

THEOLOGY PROPER (55)

QUESTION #15 - What are the **Communicable Attributes** of God?

For the sake of systematic analysis, we are examining God's attributes under two separate categories: 1) The incommunicable attributes- those attributes which are found in God and in no other; 2) The communicable attributes- those attributes which are found in God and to a certain extent can be discovered in others.

The communicable attributes most definitely prove the existence of God. For when all is said and done, there can be no other explanation for their existence. The communicable attributes are attributes that characterize God and to a certain extent characterize God's creation. Whoever distributes these attributes to another, must Himself have them in order to distribute them. Such is the case with the communicable attributes of God.

Communicable Attribute #1- Freedom.

This is the attribute of God, which in some respects is incommunicable and in other respects is communicable. The attribute of freedom means that God is absolutely free in His will to do whatever He desires to do and is completely independent from any and all restrictions, He has no dependency on any of His creatures or His creation. When it comes to God, the Bible paints this attribute in the most absolute terms:

- 1) Job 11:10 – There is nothing that can restrain God- He is completely free to do what He wants.
- 2) Job 33:13 – God is completely free and is under no obligation to give any account of anything He does or permits.
- 3) Ps.115:3 – God is absolutely free and does whatever He pleases.
- 4) Prov.21:1 – God is free from any restriction and can turn a person's mind anyway.
- 5) Is.29:16 – God is completely free to do whatever He wants with whomever He wants. This is true even with the most arrogant and godless (10:12)
- 6) Is.29:16 – God is absolutely free and not equal with any other being.
- 7) Is.45:9 – God does whatever He wants and “woe” to any who want to quibble with Him.
- 8) Mt.20:15 – God has total freedom to do whatever He wants because He owns it all.
- 9) Rom.9:15-24 – God has total freedom in determining who is saved.
- 10) I Cor.12:11 – God has total freedom in the distribution of spiritual gifts.
- 11) Rev.4:11 – God is worthy of praise because of His absolute freedom to do whatever He desires.

Clearly the Attribute of freedom is one that is abundantly supported in Scripture. God is free to do whatever He desires to do. Dr. Berkhof said: "God determines voluntarily what and whom He will create, and the times, places and circumstances of their destiny, and uses them for His purposes. And though He endows them with freedom, yet He controls their actions." (p.78) Berkhof hits on many points in this one statement, and one of the points is that God "endows" His creation with a certain "freedom." To a certain extent, the attribute of freedom may be seen in God's creation.

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God did not make His creation a robotic world, but granted His creation a certain freedom to make rational and moral choices. When we say God's creation has been granted a certain freedom, we do not mean freedom in an absolute sense, for in order for one to be free in an absolute sense, one must be free from all influences and accountability, and only God has this level of freedom. However, we do admit that God's creation has been given a certain freedom which enables it to make certain choices, preferring one thing rather than another. Whether in the world of birds, fish, animals or humans, certain freedom of choices may be observed.

All choices fall under the sovereign jurisdiction of God. All choices are influenced by something. All choices have some accountability factor. There is in a limited sense a certain level of freedom of choice that may be seen in God's creation and this level of choice displays the attribute of God's freedom.

This attribute of God's freedom is meaningful in several ways:

- 1) It should cause us to stand in awe of God, the ONLY Being who has absolute freedom.
- 2) It should cause us to be humble before God, realizing that in His absolute freedom of choice, He chose us.
- 3) It should cause us to ask God for wisdom in all choices we make, realizing that we are influenced by many things and very accountable for our choices.
- 4) It should cause us to thank God when we see terrible choices being made by others, realizing apart from God working in our lives, we should have been the one making the same choice.
- 5) It should cause us to carefully think through every choice we make, realizing the freedom to choose is a privilege from God. which means our choices are accountable to God.

Communicable Attribute #2- Goodness.

This is the attribute of God which means God is always infinitely and perfectly good. He has a nature that is good, He will always do good and He is the source of all good. God the absolute and infinite opposite of bad. Everything God **does** is good. Everything God **is**, is good. Everything God **does** is good even the negative. Nothing God can do can ever be classified as being bad. He may authorize bad things to happen, but there are always good reasons and results. God will always do what is good in regard to His Person, His good pleasure, His word and His will. There are many passages which speak of this wonderful attribute:

- 1) Ps.100:5 - God is good and demonstrates His goodness to all people and generations.
- 2) Ps.136:1 - God is to be thanked for His goodness which created all things, destroys all enemies and preserves His people.
- 3) Ps.145:9 - God has been good to all and in His goodness He extends His mercy in every area of his creation.
- 4) Jer.33:11 - God is good to bless His thankful people, and He will give Israel her land.
- 5) Nahum 1:7 - God is good to those who turn to Him in times of trouble.
- 6) Mt.19:17/Mk.10:18 - God is the only Being who is good, and He is the only source of good.
- 7) Rom.8:28 - God works good in all things in a conforming Him to Christ.
- 8) James 1:17 - God's goodness is the cause of anything that is good on earth.

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Goodness is most definitely a communicable attribute and it is expected that a believer, especially a leader in God's church will specifically have it. "Loving what is good" is not optional for the leader (Titus 1:8). He must love everything good: people, places, things, teaching, talk.

It also needs to be pointed out that it was this attribute that enables God to classify everything He made as being good (i.e. Gen. 1:4,10,18,21,31). Obviously to classify something as being good, one must know exactly what good is and only God is in a position to make such a classification (i.e. Mt.19:17). Ever since Eden, there has always been an alternative to good, which is evil or bad. Anything that is good now always has the potential of being or becoming bad, with the exception of God. For example, pleasures, passions, possessions, objectives, goals, philosophies all have the potential of drifting away from being classified by God as good into the realm of becoming bad.

For example, there is nothing wrong with work. Work is good. It is designed by God to provide for one's family and to enable one to make enough so that one might be able to share with those who are without. In fact, if one refuses to work to provide for his wife and children, he is to be excommunicated from the church (II Thess.3:11-15). Clearly, work is good. However, when one makes work his or her "god" or works at the expense of neglecting the fellowship of God's people and the instruction from God's church, or works with the sole goal of gaining and hoarding more and more wealth, it is bad in the sight of God. In this case, something good gets turned by man into something bad.

Since God is good, we, who are should always be striving to do good and be good. We should be cultivating this attribute in our own lives. This attribute is meaningful in several ways:

- 1) It should cause us to recognize the greatness of a God who is always good.
- 2) It should cause us to realize that everything God does will be good.
- 3) It should cause us to realize that everything God permits will have an ultimate purpose that will be good.
- 4) It should cause us to realize that good can only be classified as good by God.
- 5) It should cause us to realize that believers have the potential of developing as good.
- 6) It should cause us to realize that all humans have the potential of doing bad.
- 7) It should warn us that it is possible to turn something good given by God into something bad.
- 8) It should cause us to realize that something that appears to be bad, may in fact have a greater purpose for good for God (i.e. amputation of a limb, may save a life or even greater a soul; war, which appears bad, may save a nation or fulfill prophecy. Due to God's nature, He must work all things out for good, specifically for His people (Rom.8:28).