

LIVING FAITH CHAPEL OF SPC
The Doctrine of God: Lesson Four
The Incommunicable Attributes of God

A. Introduction

1. When we speak of God's character we cannot speak of it all at once. We need some way to decide what to speak on first, second, etc. We need to categorize God's attributes in an orderly way.
2. The traditional way has been by:
 - a. Incommunicable Attributes – those attributes that God does not share or “communicate” with us
 - b. Communicable Attributes – those attributes that God does share or “communicate” with us
3. This, however, is not totally accurate
 - a. We share to some degree aspects of God's incommunicable attributes
 - b. At the same time it is important to point out that the quality of God's communicable attributes are far greater than ours
 - c. Perhaps the better definition is “less shared” and “more shared”
 - d. So, there is some overlap between the two

B. Aseity (Independence or Self-Existence) of God

1. Definition: God does not need us or the rest of creation for anything
 - a. God is absolutely independent and self-sufficient
 - b. God necessarily exists
2. Scripture
 - a. Acts 17:24-25
 - b. Job 41:11
3. Common Misconception: People have sometimes thought that God created human beings because he was lonely and needed fellowship with other persons.
 - a. Scripture's response: John 5:26; 17:5; 17:24
 - b. God created out of strength, not weakness, out of abundance, not lack, out of excess joy, not unfulfilled.
4. Implications
 - a. God was never created
 - b. God never came into being. He always was.
 - c. Scripture: Rev. 4:11; Ps. 90:2
 - d. W/o creation God would still be infinitely loving, just, eternal, omniscient, Trinitarian, and so forth
5. At the same time, we do not discount that we are special and significant to God. He delights and rejoices over us.
 - a. Scripture: Is. 62:3-5; Zeph. 3:17-18
 - b. “Apple of His eye”

C. Immutability (Unchangeableness)

1. Definition: God is unchanging in his being, perfections, purposes, and promises, yet God does act and feel emotions, and he acts and feels differently in response to different situations.
2. Scripture
 - a. Ps. 102:25-27
 - b. Malachi 3:6; James 1:17
3. Even our reason indicates the impossibility of God changing for change is for better or worse, but God is absolute perfection, thus he cannot improve nor deteriorate.
4. Implications
 - a. the fact that God is unchanging in his being is of the utmost importance for maintaining the Creator/creature distinction, and for our worship of God
 - b. That is why God is called a “Rock”
5. Scripture Texts Regarding His purposes
 - a. Matt. 13:35; 25:34; Eph. 1:4,11; 2 Tim. 2:19; 1 Peter 1:20; Rev. 13:8; Is. 46:9-11; Num 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29
6. But does God sometimes change his mind?
 - a. Problematic passages: Gen. 6:6; Ex. 32:9-14; Is. 38:1-6; 1 Sam. 15:10
 - b. These instances should all be understood as true expressions of God’s present attitude or intention with respect to the situation as it exists at that moment. God responds differently to different situations. They are often expressions of God’s present displeasure.
 - c. Divine immutability does not mean immobility, that there is no movement in God.
7. The question of impassibility (i.e. God does not suffer)
 - a. We are to see that God does have emotions but he does not suffer
8. Process Theology
 - a. PT advocates insist that process and change are essential aspects of genuine existence, therefore God must be changing over time, just like us.
 - b. PT does not like the doctrine of immutability b/c they think it implies that nothing we do can really matter to God.
 - c. They insist that our actions have an influence/impact on the very being of God Himself.
 - d. Dangers: it blurs the Creator-creature distinction. It undermines the authority and truth of Scripture. How then do we come to know God presently?