

## THEOLOGY PROPER (65)

The justice of God is meaningful to us in several ways:

- 1) It should cause us to humbly bow before God recognizing that in His grace, He reaches out to sinners He can legitimately condemn.
- 2) It should cause us to realize that God's justice demands righteous judgment which will be accurate and true, both remuneration and retribution.
- 3) It should cause us to make our judgments accurate and true, without showing any partiality or favoritism.
- 4) It should promote a godly life of service, knowing God's justice demands judgment.

### **Communicable Attribute #6- Knowledge.**

Many theologians place this attribute under and/or with the attribute of God's Omniscience. The attribute of omniscience, however, emphasizes the unique level of God's "all-knowing" knowledge, whereas this attribute emphasizes the communicable potential of man gaining some of God's knowledge. Solomon wrote: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov.1:7). He also wrote: "Then you will discern the fear of the LORD and discover the knowledge of God" (Prov.2:5). Clearly, we see from this that in Solomon's mind, it was certainly possible for man to gain some level of knowledge from God. When we turn to the N.T., we discover that the Apostle Peter wrote: "But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Pet.3:18). Clearly the assumption is made that it is possible to gain a measure of God's knowledge. Based on these Biblical realities, it is perfectly legitimate to classify "knowledge" as a communicable attribute.

**The main distinction between God and man, when it comes to knowledge, is that God already knows everything, whereas man is continually seeking to know something.**

Having knowledge may be defined as being in a state of knowing something. Obviously, God is in a continual state of knowing everything about everything, God knows all things actual, possible, universal and individual. He actually knows the thoughts and intents of every persons mind and heart. He knows everything about everything.

When it comes to this attribute relating to man- it is the ability to accurately know something in a form of the manner that God knows something. Knowledge is an ability to perceive or understand something in a manner as God perceives and understands. The highest level of knowledge that one can have in this universe is not one that moves in a direction of the knowledge level of other sinful, finite men, but one that moves in a direction of the infinite holy God. God, Himself, says: "Counsel is mine and sound wisdom, I am understanding, power is mine" (Prov.8:14), The potential of a human tapping into God's knowledge is an exciting possibility. It is more valuable than the "choicest gold" (Prov.8:10). It makes one a strong and powerful individual and one who increases in knowledge is one who will increase in power (Prov.24:5). It is imperative to living a blameless life (Phil.1:9-10) and a worthy life (Col. 1:9-10).

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The Scriptures are very specific in what it takes to begin the process of gaining knowledge:

1. There must be a fear of the LORD. Prov.1:7; 9:10
2. There must be a willingness to be taught. Prov.2:1-2
3. There must be a specific prayer. Prov.2:3
4. There must be intense study. Prov.2:4

If these prerequisites are met, it is possible for a sinful, finite human being to tap into the knowledge of God. It is possible for a sinful, finite human being to be granted, by God, a certain knowledge level in which that person perceives and understands things far beyond the realm of the norm.

This attribute is meaningful to us in several ways:

- 1) It should cause us to stand amazed that God would allow any access to His knowledge.
- 2) It should motivate each of us to meet the prerequisites for His knowledge.
- 3) It should cause us to realize only when one is right with God are greater levels of knowledge actually possible.

### Communicable Attribute #7- Love.

In the Bible, there are certain direct statements which are made about God. We could classify these statements as "God is" statements. For example, John 4:24 says "God is spirit." I John 1:5 says "God is light." Of all of the "God is" statements found in the Bible, there is none more profound as the one found in I John 4:8 which says "God is love."

What this statement means, as Dr. Chafer articulated, is, "God has not attained unto love, nor does He by and effort maintain love; it is the structure of His being. He is the unfailing source of all love." (Vol.1, p.205)

The fact that Jesus Christ said "love" was the key to all of the law and prophetic writings (Mt.22:36-40) indicates both the importance of understanding this attribute and the communicable nature of it. It is assumed that God's love will be cultivated in the life of a believer. We are charged to love each other (Rom.12:9-10). We are charge to love our neighbor (Rom.13:8-10). Husbands are charged to love their wives as Christ loved the church (Eph,5:25). Wives are charged to love their husbands and children (Titus 2:4). Believers are charged to love their enemies, even those who hate us (Luke 6:27). **These realities clearly identify a communicable expectation of God- namely that His people learn to demonstrate a love that reflects His character.**

Unfortunately, when comes to the subject of love, many neglect a careful study of what it actually is. We may be certain that any natural, sinful, finite human's perspective of love will be far inferior and far short of God's definition of love. For example, oft times it is said: "How could a loving God send people to hell?" The actual reason for this question is because of a human's concept of the love of God. God's concept of love and man's concept of love are different.

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It is a grave mistake to equate man's distorted concept of love with God's character of love. Man's concept is often irrationally emotional and, as we shall see, that is not the way God's love really is. Dr. Paul Enns made a profound observation when he observed: "It (God's love) is not a mere emotional impulse, but a rational and voluntary affection...". It (God's love) is "a reasoned-out love, rather than an emotionally-based love..." (Enns, 19,182)

Furthermore, the love of God is just one of the attributes of God. We must remember that even though it is true that God is love, it is also equally true that He is Holy and Just. God's love can graciously provide an ultimate sacrifice for sin, but His holiness and justice cannot dismiss sin. Dr. Charles Ryrie observed that a true concept of love, like God's concept of love, requires both affection and correction. He goes on to say that love in its perfected state cannot ever overpower holiness and must punish those who reject Christ and choose to die in their own sins. (Ryrie, pp.39-40)

The Greek noun of the word that is used in connection with this attribute of God is "agape" (ἀγάπη). This noun comes from the verb "agapao" (ἀγαπάω). Generally speaking in Greek, there are two key N.T. verbs used for the word "love" - agapao and phileo (φιλέω). The main distinction between these two words is that phileo is a love based on emotion and agapao is a love based on calculated reason.

G. Abbott-Smith, an esteemed Greek Lexicographer, said that one reason why God's love can be commanded is because it is not based on emotion but on mental calculation (p.3). One cannot command a person to feel a certain way, but one can command a person to choose to think in a certain way. Charles Baker observed, "Agape, unlike phileo, does not express tender affection, but rather indicates the exercise of the divine will in deliberate choice." Baker goes on to cite Herman Cremer who says: "It denotes the love which chooses its object with decision of will..." (Baker p.139). Truly "God is love" but understanding what that means and being able to develop this attribute to a certain extent in our own character is not an easy assignment. The love of God is a theme so vast and so deep that Paul prayed that the Ephesians would be able to comprehend, with all the saints, the colossal dimensions of it (Eph.3:14-19). Coming to a true understanding of the communicable attribute of love so that it may be demonstrated to a certain extent in our own lives, is no simple task.

To begin to think in terms of God's attribute of love, we must draw a sharp contrast between divine love and human love. The theologian Floyd Barackman makes a very important observation on this very issue: "God's love must be distinguished from human love, which is often spontaneous and which rises from pleasure in its object. In spite of His hostility toward us when we were sinners, God graciously chose to love us and to provide a way by which to deliver us from our sins and bring us into a right relationship with Himself (Rom.5:7-8). Because of our sin-ridden condition and hostility toward God, there was nothing in us that attracted His love. He did not spontaneously love us or like us in our sinful state. He loved us because He chose to do so, not because He was compelled by anything in us." (Barackman p.62)