did not step in to execute them. Without power His mercy would be but feeble pity, His promises an empty sound, His threatenings a mere scarecrow. God’s power is like Himself: infinite, eternal, incomprehensible; it can neither be checked, restrained, nor frustrated by the creature.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Pink, A. W. *The Attributes of God: Omniscience*

<sup>3</sup> Pink, A. W. *The Attributes of God: Omnipotence*

## God is perfect in **Justice**.

Deuteronomy 32:3-4 – “For I will proclaim the name of the LORD; ascribe greatness to our God! “The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.”

Romans 3:23-26 – “[F]or all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Justice, which means doing in all circumstances things that are right, is one expression of God’s holiness. God displays his justice as legislator and judge, and also as promise-keeper and pardoner of sin. His moral law, requiring behavior that matches his own, is “holy, righteous and good” (Rom. 7:12).

He judges justly, according to actual desert (Gen. 18:25; Pss. 7:11; 96:13; Acts 17:31). His “wrath,” that is, his active judicial hostility to sin, is wholly just in its manifestations (Rom. 2:5-16), and his particular “judgments” (retributive punishments) are glorious and praiseworthy (Rev. 16:5, 7; 19:1-4).

Whenever God fulfills his covenant commitment by acting to save his people, it is a gesture of “righteousness,” that is, justice (Isa. 51:5-6; 56:1; 63:1; 1 John 1:9). When God justifies sinners through faith in Christ, he does so on the basis of justice done, that is, the punishment of our sins in the person of Christ our substitute; thus the form taken by his justifying mercy shows him to be utterly and totally just (Rom. 3:25-26), and our justification itself is shown to be judicially justified.<sup>4</sup>

## God is perfect in **Goodness**.

Psalm 107:8-9 – “Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.”

Exodus 34:5-7a – “The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow

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<sup>4</sup> Packer, J. I. (1993). *Concise theology: A guide to historic Christian beliefs*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.

to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin....”

“The Goodness Of God endureth continually” (Ps. 52:1). The goodness of God respects the perfection of His nature: “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). There is such an absolute perfection in God’s nature and being that nothing is wanting to it or defective in it; nothing can be added to it to make it better.

He is originally good, good of Himself, which nothing else is; for all creatures are good only by participation and communication from God. He is essentially good; not only good, but goodness itself: the creature’s good is a superadded quality, in God it is His essence.

He is infinitely good; the creature’s good is but a drop, but in God there is an infinite ocean or gathering together of good. He is eternally and immutably good, for He cannot be less good than He is; as there can be no addition made to Him, so no subtraction from Him.

God is *summum bonum*, the ‘chiefest good.’

The original Saxon meaning of our English word God is “The Good.” God is not only the greatest of all beings, but the best. All the goodness there is in any creature has been imparted from the Creator, but God’s goodness is underived, for it is the essence of His eternal nature.”<sup>5</sup>

\*The perfection of God in all of His attributes is one of the most underrated and undervalued truths, which we so flippantly affirm and rarely consider.

### **Thinking through the Information**

Which of God’s attributes do you find comforting? Why?

Which of God’s attributes do you find fearful? Why?

How has your previous concept of God been challenged by this information?

How has your previous concept of God been encouraged by this information?

What are some practical consequences (daily effects on thoughts, words or deeds) of a person’s accurate or inaccurate concept of the character and nature of God?

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<sup>5</sup> Pink, A. W. *The Attributes of God: Goodness*