

# *The Doctrine of God*

by

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## **Attributes**

### **Definition of an Attribute**

- An attribute is a characteristic of God's nature by which He performs activities. Each of God's actions conforms perfectly to each of His attributes.

### **Discussion of an Attribute**

- God's attributes are not personal, but natural, and are shared by all three persons equally without distinction. They are basic to what God is.
- God's attributes do not overlap. One attribute is not the basis of, nor based in, another attribute. For instance, holiness is not based on righteousness or goodness.
- Attributes inhere (cannot be separated from) the essence, and therefore are shared equally by the three persons.
- Therefore, attributes are eternal as God is. Those activities which proceed from attributes in time are not eternal, and should not be considered attributes.

### **The Attributes of God**

#### *Goodness*

- Goodness is not to be confused with righteousness: Romans 5:7. See also the discussion of holiness. The term "good" is not an ethical term, as is "righteousness": Matthew 7:11; 17.
- Goodness provides that which is needed to produce happiness: Luke 1:53; Acts 14:17. God is happy, not angry, concerning that which He has produced: 1 Timothy 1:11, 16.
- In the ultimate sense, only God is characteristically good, although evil men can do good things: Mk. 10:18. God is good in that He maintains His own happiness. God is good in that He maintains the happiness of others.

#### *Love*

##### **Definition of Love**

- Love is that volitional act of God whereby He sacrificially delights in and provides for the well-being of the objects of His love.

##### **Discussion of Love**

- Love is an act of volition, not emotion: Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; Colossians 3:19.
- Love always has an object: 1 John 3:10-14; John 3:16.
- Love delights in the well-being of its object: 1 Corinthians 13:4.
- Love produces self-sacrifice: John 14:15; John 3:16; Ephesians 5:25; Galatians 2:20; Romans 5:8.
- Love is a characteristic of God through which He acts, and is therefore an attribute: 1 John 4:8, 16.
- God is love in that He characteristically maintains a delight in the well-being of the objects of His love, even to the point of self-sacrifice.
- God's *acts* of love are not to be confused with His *attribute* of love: John 3:16; Ephesians 5:25; Hebrews 12:6; 2 Corinthians 13:11-14.

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- Longsuffering, grace, and kindness are not separate attributes, but are aspects of love. 1) Longsuffering: 1 Corinthians 13:4; 2 Peter 3:9 2) Grace: 2 Thessalonians 2:16 (In the Greek N.T.). 3) Kindness: 1 Corinthians 13:4.

### ***Truth***

#### ***Definition of Truth***

- Truth is the representation of all things as they actually are. God is true in that He sees Himself and all things as they actually are.

#### ***Discussion of Truth***

- The Lord Jesus Christ is truth personified and therefore never misrepresents truth: John 14:6.
- God the Father is characteristically true as to His nature: John 17:3.
- Believers are related to truth because they are positionally “in the true One, and in His Son Jesus Christ”: 1 John 5:20.

### ***Righteousness***

#### ***Definition of Righteousness***

- Righteousness is the ability to consistently act and think in accordance with that which is correct, including both ethical and non-ethical situations and activities. God always acts and thinks correctly with regard to Himself and with regard to His creatures.

#### ***Discussion of Righteousness***

- Righteousness is an eternal attribute of God: Psalm 111:3.
- God never acts in an unrighteous manner: Psalm 71:19.
- Man’s righteousness should be determined by comparison to God’s righteousness, not by comparison to another man’s: Isaiah 45:24-25.

### ***Holiness***

#### ***Definition of Holiness***

- Holiness is the quality of God by which He maintains Himself distinct and separate from anything that is unlike Himself. Holiness includes both moral and non-moral separation.

#### ***Discussion of Holiness***

- God is holy in that He maintains His separation from anything unlike Himself, and conforms perfectly to the purity that He demands of others. Leviticus 11:44, 45 indicates that an individual is holy when he conforms to God’s program in distinction to any other program one might be tempted to use in life. It is clear from Leviticus 19:2ff that both moral and ceremonial laws involved in Old Testament legal holiness.
- Holiness is based on God’s demands for a correct lifestyle as related to a biblical household. Israel’s holiness included separation from Gentiles in food and clothing. Today, separation is based exclusively on living the grace lifestyle. See 1 Peter 1:14.
- In man holiness as two aspects: 1) Holiness involves a separation from that which is unlike God: 1 Peter 1:14; 2) Holiness involves a conformity to that which is like God: 1 Peter 1:15.

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## *Almightyness (Not Omnipotence)*

### **Definition of Almighty**

- God is almighty in that there is nothing He cannot do to produce the result of His determination. The Greek word almighty is *pankrator*, from *pan*, all, and *kratos*, might. According to Friberg's Lexicon, might is the "possession of force or strength that affords supremacy or control." It is the Greek word that most directly refers to God's control and sovereignty over all things.
- Unfortunately, the old KJV confused *kratos* and *dunamis*, often translating either one power or might. Only a direct examination of the Greek text will keep the student straight on this issue.
- Therefore, the word almighty (*pankratos*) refers to the attribute of God rather than power (*dunamis*). God's might is said to be eternal by Paul (1 Timothy 6:16). In Colossians 1:11, we find that power (*dunamis*) is "according to might (*kratos*), making might superior to power.

### **Definition of Omnipotence**

- The word *omnipotence* means all powerful rather than almighty. Think of it as the ability to do whatever God deems necessary by applying the correct amount of might. Ephesians 6:10 indicates that power belongs to God's might (*the power of His might*). So power is the application of might to specific situations, and God is all powerful, or omnipotent, in the sense that He can apply His might to a greater or lesser degree in order to perform what ever task He deems necessary.
- While God is almighty, He does not apply all of His almightyness at one time in all situations. Rather He applies power in just the right amount to gain the perfect result.
- It is also necessary to distinguish between power and authority (*exousia*). Power (*dunamis*) is different than authority in that authority is the *right* to do a thing, while power is the *ability* to do a thing by applying a perfect amount of God's almightyness.

### **The Biblical Statement of God's Almightyness**

- The Revelation uses the Greek Word *PANKRATOR*, almighty, of God 8 times (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7 & 14; 19:15; 21:22). See also 2 Corinthians 6:18. In addition, the Hebrew text uses the word almighty (*shaddai*) of God 48 times. God is all almighty in that He is able to apply His might to whatever He determines to do, limited only by that which is contradictory to His nature.

## *Omniscience*

### **Definition of Omniscience**

- God is omniscient in that He knows all things instantaneously and simultaneously, without reference to succession, interval or sequence.

### **Discussion of Omniscience**

- Omniscience is not to be confused with foreknowledge. Omniscience is based on "oida" knowledge - 2 Corinthians 12:3. This kind of knowledge God has because of His nature. God foreknows because He has experienced the fact before man knows about it - Romans 8:29. Since foreknowledge is based on God's experience it changes, whereas omniscience is unchangeable as an attribute of God.
- God's knowledge is not limited by temporal actualities - Romans 4:17b. God knows all potentialities as well as all actualities - Matthew 11:21-23. God sees all from an eternal viewpoint, knowing the beginning and the ending simultaneously - Isaiah 46:10