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that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). We see evidence that this attribute of God was active even before creation among the members of the Trinity. God speaks to his Father of “my glory which has been given me in your love before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24), indicating that there was love from the Father to the Son from all eternity. It continues at the present time, for we read, “The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand” (John 3:35). We imitate this communicable attribute of God, first by loving God in return, and second by loving others in imitation of the way God loves them. All our obligations to God can be summarized in this: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. . . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-38). If we love God, we will obey his commandments (1 John 5:3) and thus do what is pleasing to him. We will love God, not the world (1 John 2:15), and we will do all this because he first loved us (1 John 4:19). Mercy, grace, patienceGod’s mercy, patience, and grace may be seen as three separate attributes, or as specific aspects of God’s goodness. These three characteristics of God’s nature are often mentioned together, especially in the Old Testament. When God declared his name to Moses, he proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Exodus 34:6). David says in Psalm 103:8, “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.”Mercy is often emphasized where people are in misery or distress. David says, for example, “I am in great distress; let us fall into the hand of the Lord for his mercy is great. . . .” (2 Samuel 24:14). When Paul speaks of the fact that God comforts us in affliction, he calls God the “Father of mercies and God of all comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:3). We are to imitate God’s mercy in our conduct toward others: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Matthew 5:7).God’s grace, or his favor toward those who deserve no favor but only punishment, is always freely given. God says, “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy” (Exodus 33:19). In the New Testament, and especially in Paul’s letters, the entire Christian life can be seen as a result of God’s continuous offering of grace.As with most of the God’s attributes that we are to imitate, patience requires a moment-by-moment trust in God to fulfill his promises and purposes in our lives at his chosen time. Our confidence that the Lord will soon fulfill his purposes for our good and his glory will enable us to be patient. James makes this connection when he says, “You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (James 5:8).HolinessGod himself is the Most Holy One. He’s called the “Holy One of Israel” (Psalm 71:22, 78:41, 89:18; Isaiah 1:4, 5:19, 24). The seraphim around God’s throne cry, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isaiah 6:3). “The Lord our God is holy!” exclaims the psalmist (Psalm 99:9).God’s holiness provides the pattern for his people to imitate. He commands them, “You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy” (Leviticus 19:2). When God called his people out of Egypt and brought them to himself and commanded them to obey his voice, then he said, “You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:4-6).Peace (or order)In 1 Corinthians 14:33 Paul says, “God is not a God of confusion but of peace.” Although “peace” and “order” have not traditionally been classified as attributes of God, Paul here indicates another quality that we could think of as a distinct attribute of God. Paul says that God’s actions are characterized by “peace” and not by “disorder” (akatastasia, a Greek word meaning “disorder, confusion, unrest”). God himself is “the God of peace” (Romans 15:33, 16:20, Philippians 4:9). But those who walk in wickedness do not have peace: “There is no peace,” says the Lord, “for the wicked”” (Isaiah 48:22, 57:21).We can see an imitation of this attribute of God not only in “peace” as part of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23, but also in the last-mentioned element in the fruit of the Spirit, namely, “self-control” (Galatians 5:23). When we as God’s people walk in his ways, we come to know more and more fully by experience that the kingdom of God is indeed “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17), and we can say of the path of God’s wisdom, “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Proverbs 3:17).Righteousness (or justice)God always does what is right, and He is the final standard of what is right. Scripture attests to God’s righteousness and justice:“All his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is he” (Deuteronomy 32:4).“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25).“The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart” (Psalm 19:8).“I the Lord speak the truth, I declare what is right” (Isaiah 45:19).Paul says that when God sent Christ as a sacrifice to bear the punishment for sin, it “was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:25-26). When Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins it showed that God was both righteous and just, because he paid the wages of sin (Romans 6:23) and forgave his people.JealousyPeople sometimes have trouble thinking that jealousy is a desirable attribute in God. This is because for us, jealousy is almost always wrong. But jealousy can be a positive thing, too. Paul says to the Corinthians, “I feel a divine jealousy for you” (2 Corinthians 11:2). Here the sense is “earnestly protective or watchful.” This is the jealousy we attribute to God. He protects his honor. God deserves all honor and glory from his creation, and it is right for him to seek this honor.He commands his people not to bow down to idols or serve them, saying, “for I the Lord your God am a jealous God” (Exodus 20:5). He desires that worship be given to himself and not to false gods. Therefore, he commands the people of Israel to tear down the altars of pagan gods in the land of Canaan, giving the following reason: “For you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God” (Exodus 34:14, Deuteronomy 4:24; 5:9).This is also why pride is sinful for us: we do not deserve the honor that belongs to God alone (1 Corinthians 4:7; Revelation 4:11).WrathGod loves all that is right and good, for rightness and goodness conforms to his moral character. So it shouldn’t be surprising that God intensely hates sin. Scripture’s narrative frequently describe God’s wrath, especially when God’s people sin against him. “I have seen this people. . . . now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them.” (Exodus 32:9-10)“Remember and do not forget how you provoked the Lord your God to wrath in the wilderness. . . . Even at Horeb you provoked the Lord to wrath, and the Lord was so angry with you that he was ready to destroy you.” (Deuteronomy 9:7-8)“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him.” (John 3:36)For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men.” (Romans 1:18)Christians shouldn’t fear God’s wrath. For although “we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind” (Ephesians 2:3), we now trust in Jesus, “who delivers us from the wrath to come” (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Jesus Christ bore the wrath of God that was due to our sin, in order that we might be saved (Romans 3:25-26).WillGod approves and determines every action necessary for the existence and activity of himself and all creation.Scripture frequently indicates God’s will as the final or most ultimate reason for everything that happens. Paul refers to God as the one “who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will” (Ephesians 1:11). The phrase here translated “all things” (ta panta) is used frequently by Paul to refer to everything that exists or everything in creation (for example, Ephesians 1:10, 23, 3:9, 4:10; Colossians 1:16, 17; Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians. 8:6, 15:27-28). The word translated “accomplishes” (energeō, “works, works out, brings about, produces”) is a present participle suggesting continual activity. Paul’s statement might be more explicitly translated, “who continually brings about everything in the universe according to the counsel of his will.”“Will” is a communicable attribute because we exercise choice and make real decisions regarding the events of our lives. Our ability to exercise will and make choices is one of the most significant marks of God-likeness in our existence.FreedomGod does whatever he pleases. Nothing in creation can hinder him from carrying out his will.The Psalmist contrasts God’s power and freedom with the weakness of idols: “Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases” (Psalm 115:3). Human rulers can’t oppose God’s will, for “the king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will” (Proverbs 21:1). Similarly, Nebuchadnezzar learns that God, “does according to his will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, ‘What are you doing?’” (Daniel 4:35).While our will isn’t absolutely free in the way God’s is, he gives us relative freedom. When we use our will and our freedom to make choices that are pleasing to God, we reflect his character and bring glory to him.Omnipotence (or power and sovereignty)God’s omnipotence refers to his power to do what he decides to do. Omnipotence derives from two Latin words, omni, “all,” and potens, “powerful,” and means “all-powerful.” Numerous passages speak to God’s omnipotence.In context, the rhetorical question, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” (Genesis 18:14; Jeremiah 32:27) implies that nothing is too hard for the Lord.Jeremiah also says to God, “nothing is too hard for you” (Jeremiah 32:17). Paul says that God is “able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think” (Ephesians 3:20).God is called the “Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:18; Revelation 1:8), a Greek term (pantokratōr) that suggests the possession of all power and authority.The angel Gabriel says to Mary, “With God nothing will be impossible” (Luke 1:37)Jesus says, “With God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26).However, there are some things that God cannot do. God cannot do anything that denies his own character. For example, Scripture tells us that God can’t lie.In Titus 1:2 he is called (literally) “the unlying God” or the “God who never lies.”The author of Hebrews says that in God’s oath and promise “it is impossible for God to lie” (Hebrew 6:18, Grudem’s translation).2 Timothy 2:13 says of Christ, “He cannot deny himself.”Additionally, James says, “God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one” (James 1:13). Thus, God cannot lie, sin, deny himself, or be tempted with evil. He cannot cease to exist, or cease to be God, or act in a way inconsistent with any of his attributes.PerfectionGod completely possesses all excellent qualities. Additionally, there’s no quality of excellence that he does not have. He is “complete” or “perfect” in every way.Jesus tells us, “You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). And David says of God, “His way is perfect” (Psalm 18:30).BlessednessGod delights fully in himself and in all that reflects his character.We imitate God’s blessedness when we find delight and happiness in things that please God. When we’re thankful for the specific abilities, preferences, and other characteristics with which God has created us as individuals, we imitate his blessedness. We find our greatest blessedness—our greatest happiness—in the source of all good qualities, God himself.BeautyGod is the sum of all desirable qualities. All of our good and righteous desires, all of the desires that really ought to be in us or in any other creature, find their ultimate fulfillment in God.The beauty of our lives is so important to Christ that his purpose now is to sanctify the entire church “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” (Ephesians 5:27). Thus, we individually and corporately reflect God’s beauty in every way in which we exhibit his character.GloryScripture presents God’s glory in two major ways. In one sense, God’s glory isn’t an attribute, but the superlative honor that everything in the universe should give to God (Isaiah 43:7; Romans 3:23; John 17:5).But God’s “glory” also describes the bright light that surrounds his presence. It belongs to him alone and it’s the outward expression of his excellence. We see this glory in several places in Scripture. For example:When the angel of the Lord appears to the shepherds (Luke 2:9)The transfiguration (Matthew 17:2)The heavenly city in Revelation (Revelation 21:23)God made us to reflect his glory. Paul tells us that even now in our Christian lives we all are being “changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another” (2 Corinthians 3:18). There isn’t a visible light that surrounds us, but there is a brightness, splendor, or beauty about the life of a person who deeply loves God, and it’s often evident to those around them.ConclusionIn many ways, God is nothing like us. He, as the creator, will always have unique attributes his creation cannot possess. But we’re also made in his image (Genesis 1:26-28), so in other ways, God shares his attributes with us. We are finite, created beings, made in the likeness of our infinite creator.SaveLearn more in Wayne Grudem’s Systematic Theology online course.