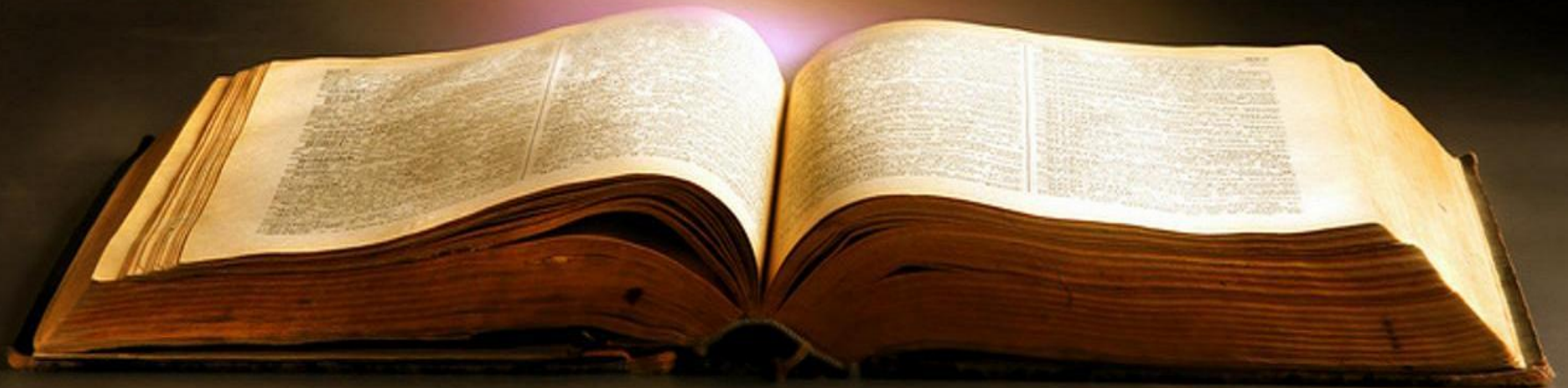


Stow Park Bible Fellowship

Bible Doctrines

Based on the teachings of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

4. The Attributes of God's Personality



The Attributes of God's Personality

- As we resume our consideration of the great and central doctrine of God, let me remind you that we have seen that the existence of God is not argued in the Scriptures. It is assumed.
- Furthermore, we saw that we can deduce from the Scriptures that God is knowable but incomprehensible.
- We can know Him but that does not mean that we can understand God fully or exhaustively.
- And then we went on to consider something about the essential being and nature of God. We mentioned His infinity, His spirituality, His personality and the essential unity of the Godhead.
- But fortunately for us, the Bible does not stop at that; it goes further revealing more about Him, and obviously its object is that we may know God and worship Him more truly and that is the real reason for considering this great doctrine because unless we understand what the Bible tells, our worship is unreal.

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- You will remember Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, 'you worship what you do not know . . .' (John 4:22). The Samaritans thought they knew God.
- And in the same way, Paul said to the Athenians, 'I even found an altar with this inscription: *To an unknown God*. Now what you worship as something unknown, I am going to correct you.'
- Though we may say that we believe in God and believe that we are worshipping Him, we are not of necessity doing so. And we can never worship truly until we worship in the way in which our Lord taught the woman of Samaria to worship.
- He said, 'God is Spirit, and His worshippers must worship in spirit and truth'. (John 4:24). He also said, 'for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks'. (v.23)
- The whole object of these considerations is that we may learn how to worship God and how truly to be God's people. He has been graciously pleased to further our knowledge of Himself.

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- Now these further revelations are customarily divided into two main sections: *Attributes* and *Names* by which God has revealed Himself.
- So we take the *Attributes* of God first and we begin by stating that the Bible reveals to us that God is in a glory that no man or woman can ever approach. God is in a light that is utterly inaccessible to us in His ultimate nature and being.
- God has been pleased to reveal to us something of Himself which are His attributes but He has also revealed to us certain names to Himself, and the object of these names is, as it were, to bring God still closer that we may not be left baffled and bewildered. But these names are for a future study.
- Some of the attributes of God, or perfections, or virtues of God Peter advises in his first letter is that 'we may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light'.
(1 Peter: 2:9)

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- The Christian is meant to show forth the attributes of God – these perfections, these excellencies of God.
- Last week we said that God is a Person. He is a personality in an absolute sense. So what are the attributes that belong to His personality?
- They are of course, expressive of His eternal being, and the first one, therefore is the *eternity* of God, and with it the *immutability* of God who is without beginning and without ending. He is *everlasting*.
- ‘Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting You are God’. (Psalm 90:2)
- But we must look a little more at the *immutability* of God. This means that God is absolutely *unchangeable* – everlastingly the same. He always is and always has been. One of His great names is Yahweh – I am that I am – meaning always the same.

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- We are not *immutable* – we are mutable but that is something that is inconceivable in God who is always the same.
- Now let us also be clear: God's character never changes, but His dealings with people change. He can and does vary His procedure according to whether people repent or not. God has still his personality.
- God's immutability is not the immutability of a stone which is always a stone and never will be anything else. God is not an immutable, lifeless machine.
- Because God is personal in His dealings with men and women, He varies His actions.
- We should always be eternally grateful for God's immutability. 'Change and decay in all around I see, oh Thou who changest not, abide with me'.

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- The next attribute to His essential, eternal being is His *omnipresence*. This means that God is present everywhere.
- We discovered that God is spirit, so when we say that God is everywhere we are not speaking in a bodily sense and it may be very difficult to grasp this but it is our duty to face these difficulties and learn from the experience.
- Now God is not of necessity present in the same way everywhere, because the Bible tells us that heaven is His dwelling place. (1 Kings 8:30).
- There are certain places where God is specially present and Jeremiah 23: 23/4 tells us, 'Am I only a God nearby? Declares the Lord, and not a God far away? Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him? Declares the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth?'

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- Psalm 139 makes the same point: 'Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, You are there, if I make my bed in the depths, You are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there Your hand will guide me, Your right hand will hold me fast.'
- It doesn't matter where I go, God is there. Paul states in Acts 17:28: 'in Him we live, and move, and have our being'. We cannot get out of the presence or the sight of God – the *omnipresence* of God.
- The next attribute is the *omniscience* of God – God knows all things! And his knowledge is always absolute knowledge – perfect and complete.
- See Psalm 147: 5 and Proverbs 15:3: 'God's understanding is infinite – His eyes are in every place, seeing evil and the good.'

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- Here are two very simple and straightforward examples that the Bible gives us: 1. Psalm 146:4 – ‘He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name’.
- 2. Mat. 10:29 - Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of the Father.’
- There is nothing in creation but that God knows it in that minute and personal sense.
- But we are also interested in God's knowledge of our human experience, and Psalm 139:2 is very eloquent – ‘You know when I sit and when I rise, You perceive my thoughts from afar.’
- God even knows my thoughts! Verse 4 goes further: ‘Before a word is on my tongue You know it completely’.
- Alas we are often tempted to think God doesn't know.

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- Why God even knows the number of the hairs on our heads!
- Hebrews 4:13 sums it up, 'Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.'
- Let me repeat again Romans 11:33 – 'Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!'
- The word 'wisdom' brings another subsection on omniscience because we read a lot in the Bible about God's wisdom which is a part of His perfect knowledge.
- What is the difference between knowledge and wisdom? Today the world goes for knowledge which is good but you do not get wisdom by merely studying because what the world today lacks is discernment.
- Knowledge is generally theoretical – wisdom is practical.

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- In knowledge you have the mind acting apart from the will, whereas where wisdom is concerned you have the mind acting in subservience to the will. In other words, wisdom is the right kind of knowledge.
- Often we have great numbers of clever people, but, oh, what a tragic lack of wisdom.
- The final attribute we need to think about here, is that of the *omnipotence* of God. God is all powerful. His omnipotence is the power by which God brings to pass everything He wills.
- What is the will of God? It is the final ground of everything, of all existence. It is the final explanation of everything that has ever happened or everything that will happen. The bible teaches that the will of God is sovereign. It is the expression of His Lordship, His absolute being. Remember His will is never arbitrary, it is always in perfect harmony with all His other attributes.

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- I have no doubt we often find all this difficult to understand but not for God whose omnipotent power is endless. 'For with God nothing shall be impossible'. (Luke 1:37)
- This sovereign will and power of God have been manifested, made known, most clearly, in three ways: in creation, in salvation and in providence and its omnipotence is staggering with much we do not understand. But we are not meant to understand them, we are meant to look at them with reverence and with awe and worship.
- We are meant to realise that there would be no hope for us at all were it not for the omnipotence of God by which we are saved by the power of God in and through the Lord Jesus Christ which is the absolute blessedness of God.
- We must thank God and worship Him that He has been so graciously pleased to tell us about Himself.