

Biblical Theology

Unit 2: Doctrine of God – Lesson 4: Communicable Attributes of God Part 1

Communicable Attributes

- Definition: Attributes of God that he shares with mankind.
- Everyday Significance of God's Communicable Attributes.
 - *Colossians 1:15 - The Son is the image of the invisible God*
 - *Romans 8:29 - to be conformed to the image of his Son*
 - *Colossians 3:10 - in knowledge according to the image of its creator.*
- As we exercise God's attributes, we bear his image.

Unity

- Definition: God is not divided into parts, yet we see different attributes of God emphasized at different times.
 - When Scripture speaks about God's attributes it never singles out one attribute of God as more important than all the rest.
 - *Exodus 34:6-7 - merciful and gracious...yet by no means clearing the guilty...*
 - *1 John 4:8 – God is love*
 - *Nahum 1:8 - He will make a full end of his adversaries*

Spirituality

- Definition: God exists as a being that is not made of any matter, has no parts or dimensions, is unable to be perceived by bodily senses, and is more excellent than any other kind of existence.
 1. **God is Spirit (Omnipresence)**
 - *John 4:24 - God is spirit...*
- Communicable Tie to Mankind
 - Man has Spirit
 - *Luke 23:46 - Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.*
 - Spirit of man is integral in relating with God, who is spirit.
 - *John 4:24 - those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.*

Invisibility

- Definition: God's invisibility means that God's total essence, all of his spiritual being, will never be able to be seen by us, yet God still shows himself to us through visible, created things.
 1. **God is invisible**
 - *John 6:46 - Not that anyone has seen the...*
 - *1 Tim 1:17 - To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible...*
 - *Romans 1:20 - his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are...*
 2. **God makes appearances - Theophany**
 - *Genesis 18:1-33, Genesis 32:28-30, Exodus 33:21-23, John 14:9, John 1:18, Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 1:3.*
 - Although what man sees is not an exhaustive vision of God, it is a completely true and clear and real vision of God that brings man inexhaustible joy.
- Communicable Tie to Mankind
 - There are certain aspects of man that are invisible. (Thoughts, emotions, dreams, etc.)

Knowledge

- Definition: God fully knows himself and all things actual and possible in one simple, eternal act.
 1. **God fully knows.**
 - 1 John 3:20 - for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.
 - Job 37:16 - the wondrous works of the one whose knowledge is perfect,
 2. **God knows himself.**
 - 1 Corinthians 2:10-11 - the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.
 - 1 John 1:5 - in him there is no darkness at all.
 3. **God knows all things actual.**
 - Things that exist throughout all time, past, present, future.
 - Matthew 10:29-30 - even the hairs of your head are all counted.
 - Matthew 6:8 - for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.
 - Psalm 139:16 - In your book were written all my days that were formed
 4. **God knows all that is possible**
 - God knows things that might happen but that do not actually come to pass.
 - 1 Sam 23:11-13 - The Lord said, "He will come down."
 - Matthew 11:21 – they would have repented
- Communicable Tie to Mankind
 - Man can possess and use knowledge in ways unique from all of creation.

Wisdom

- Definition: God's wisdom means that God always chooses the best goals and the best means to those goals.
 1. **God uses what he knows to always bring about the best result.**
 - Job 9:4 - He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength.
 - Job 12:13 - he has counsel and understanding.
 - Psalm 104:24 - In wisdom you have made them all
 - 1 Corinthians 1:24 - Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.
- Communicable Tie to Mankind
 - When desiring to make the right decision with what we know, we can ask God for guidance.
 - James 1:5 - If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God
 - Psalm 19:7 - the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple;
 - Deuteronomy 4:6 - this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples

Truthfulness

- Definition: God's truthfulness means that he is the true God, and that all knowledge and words are both true and the final standard of truth.
 1. **God has been, is and forever will be the true God.**
 - Jeremiah 10:10-11 - But the Lord is the true God; The gods...shall perish
 - John 17:3 - the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.
 - 1 John 5:20 - He is the true God and eternal life.
 2. **God's faithfulness means that God will always do what he has said and fulfill what he has promised.**
 - Numbers 23:19 - God is not a human being, that he should lie...
 - 2 Samuel 7:28 - your words are true
 - Titus 1:2 - in the hope of eternal life that God, who never lies

- *Hebrews 6:18 - it is impossible that God would prove false,*
 - Anything that flows from God is truth and trustworthy
 - Anything God says about himself or creation correspond with reality.
- 3. *God's words aren't merely true (conforming to standard of truth outside of God), rather they are true because God is truth.***
- *John 17:17 - Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.*
 - *John 14:6 - "I am the way, and the truth, and the life.*
- Communicable Tie to Mankind
 - Knowledge is tied to wisdom and wisdom is tied to truth and truth is tied to faithfulness.
 - The bible teaches us not to lie because, not only does it do harm, it misrepresents God's image/character.
 - *Exodus 20:16 - You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*
 - *Proverbs 13:5 - The righteous hate falsehood,*
 - *Proverbs 12:22 - Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight.*
 - *Revelation 21:8 - But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."*
 - Knowing God, applying wisdom, standing for truth means exercising faithfulness to God.

Discussion Questions

1. Define the following term:
 - Theophany:
2. If God is Spirit, how should we think of him when we are worshiping him?
3. What ideas come to mind as you realize God knows everything?
4. What is the difference between God being all-knowing and being all-wise?
5. God's wisdom means that God always chooses the best goals and the best means to those goals. How has this been true in your own life?
6. Why is it significant to recognize God is not just true, but he is truth?
7. Colossians 3:10 tells us that the more we know God, the more we reflect his image. How does this affect your view of his communicable attributes?

Reading Assignment

*Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem – Chapter 12: The Character of God: "Communicable" Attributes
Read Section C. Moral Attributes.*