

## **Applying Scripture to Life** **Topic 5 – God’s Excellencies (or Attributes)**

Randy Thompson  
Valley Bible Church  
www.valleybible.net

### **Review / Introduction**

We are now studying some aspects of practical theology that are particularly applicable to our purpose of applying the Scriptures to our own life issues and sin and bringing Biblical care to one another.

We have looked at sin and its insidiousness and its impact on ourselves and most importantly the negative impact on our relationship with God.

We looked at the amazing work that God does in our life at the moment of salvation. The believer has been freed from the penalty of sin, the power of sin, and one day in heaven from the very presence of sin. Now our labor is to battle the flesh and remain in constant fellowship with Christ with the resources God has given us. Should we sin, confession to God and repentance from sin are our remedies.

We looked at the Spirit’s filling ministry. The usual, expected position of the believer is to be filled with (or controlled by) the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18-6:9). Walking in the Spirit is a moment-by-moment decision to recognize, repent, and confess sin (not grieving the Spirit – Eph 4:30); yield your will to God’s moral will as set forth in His word (not quenching the Spirit – 1 Thess 5:19-20); and allow the word to richly dwell within you (Col 3:16). When a believer is submitted to God and his Word, the indwelling Holy Spirit produces Christ-like heart motives, attitudes, words, reactions, and relationships. We can discern clearly either negatively (Gal 5:19-21) or positively (Gal 5:22-23) if we are filled or not.

The Spirit applies the Word to the believer’s heart. The Spirit is powerful. God’s Word is powerful. Therefore, the believer in the most dire, seemingly hopeless circumstances can be encouraged, comforted, and changed as the Spirit applies the Word to his/her heart.

One of the results of Spirit filling is progressive sanctification, being progressively transformed into Christ’s image (2 Cor 3:18). Spiritual growth is progressively having your character, motives, thoughts, words, and deeds match up with your position in Christ. You grow as you strive, press, and reach for growth by working on your vibrant relationship with Christ through the word and prayer, discipline, involvement in the body, and putting off sin and putting on righteousness.

Today we look at the character or attributes or excellencies of God and the impact on our walk. God’s creation displays His “invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made” (Rom 1:20). Yet, it is only in God’s word (His specific revelation) that we see God’s self-revealing of His character and works (See Psalm 19 for a description of both). So, we will dig into the Scriptures to learn about God’s excellencies.

Meditation on God’s excellencies is restorative in our relationship with God when we sin, but also preventative in keeping us from sinning.

## Definition of God's Excellencies

An "attribute" of God is anything true of His character – either something that the Bible says is true about God or what the Bible shows is true about God. Note that we are interested in what the BIBLE says about God.

Normally, people use the word "attribute" to describe aspects of God's character. The difficulty in using that word is that it implies ascribing a quality to something. We are not ascribing something to God that He may or may not have. We are describing God by the intrinsic qualities that are His.

Another word for "attribute" is perfection denoting that His attributes are perfectly found in Him as opposed to His creatures. However, I believe that the better word for the characteristics that are intrinsically God's is "excellencies".

<sup>9</sup>But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may **proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light**; <sup>10</sup>for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

"Excellencies" describe any preeminence (moral, intellectual, military) or quality by which one stands out as excellent. It is a term denoting consummate 'excellence'. Vine notes that it "properly denotes whatever procures preeminent estimation for a person or thing; hence, intrinsic eminence, moral goodness, virtue".

The reason believers are a "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession" is so that we will proclaim God's "excellencies", His perfections, His intrinsic qualities. Ultimately, so He may be glorified, for His glory.

### ❖ **Do you display, verbally and non-verbally, the excellencies of God?**

With God, His excellencies are the perfect, full manifestation of the attribute and are intrinsic to His being. People can know some things and to some extent are powerful, but God "is" all knowing and "is" all powerful. People can display love, but God "is" love. People can make good judgments, but God "is" justice. People can do faithful things, but God "is" faithful. And so on. God's excellencies describe His nature. If any one of the excellencies found in Scripture were not found perfectly, fully in God, then God would not be God.

The excellency of "infinite" is a comprehensive attribute of God. God's infinite touches all aspects of God's being. Every excellency of God is so to the fullest. God is unlimited. God Himself has no bounds or limits imposed on Him except that which might be self-imposed (like the incarnation). He is not limited or confined by anything including time and space. He is beyond and beyond ultimate comprehension. Because of this excellency, we understand that the finite cannot fully grasp the infinite.

<sup>27</sup>"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, **heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You**, how much less this house which I have built! (1 Kings 8:27)

<sup>2</sup>Before the mountains were born Or You gave birth to the earth and the world, Even **from everlasting to everlasting**, You are God. (Psa 90:2)

<sup>3</sup>Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised, And **His greatness is unsearchable.** (Psa 45:3)

<sup>5</sup>Great is our Lord and abundant in strength; **His understanding is infinite.** (Psa 147:5)

<sup>33</sup>Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and **unfathomable His ways!** (Rom 11:33)

Also, not one of God's excellencies is present or working at any one time more than any other. The excellencies do not "balance" each other. God's wrath is not "balanced" by His grace. There is not "balance" or "compromise" in His excellencies. When He acts in infinite wrath for sin, He is also acting in infinite love. This is an aspect of God that we have difficulty fathoming because it is completely different than our experience.

Also, when you view God as loving, He is not just acting in love, all the other excellencies (e.g., holiness, justice, goodness, mercy, sovereignty, omniscience, etc.) are present and are working also because they are all intrinsically a part of God. They are all who He is. His excellencies are not like a patchwork quilt bringing together separate partitioned attributes. They are perfections of God's indivisible, simple being. This is why it is dangerous to focus on one excellency at a time because God never acts in time and space with only one excellency, they are all working perfectly, fully at the same time.

#### ❖ **Do you think of God's excellencies one at a time or all equally together?**

An attribute of God is either something that the Bible says is true about God or what the Bible shows is true about God. The attributes of God can be categorized multiple ways. Since God is transcendent over all (1 Kings 8:27; Isa 40:21-25) and also immanent (existing in all parts) in the world (Psa 139 see v7-10), theologians often discuss the attributes of God by dividing them into those two categories. Attributes that deal with God's transcendency and belong to Him alone are called absolute or incommunicable or divine attributes. Those that deal with His immanency and are in some way found in man are called relative or communicable or personal attributes. Following is a partial list of the attributes of God.

#### **Absolute, Incommunicable, or Divine Excellencies**

1. Glory – The composite of God's attributes and essence; the sum total of what He is. Glory is the created brightness that surrounds God's revelation of himself.

<sup>10</sup>Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, **He is the King of glory.** (Psa 24:10)

<sup>8</sup>"I am the Lord, that is My name; I **will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images.** (Isa 42:8)

<sup>18</sup>Then Moses said, "I pray You, **show me Your glory!**" <sup>19</sup>And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." (Ex 33:18-19)

"Name" refers to all that God is; the sum of His attributes. His glory is essential to His being. It is the composite of His attributes and essence, the beauty, power, and splendor of His character. He is infinitely glorious, so we cannot add anything to Him.

To glorify God is our purpose. Some ways that we can glorify God: trust Him (Romans 4:19-21); confessing sin (Joshua 7:19-20); bearing much fruit (love motivated, Spirit-filled good works) (John 15:8; Matt 5:16); serving the body (1 Pet 4:10-11); humbly attributing success to God (Acts 12:21-23; 1 Cor 15:10; Psa 50:23); everything (1 Cor 10:31).

❖ **What is your highest purpose?**

2. Beauty – God is the sum of all desirable qualities.

<sup>4</sup>One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, **To behold the beauty of the Lord** And to meditate in His temple. (Psa 27:4)

<sup>4</sup>For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. <sup>5</sup>For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the Lord made the heavens. <sup>6</sup>**Splendor and majesty are before Him, Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.** (Psa 96:4-6)

❖ **Do you desire anything more than God?**

3. Eternality – God always was and always will be existing from eternity past to eternity future. He is free from the succession of time; the past, present, and future are equally vivid to Him.

<sup>2</sup>Before the mountains were born Or You gave birth to the earth and the world, **Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.** (Psa 90:2)

<sup>28</sup>Do you not know? Have you not heard? **The Everlasting God**, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. (Isa 40:28)

<sup>17</sup>Now to the King **eternal, immortal**, invisible, the only God, *be* honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1 Tim 1:17)

❖ **What do you view as too big for God to handle?**

4. Independence – God does not need us or the rest of creation for anything.

<sup>24</sup>The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; <sup>25</sup>**nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things;** (Acts 17:24-25)

<sup>13</sup>Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, Or as His counselor has informed Him? <sup>14</sup>With whom did He consult and *who* gave Him understanding? And *who* taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge And informed Him of the way of understanding? (Isa 40:13-14)

❖ **Do you think God owes you something?**

5. Immutability – God is unchanging and unchangeable in excellencies, eternal purposes, or promises. He is never inconsistent or developing.

<sup>17</sup>Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, **with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.** (James 1:17)

<sup>6</sup>“For **I, the Lord, do not change**; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed. (Mal 3:6)

❖ **Is there any way you don’t trust God or His promises?**

6. Omnipresence – God is present at every point of space with his whole being at every point of time. God is present everywhere all the time.

<sup>7</sup>Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? <sup>8</sup>If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. <sup>9</sup>If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, <sup>10</sup>Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me. <sup>11</sup>If I say, “Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, And the light around me will be night,” <sup>12</sup>Even the darkness is not dark to You, And the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike *to You*. (Psa 139:7-12)

<sup>3</sup>**The eyes of the Lord are in every place**, Watching the evil and the good. (Prov 15:3)

<sup>23</sup>“Am I a God who is near,” declares the Lord, “And not a God far off? <sup>24</sup>“Can a man hide himself in hiding places So I do not see him?” declares the Lord. “Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?” declares the Lord. (Jer 23:23-24)

❖ **Are there times when you are lonely?**

7. Omniscience – God knows everything actual and possible in one simple eternal act.

<sup>21</sup>For the **ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord, And He watches all his paths**. (Prov 5:21)

<sup>21</sup>“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, **they would have repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes. (Matt 11:21)

<sup>1</sup>O Lord, You have searched me and known *me*. <sup>2</sup>You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. <sup>3</sup>You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways. <sup>4</sup>Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O Lord, You know it all. <sup>5</sup>You have enclosed me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me. <sup>6</sup>*Such* knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is *too* high, I cannot attain to it. (Psa 139:1-6)

❖ **Is there sin that you think you can hide?**

8. Omnipotence – God is all powerful and is able to do all His holy will without any effort. God has an incomprehensible plenitude of power.

<sup>1</sup>Then Job answered the Lord and said, <sup>2</sup>“I know that **You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted**. (Job 42:1-2)

<sup>3</sup>But our God is in the heavens; He **does whatever He pleases**. (Psa 115:3)

<sup>17</sup>“Ah Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! **Nothing is too difficult for You**, (Jer 32:17)

❖ **Do you believe (heart-level) that God is powerful enough to accomplish anything?**

9. Sovereignty – The exercise of God’s rule over His creation using His absolute power. All things are under His rule and control, and nothing happens without His direction or permission. His purpose is all inclusive and is never thwarted. Nothing takes Him by surprise.

<sup>25</sup>Have you not heard? Long ago I did it; From ancient times **I planned it Now I have brought it to pass**, ... (2 Kings 19:25)

<sup>24</sup>The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, **just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand**, (Isa 14:24 see also Isa 46:9-11)

<sup>11</sup>also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined **according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will**, (Eph1:11)

<sup>28</sup>And we know that **God causes all things to work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. <sup>29</sup>For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; (Rom 8:28-29)

❖ **Do you have hope and security in all circumstances?**

**Relative, Communicable, or Personal Attributes**

1. Faithfulness – God will always do what He has promised to do. He is steadfast, perfectly reliable, utterly dependable, and completely trustworthy.

<sup>89</sup>Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven. <sup>90</sup>**Your faithfulness continues throughout all generations**; You established the earth, and it stands. (Psa 119:89-90)

<sup>9</sup>Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, **the faithful God**, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments; (Deut 7:9)

<sup>4</sup>“The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; **A God of faithfulness** and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He. (Deut 32:4)

<sup>13</sup>If we are faithless, **He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself**. (2 Tim 2:13)

❖ **Is God your refuge?**

2. Righteousness – God always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right.

<sup>7</sup>For **the Lord is righteous, He loves righteousness**; The upright will behold His face. (Psa 11:7)

<sup>5</sup>**Gracious is the Lord, and righteous**; Yes, our God is compassionate. (Psa 116:5)

<sup>31</sup>because He has fixed a day in which **He will judge the world in righteousness** through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.” (Acts 17:31)

<sup>25</sup>For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that **without partiality**. (Col 3:25)

❖ **Is there right in God’s word that you do not submit to?**

3. Truth – God is the only real God, and all His words are both true and the final standard of truth.

<sup>5</sup>**“I am the Lord, and there is no other;** Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me; (Isa 45:5)

<sup>3</sup>This is eternal life, that they may know You, **the only true God**, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (John 17:3)

<sup>2</sup>in the hope of eternal life, which **God, who cannot lie**, promised long ages ago, (Titus 1:2)

<sup>18</sup>so that by two unchangeable things in which **it is impossible for God to lie**, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. (Heb 6:18)

❖ **Do you seek truth apart from God’s word?**

4. Holiness – God is pure and separate from sin. All His acts are morally unassailable.

<sup>5</sup>This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that **God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.** (1 John 1:5)

<sup>11</sup>“Who is like You among the gods, O Lord? Who is like You, **majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?** (Ex 15:11)

<sup>5</sup>Exalt the Lord our God And worship at His footstool; **Holy is He.** (Psa 99:5)

<sup>3</sup>And one called out to another and said, **“Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.”** (Isa 6:3)

<sup>15</sup>but **like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves** also in all your behavior; (1 Pet 1:15)

❖ **Do you view every act of God as perfect?**

5. Wrath – God intensely hates all sin.

<sup>2</sup>A jealous and avenging God is the Lord; **The Lord is avenging and wrathful. The Lord takes vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies.** (Nah 1:2)

<sup>6</sup>For it is because of these things that **the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience,** (Col 3:6)

<sup>36</sup>He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but **he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”** (John 3:36)

❖ **Do you take your own sin seriously?**

6. Love – God eternally gives of himself to others for their benefit.

<sup>3</sup>The Lord appeared to him from afar, *saying*, **“I have loved you with an everlasting love;** Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness. (Jer 31:3)

<sup>16</sup>“For **God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

<sup>8</sup>The one who does not love does not know God, **for God is love.** (1 John 4:8)

<sup>4</sup>But God, **being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,**  
<sup>5</sup>even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), (Eph 2:4-5)

<sup>8</sup>But **God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.** (Rom 5:8)

❖ **Do you love because He first loved you?**

7. Lovingkindness – God’s devoted love promised in a covenant; His faithful love in action; or “steadfast love” (ESV).

<sup>1</sup>**Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness;** According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. (Psa 51:1)

<sup>1</sup>Praise the Lord! Oh give thanks to the Lord, for **He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting.** (Psa 106:1)

<sup>9</sup>**The Lord is good to all,** And His mercies are over all His works. (Psa 145:9)

<sup>7</sup>**The Lord is good, A stronghold in the day of trouble,** And He knows those who take refuge in Him. (Nah 1:7)

❖ **Do you rest in God’s devoted love?**

8. Compassion (or mercy) – God is good to those in difficulty, moving to relieve the misery of and distress of fallenness even though it is not deserved.

<sup>19</sup>You, **in Your great compassion,** Did not forsake them in the wilderness; The pillar of cloud did not leave them by day, To guide them on their way, Nor the pillar of fire by night, to light for them the way in which they were to go. (Neh 9:19)

<sup>22</sup>The Lord’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For **His compassions never fail.** (Lam 3:22)

<sup>13</sup>Just as a father has compassion on *his* children, So **the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him.** (Psa 103:13)

❖ **Do you trust God’s perfect compassion to care for you when in misery?**

9. Grace – God’s underserved intervention in His people’s helplessness and hopelessness in salvation and sanctification for His own glory

<sup>13</sup>And rend your heart and not your garments.” Now return to the Lord your God, **For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil.** (Joel 2:13)

<sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, **full of grace and truth.** (John 1:14)

<sup>8</sup>For **by grace you have been saved through faith;** and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; (Eph 2:8)

<sup>10</sup>After you have suffered for a little while, **the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ**, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you. (1 Pet 5:10)

❖ **Are you grateful for God’s work in your life?**

10. Longsuffering – God is patience toward those who deserve to be punished.

<sup>18</sup>‘The Lord is **slow to anger** and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth *generations*.’ (Num 14:18)

<sup>4</sup>Or do you think lightly of **the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?** (Rom 2:4)

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, <sup>15</sup>and **regard the patience of our Lord as salvation**; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, (2 Pet 3:14-15)

<sup>16</sup>Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, **Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience** as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. (1 Tim 1:16)

❖ **Are you grateful that you live today?**

Here is a list of the attributes that we covered:

Incommunicable: Glory, Beauty, Eternality, Independence, Immutability, Omnipresence, Omniscience, Omnipotence, Sovereignty

Communicable: Faithfulness, Righteousness, Truth, Holiness, Wrath, Love, Lovingkindness, Compassion, Grace, Longsuffering

❖ **How might God’s excellencies impact anxiousness and worry, hard times, fear, pride, anger, immorality, choices to sin, laziness, etc?**

**Conclusion**

We looked God’s excellencies in order to know Him better and be impacted by that knowing. Our response to these excellencies is to display them to the unbelieving world as we walk in the Spirit, so that others might see Christ in us and that He would be glorified. Additionally, meditating on His excellencies changes our thinking about our circumstances and choices.

## Additional Study

Re-read the passages on each attribute and answer the questions.

Glory – What does this tell me about my pride?

Beauty – How should I view God?

Independence – How should I view my own importance?

Immutability – How should I view God’s promises?

Omnipresence – How does this relate to my “secret” sins?

Omniscience – What does this tell me about my sinful thoughts?

Omnipotence – How is this related to my difficult times?

Sovereignty – How does God’s glory and sovereignty work together in my difficult times?

Faithfulness – In addition, read 2 Peter 1:3 and explain what God’s faithfulness means to believers who are committed to be doers of God’s Word; read Hebrews 12:4-13 and explain what God’s faithfulness means to those who have decided to continue in willful sin; read Psalm 96:11-13 and Revelation 19:11 and explain what God’s faithfulness means to those who have not bowed in submission to Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Righteousness – How does this impact my view of God’s fairness?

Truth – How should I view God’s Word?

Holiness – What is preventing me from pursuing holiness?

Wrath – How motivated should I be to make disciples?

Love, lovingkindness, compassion, grace, longsuffering – How thankful am I for God not giving me what I deserve?