

## Chapter 13: The Character of God: Communicable Attributes (Part 2)

How is God like us in attributes of will and in attributes that summarize his excellence?

### D) God's Attributes of Purpose

#### 1) Will

a) God's will is that attribute of God whereby he approves and determines to bring about every action necessary for the existence and activity of himself and all creation.

b) God's Will in General

c) Scripture frequently indicates God's will as the final or most ultimate reason for everything that happens.

**Eph.1:11:** In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things (tou/ evnergou/ntoj ta. pa,nta) according to the counsel of his will,

The "all things" includes:

Creation: Rev 4:11

Government: **Dan. 4:32**

Christ's crucifixion: **Acts 4:27-28:**

Even the hardship and suffering of Christians are sometimes said to be according to God's will:

1 Peter 3:17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. (next verse: based on example of Christ's suffering)

All the small events of our lives are also included: Jas 4:13-15. This doctrine of God's will should bring great encouragement and comfort to us:

- nothing can happen to us outside of the will of our infinitely wise, merciful, good God

**Romans 8:28** "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."

- thinking about God's will should give us great peace
- concerning world conflicts (Israel and Lebanon today, for example)
- concerning troubling events of our lives
- Note the repeated affirmation of trust in God's will in King David's life: 1 Samuel 23:14; 25:32; 25:39; 26:10;

Knowledge of God's will does not mean we should be fatalistic, becoming passive and unfeeling when evil happens. Rather, we should feel sorrow and we should act:

1 Samuel 30:1-8, 18-19

2 Samuel 5:12; 7:1, 18; 2Sam 8:6; 10:12; 17:14;

But the Bible never blames God for sins that we commit!

2 Samuel 12:7-11. God held David accountable for the evil that he had done.

### Summary:

God "works all things according to the counsel of his will" (Eph. 1:11)

- a. This should give us peace and lead our hearts to frequent thanksgiving
- b. But: our choices and actions are real and they do matter!
- c. Sin is real, and it does real damage to people, and God holds people accountable for their sinful choices
- d. Pain and sorrow are real, and it is not wrong to feel them deeply
- e. Still, we view all of this under the umbrella of the sovereign will of our infinitely wise and good God – and we can be at peace

### **C) Distinctions in aspects of God's will**

#### 1) Necessary Will and Free Will

God's necessary will includes everything that he must will according to his own nature. But what must God will?

- He must will himself. (his own existence and character) Ex 3:14

2) God's free will includes all things that God decided to will but did not have to will according to his nature (this includes creation and redemption).

Creation: Revelation 4:11 ; Gen 1;26

Redemption: **Isa. 48:9-11:**

It would be wrong for us to try to find a necessary cause for creation in the being of God himself

-- as if God had to create us or save us in order to truly be God

-- this would rob God of his independence

-- it would say that without us God could not truly be God

-- God's decisions to create and redeem were totally free decisions

-- all of God's works "outside himself" (*opera ad extra*) are completely free

ii) God's secret will and revealed Will

**Deut. 29:29:** The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

(a) God's secret will includes his hidden decrees by which he governs the universe and determines everything that will happen. Jas 4:15; Gen 50:20; 1 Cor 4:19; Matt 11:25-26

God's secret will is hidden from us (until it happens), and therefore it should not be the basis for our decision making (but sometimes God reveals to his servants what he is going to do – as in prophecies in the Bible)

(b) Revealed will (also called will of precept/ will of command): This is God's declared will concerning what we should do or what God commands us to do. Deut 29:29, Eph 5:17

God's revealed will tells us what kinds of things we should pray for: Matt 6:10; 1 John 5:14

How can we find out God's revealed will?

-Read the Bible!

Imitation of God's attribute of his will:

God has made us as creatures with a will; we exercise choice and make real decisions.

- These decisions do matter.

- This is a wonderful, amazing part of our creation in the image of God.

#### **2) Freedom**

a) God's freedom is that attribute of God whereby he does whatever he pleases. Ps 115:3

b) We imitate God's attribute of freedom by our ability to make choices, to decide things for ourselves.

(1) God frequently appeals to our ability to choose: Josh 24:14-15; Matt 11:28-30

+ many, many other verses in the Bible

(2) this pattern in Scripture is the basis for establishing and supporting freedom of religion (example of new mosque being built). Also regarding our children: we can encourage and teach and pray, but we cannot force our children to be Christians.

(3) God has placed in all human beings a deep desire to be free – to exercise self-determination regarding many aspects of our lives, including the rule of nations

American Revolutionary leader Patrick Henry: "Give me liberty or give me death!"

- this is why people instinctively feel that living under a dictatorship, or being put in prison, are so de-humanizing: they rob us of a very important God-like quality

(4) A desire for freedom is seen in children at an early age – a God-like quality imitating God's own freedom

(5) Freedom of course can be abused and used to commit sin that is why societies and churches make rules to restrain people's sinful conduct

(6) God's freedom is a wonderful attribute – and one he has enabled us to imitate in significant measure

### **3) Omnipotence (power, sovereignty)**

a) God's omnipotence means that God is able to do all his holy will.

(Sovereignty: God's use of his power to rule over his creation.)

**Ps. 24:8:** Who is this King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle!

**Jer. 32:17; Eph 3:20; Matt 19:26**

-- God is all-powerful: far beyond our ability to comprehend

b) But God cannot will or do anything that would deny his own character.

**Titus 1:2; 2 Tim 2:13; Jas 1:13**

c) Imitation of God's power:

God has given us power (physical, mental, and spiritual) to bring about good results in the world. (it is a tiny reflection of God's infinite power, but it is still a good thing!)

- -a desire to imitate God's power is the reason why we enjoy being strong rather than weak (able to do more things)

-- a desire to have power to do good is a positive, God-like characteristic – but power is so easily abused by sinful human beings! ("power corrupts")

-- misuse of power is best prevented by the dispersion of power among several different people  
example: multiple elders in a church (or theologians at a meeting!)

example: "checks and balances" in U.S. government

bad example: very few absolute monarchs have remained really good throughout history (note even David, Solomon)

- be thankful for your human will, your freedom, your power – all are excellent God-like qualities - use them wisely!

E) "Summary" Attributes (218-221)

### **1) Perfection**

a) God's perfection means that God completely possesses all excellent qualities and lacks no part of any qualities that would be desirable for him.

**Matt. 5:48:** You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

b) God's perfection means it is impossible to think of any way in which God could be "better" than he is – he is better and greater than anything that could be imagined, and he lacks no desirable quality

c) Imitation: we will never be perfect as God is, but we should have a desire to improve –

morally, and also in other skills of life: the desire to "do better" is ultimately a God-given human quality, and it explains human progress throughout history

## 2) Blessedness

a) God's blessedness means that God delights fully in himself and in all that reflects his character. 1 Tim 1:11

**1 Tim. 6:15:** which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed (Greek *makarios*: "happy, joyful") and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

- How do you feel about the fact that the eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, holy, just, wise God of the universe is supremely **happy**?

b) And God truly delights in his people (in you!):

**Isa. 62:5:** For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

c) As God rejoices in us, he is really rejoicing in the reflection of his own excellent character:

**James 1:17:** Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

d) Imitation of God's blessedness means that we should freely take delight and rejoice in

-- all that is good in ourselves (how God made us)

-- and in all that is good in others – all the God-like qualities we see reflected in them

-- and certainly all that is good in God!

e) Should we be fundamentally happy or unhappy with ourselves, who we are?

- imitation of God's blessedness decides this question!

## 3) Beauty

a) God's beauty is that attribute of God whereby he is the sum of all desirable qualities. (similar to God's perfection, but this focuses on the fact that God's qualities are desirable, they bring pleasure and delight)

### 4)

**Ps. 27:4:** One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

**Ps. 73:25:** Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

b) The greatest joy of eternity will be to behold the beauty of God – to see his face:

**Revelation 22:3** No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

c) We reflect God's beauty in our own lives when we exhibit conduct that is pleasing to him.

**1 Peter 3:4:** but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.

**Titus 2:10:** not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

**Eph. 5:27:** so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. A delight in physical beauty (of nature, or a building or a painting or a home, or of music) is a good, God-given characteristic – if done with thanks to God!

-- but beware: society can make beauty an idol!

#### 4) Glory

a) God's glory is the created brightness that surrounds God's revelation of himself.

**Ps. 24:10:** Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory! Selah

**Ps. 104:1-2:** Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, you are very great! You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering yourself with light as with a garment, stretching out the heavens like a tent.

**Luke 2:9:** And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear.

**Matt. 17:2:** And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.

**Rev. 21:23:** And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

b) God's glory is an appropriate outward manifestation of his excellence

-- it will call forth from us both awe and delight

-- we will never be able to fully comprehend God, but what we can see will fill us with joy and worship

-- God's glory will fill the city in which we live forever!

c) Amazingly, God made us to reflect his glory.

**2 Cor. 3:18:** And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

**Dan. 12:3:** And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

**Matt. 13:43:** Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

**1 Cor. 15:43:** It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.