**Maranatha Bible Church 2020**

**Equipping Hour: Systematic Theology**

**Week 6: Attributes of God Part 4**

**God’s Communicable Attributes Continued** :

“Those distinguished as communicable, of which some faint, but infinitely defective resemblances, may be found among his creatures, - as knowledge, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth…”[[1]](#footnote-1)

Grudem says that based upon Ephesians 5:1 “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.” we are to imitate each of these in our own lives. Not to the degree that God does perfectly, but there should be some semblance of them.[[2]](#footnote-2)

1. **Personality** 
   1. God is a person. To be a person, something must have thoughts, will and emotions.
      1. Thoughts:
         1. Deuteronomy 32:8 “When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, When He separated the sons of man, He set the boundaries of the peoples According to the number of the sons of Israel.”
      2. Will:
         1. Revelation 4:11 “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”
      3. Emotions:
         1. Isaiah 62:5 “For as a young man marries a virgin, So your sons will marry you; And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So your God will rejoice over you.”
   2. We too have thoughts, will and emotions, though they are subjected to our sinful nature. God’s, of course, are not.
   3. One of the ways that God reveals Himself to us is by using a name. By using a name, it demonstrates that God is not some abstract idea and that He desires a personal relationship with us.
      1. He is called Father (**Rom. 8:15**), He speaks to us (**Eze. 39:17**), He desires us to speak to Him (**Phil. 4:6**)…this means that God is not “merely one of whom we hear, but one who we meet and know.”[[3]](#footnote-3)
      2. Though none of the above traits *make Him a person,* they show that as a person, He desire to have an intimate relationship with us.
2. **Holiness**
   1. God is majestically transcendent, unique and set apart from His creation being separate, free and intolerant to any sin.
   2. Notice there are two aspects to the holiness of God:
      1. Metaphysical / Majestic Holiness
         1. Freedom from all sin…
      2. Moral / Ethical / Purity Holiness
         1. Hatred of all sin…
      3. “The Holiness of God is that essential perfection of his nature, which lies in perfect freedom from, and hatred of all sin, and in perfect love to everything holy and pure.”[[4]](#footnote-4)
   3. God’s Majestic Holiness:
      1. Exodus 15:11 “Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?”
      2. 1 Samuel 2:2 “There is no one holy like the LORD, Indeed, there is no one besides You, Nor is there any rock like our God.”
      3. Psalm 105:3 “Glory in His holy name; Let the heart of those who seek the LORD be glad.”
         1. This means that there is no other like God. There is nothing that we can compare Him to, He is separate.
         2. He is not effected by sin as we are.
   4. God’s Moral Holiness
      1. Leviticus 11:44 “For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth.”
      2. 1 Peter 1:15-16 “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.”
      3. 1 John 1:5 “This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.”
         1. God is not sin, God cannot sin and God desires that no one sin. This is what His moral holiness is.
   5. Anything or anyone associated with the Lord is also holy.
      1. Isaiah 52:1 “Awake, awake, Clothe yourself in your strength, O Zion; Clothe yourself in your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; For the uncircumcised and the unclean Will no longer come into you.”
      2. Isaiah 52:10 “The LORD has bared His holy arm In the sight of all the nations, That all the ends of the earth may see The salvation of our God.”
      3. Isaiah 56:7 “Even those I will bring to My holy mountain And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.”
         1. The things that are the Lord’s will also be like Him with regards to His holiness. If the Lord is there, that place is holy.
   6. God desires that His people be a holy people.
      1. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.”
      2. There are two reasons that we should strive for holiness as people of God.
         1. God lives in us.
            1. Galatians 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”
            2. John 13:23 “Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.”
         2. We should hate the things that He hates
            1. Romans 12:9 “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.”
            2. Psalm 97:10 “Hate evil, you who love the LORD, Who preserves the souls of His godly ones; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked.”
   7. If we are the Lord’s, then we need to submit to Him as King. We share this attribute with Him, though He *is* holy and we are becoming Holy.
   8. There is positional sanctification and practical sanctification. Positionally, we are fully holy before God…that will never change. Practically, we are working out our holiness on a day by day basis with every choice we make.
3. **Righteousness / Justice**
   1. “God’s righteousness means that God always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right.”[[5]](#footnote-5)
   2. “The justice of God is ‘the perfect righteousness of God in which all His judgments and actions are right (and, in fact, are the very definition of what is right.)’”[[6]](#footnote-6)
   3. Genesis 18:25 “Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?”
      1. God cannot passively overlook sin and ***must always*** act justly.
   4. Nehemiah 9:33 “However, You are just in all that has come upon us; For You have dealt faithfully, but we have acted wickedly.”
   5. Romans 3:25-26 “whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”
   6. How can we, as sinful man, determine what God’s righteousness and justice are? The Bible.
      1. Psalm 1:2-3 “But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.
      2. Psalm 119:11 “Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.”
      3. Psalm 119:105 “Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.”
      4. It is only by the Word of God that we may know the will of God and therefore be able to walk in such a way that pleases Him because we are walking justly.
   7. The Lord Himself is righteous and is the standard of righteousness.
      1. Psalm 11:7 “For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness (as in righteous deeds); The upright will behold His face.”
      2. God is the standard for what is right…His the final standard…He is the only standard…
   8. When we talk about *what is right…*
      1. “In other words, what *ought* to happen and what *ought* to be? Here we must respond that *whatever conforms to God’s moral character is right.* But why is whatever conforms to God’s moral character right? It I right because it conforms to his moral character! If indeed God is the final standard of righteousness, then there can be no standard outside of God by which we measure righteousness or justice. He himself is the final standard.”[[7]](#footnote-7)
   9. Punitive Justice (punishing sin)
      1. “God will punish sin, for sin intrinsically deserves to be punished.”[[8]](#footnote-8)
      2. Genesis 2:17 “…but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”
      3. Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
   10. Remunerative Justice (rewarding righteousness)
       1. “God’s distributing of rewards for obeying his law.”[[9]](#footnote-9)
       2. Deuteronomy 7:8 “but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”
       3. Romans 2:7 “…to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life;”
   11. Key point to know about the righteousness and justice of God…Man cannot question the standards or workings of God.
       1. Romans 9:20-21 “On the contrary, ***who are you, O man, who answers back to God***? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? ***Or does not the potter have a right over the clay***, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?”
       2. Romans 11:33-36 “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! ***How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!*** For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”
       3. Job 40:2, 8 "***Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty?*** Let him who reproves God answer it." 8 "Will you really annul My judgment? ***Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?***”
   12. Through all of this, we are told that we need to have the righteousness of Christ imputed to us for salvation and which is only available through faith (**Rom. 3:21-22**).
4. **Wrath**
   1. “God’s wrath means that he intensely hates all sin.”[[10]](#footnote-10)
   2. God’s endless anger and hatred towards all that is wicked.
   3. ***Wrath can be correctly characterized as both an attribute and an action***. We can see that because God’s deep disdain for sin He is wrathful towards it. So wrath both makes up who He is and how He acts upon sin and sinners.
   4. Exodus 32:9-10 “The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation.”
   5. John 3:36 “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”
   6. Colossians 3:6 “For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience…”
   7. **Displays of God’s wrath:**
      1. Leviticus 10:1-3 “Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. Then Moses said to Aaron, "It is what the LORD spoke, saying, 'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored.'" So Aaron, therefore, kept silent.
      2. Revelation 20:11-15 “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”
   8. God’s wrath is expressed in **action** *and* with **inaction**.
      1. 1 Thessalonians 5:9 “For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ…”
      2. Romans 1:24 “…Therefore ***God gave them over*** in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.”
         1. While God is acting, but withdrawing, the point is that He is no longer actively performing anything good in their life.
   9. **God’s wrath ultimately glorifies Himself** 
      1. Romans 9:22-23 “What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory…”
   10. **God’s wrath and patience** 
       1. 2 Peter 3:9 “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”
       2. Romans 2:4 “Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?”
   11. “So God delays his wrath for the sake of his love.”[[11]](#footnote-11)
5. **The Problem with Evil**
   1. After discussing all of God’s attributes, how powerful and loving He is, it usually leads to the question that if God is all of these things…why is there evil?
   2. The *supposed* problem of evil is often times called a Theodicy (from Greek θεός, “god”; ἐκδίκησις, “justice”), explanation of why a perfectly good, almighty and all-knowing God permits evil.
   3. How can evil exist if God is all-powerful and good?
      1. If God is all powerful then He would be able to prevent / stop evil.
      2. If God is good then He would desire to prevent evil.
      3. Therefore, if God is both all-powerful and good, there should be no evil.
      4. ***There is evil…so there is no God***, or He is not all powerful, or He is not good.
         1. There are two things that this argument assumes…
            1. **One is that there must be a standard of Good.**

Who gets to decide the standard if not God?

* + - * 1. **Two is that all evil is bad, worthless and pointless**.

We cannot see the past clearly nor the future at all. How do we know that something which happened is bad, could it not actually be good?

“The argument assumes that there is no sufficient reason why God would permit evil, such as the accomplishment of a greater good.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

* + - 1. We, as Christians, need to admit the following truth about evil…
         1. It exists. The world is plagued with evil.

We cannot deny it or make it out to be some abstract idea.

* + - * 1. Since God is all-powerful and knows all things, He either determines or allows evil to exist and work in this life.

We cannot deny God’s character or attributes in an attempt to defend God…***we say what the Bible says***.

* + - * 1. We simply do not have all the answers, but we have context and meaning.

It is because God *does* have all the answers that we know we can rest in Him, even when we simply do not know.

* 1. We will never fully know the answer to the question as to *why evil exists*, but we certainly have some guardrails that keep us from living like those with no hope.
     1. We have to fully understand and believe that ***no person is neutral!*** We can struggle to understand sin because we think that left to their own, man would be okay. This is a complete and utter lie!!
     2. It is absolutely and completely impossible for man to live a good life without the Lord intervening. We are sinful and dark people.
     3. John Frame says that if God enticed or forced man to sin, this "would picture God as some kind of giant Mafia boss who keeps his hands clean by forcing underlings to carry out his nasty designs"[[13]](#footnote-13). God has clearly revealed that man sins as the result of his own desires rather than the coercion of God.

1. **God’s Providence and Evil**
   1. God sovereignly predetermines all things.
      1. Ephesians 1:11 “…also we have obtained an inheritance, ***having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will***…”
      2. Lamentations 3:37-38 “Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, Unless the Lord has commanded it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High That both good and ill go forth?”
   2. God was in providential control of the fall of man.
      1. **Genesis 3**
   3. Because of the Fall, God causes and uses natural catastrophes
      1. Romans 8:22 “For we know that the ***whole creation groans and suffers*** the pains of childbirth together until now.”’
      2. Isaiah 45:7 “The One forming light and creating darkness, ***Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these.***”
   4. We know that God predetermines and predestines sin, but this in no way makes Him culpable. Those who decide to sin stand solely responsible.
      1. Acts 2:23 “…this Man, ***delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God***, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.”
      2. Acts 4:27 “For truly in this city ***there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus***, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel.”
         1. You can see both the predetermination of God ***and*** the will of man to carry out what God desired.
   5. We know that God hardens sinners in their sin.
      1. Romans 9:18 “So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.”
   6. We also know that God hardens the sinners hearts, He never tempts anyone to sin.
      1. James 1:13 “Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.”
   7. Man ***does what he wants*** and is culpable…yet ***God works through sinful choices***.
      1. Genesis 50:20 “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.”
2. **God uses evil for His glory.** 
   1. The wicked have a divine purpose.
      1. Proverbs 16:4 “The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, ***Even the wicked for the day of evil***.”
   2. It displays His grace and mercy.
      1. Romans 3:25 “…whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed…”
3. ***Any attempt to give answers for the problem of evil through dethroning God of his sovereign power, limiting God's knowledge, or questioning God's goodness, should be refuted as biblical impossibilities***.
   1. Frame says, "It would be nice to have a solution to the problem of evil, but not at any price. If the price we must pay is the very sovereignty of God, the faithful Christian must say that the price is too high. After all, it is of little importance whether any of us discovers the answer to the problem of evil. It is possible to live a long and happy and faithful life without an answer. But it is all-important that we worship the true God, the God of Scripture. Without Him, human life is worth nothing"[[14]](#footnote-14)
4. **What about man’s free will?** 
   1. One of the most frequently used answers amongst Christians is found in the Free-Will argument.
      1. Simply, the choices man makes are not foreordained or caused by God and, therefore, God cannot be held responsible for the existence of evil.
      2. The freedom of the will, as a gift from God, delivers God from His responsibility for evil and places it upon man.
      3. Undoubtedly, Scripture teaches that man is responsible for sin, however, Scripture also gives clear references to God foreordaining and decreeing all things which occur.
   2. A potter has every right to do as he desires with his clay. All people belong to the same lump of fallen humanity through the sin of Adam. All of mankind has willingly rejected God in active sin prior to God hardening their already sinful hearts. The person questioning the justice of God is not pointed to man's free will for the answer, but rather, to a sovereign God who acts in perfection as He pleases.[[15]](#footnote-15)
5. Sometimes, it is best to conclude Deuteronomy 29:29 “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.”

1. John Brown of Haddington, Systematic Theology A Compendious View of Natural and Revealed Religion, 1817, p. 101-102 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Wayne Grudem p. 186 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Millard Erickson p. 241 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. John Brown of Haddington p. 112 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Wayne Grudem, p. 203 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Matt Waymeyer, p. 102 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Wayne Grudem p. 204 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Millard Erickson p. 315 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. MacArthur, *Biblical Doctrine,* p. 184 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Wayne Grudem p. 206 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. John Frame *The Doctrine of God* p.466 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Joel Beeke p. 1092 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. John Frame. *Apologetics to the Glory of God*. p. 166Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1994. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ibid p. 154 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/evil.cfm> 10/20/2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)