

We Believe: Doctrines of Our Faith

The Doctrine of God (Theology Proper)

The Apostles' Creed (4th century) begins with the statement, "I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth." Any confirmation of the Christian faith must begin first and foremost with a declaration of what we believe about God. The God of the Bible is a very specific kind of being. He has no equal among all the other beings in existence. He is altogether different than we are and beyond our full comprehension. Yet, He has communicated to us through Scripture aspects about Himself that help us to know and have a relationship with Him. These aspects make up the topic of *Theology Proper*, or the doctrine of God.

In general, the doctrine of God as a theological topic is broken up into categories, which can differ depending on the scholar you are reading. Sometimes the categories are God's incommunicable attributes and his communicable attributes; the former are those that have no analogue in other beings (e.g., self-existence and immensity) whereas the latter have some analogue in other beings (e.g., omnipotence as the perfection of power). Sometimes the categories are natural versus moral attributes. Natural attributes are specific to God in Himself without reference to other beings, and moral attributes like justice and mercy describe how God relates to other beings. In this lesson, we are simply going to talk about some of God's attributes as they relate to us.

What is the point of studying the doctrine of God? Where the study of sanctification or of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives seems to have an immediate application, many of God's attributes seem to be merely definitions that don't impact us in any immediate way. However, it would be a mistake to see God's attributes as having little to do with our lives. In reality, our ability to live well, to have confidence in our faith, and to worship God more fully requires that we grow in our understanding of Him as He has revealed Himself to us.

I. God's Sovereignty over Us (Jonah)

A. Omniscience

1. God knows all things that can be known about the _____ world - past, present, and future - and about all _____ worlds.

- Hebrews 4:13 – "All things are laid open and bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."
- Psalm 147:4 – "He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name."
- Isaiah 44:28 – "It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd.'"
- 1 Samuel 23:12 – "Then David said, 'Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hands of Saul?' And the LORD said, 'They will surrender you.'"

2. God's omniscience does not impede human _____, but He does perfectly understand our _____.

B. Omnipotence

1. God can do anything that is not _____ - _____ or contradictory to His _____.

- Genesis 1:3 – "Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light."

- Ephesians 1:19 – “...and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might.”
- Luke 1:37 – “For nothing will be impossible with God.”

2. Omnipotence does not mean that God is using _____ of His power all of the time.

C. Omnipresence

1. God, in His full essence, is present and working in every aspect of His _____.

- Psalm 139:7ff – “Where can I go from Your Spirit, or where can I flee from Your presence?”
- Deuteronomy 23:14 – “Since the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to defeat your enemies...”

2. Omnipresence is not the same as _____, which says that God is identical to the world.

D. Why Does It Matter?

1. God's omniscience matters because we can only _____ Him if He knows what will happen before we do.

2. God's omnipotence matters because we can only _____ Him if He is able to do what He says He will do.

3. God's omnipresence matters because we can only _____ through trials if we know God is always with us.

E. How Does This Play Out? (Jonah)

1. Omnipresence

Jonah tries to run from God in 1:3, specifically trying to get away from “the _____ of the Lord.” He even goes into the “belly” of the boat to keep from being seen.

God knows exactly where Jonah is, and He forces Jonah to make a _____-_____ decision: go to Nineveh or perish. Which does Jonah choose?

Even in the belly of the _____, God still is aware of Jonah and hears Jonah's lament. Though Jonah never really repents, God still wants to use him.

2. Omnipotence

In the ancient world, the sea represented _____, unable to be contained or controlled.

Jonah immediately knows that the _____ is God's work. Because God “made the sea and the dry land,” He has complete control over them.

Even the great sea monsters submit to God's _____ and _____. He can summon them at will, force them to do what He says, and ultimately use them as part of His plan for redemption.

3. Omniscience

The story begins with God calling Jonah to preach to the _____ capital of Nineveh.

As the story progresses, we realize that God knew how Nineveh would _____ if they heard Jonah's message.

In 4:2, Jonah admits that he was afraid that this was God's _____ all along, and he wanted no part in it.

F. How Should We Respond?

1. Living in light of God's nature first and foremost means accepting His _____ and our _____.
2. God calls all of us to live by _____, which includes doing things we don't understand to accomplish a goal we may not agree with.
3. We can live with assurance that nothing gets past or overcomes the God who has declared His never-ending _____ for us.

II. God's Relationship with Us (Exodus 34:4–17)

A. God's Relational Attributes (34:4–9)

1. As God begins to describe Himself, the first thing He points out is His desire to be _____, _____, and _____.
2. God's promise to bring judgment is both a _____ and a _____.
3. We should respond just like Moses did, _____ God and asking for His influence despite our rebellion.

B. God's Vested Interest in Us (34:10)

1. God responds to Moses' request by making a _____ with Israel in order to give them confidence that He would not leave them.
2. God wants the lives of His people to show His _____ to the world.
3. Each of our lives should be a megaphone for proclaiming God's _____.

C. God's Intolerance for Divided Interests in Us (34:11–17)

1. God's first warning to Israel after making His covenant is that they _____ themselves from the nations around them.
2. The ways in which alternative _____ creep into our lives can be subtle.

3. We all face a final choice about whether God's influence is _____ or _____ in our lives.