

# **Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Theology Proper, Session 11, Communicable Attributes, Part 2**

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This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on Theology Proper, or God. This is session 11 in Communicable Attributes, Part 2.

We continue our study of the Doctrine of God, specifically now the Attributes of God, more specifically the Incommunicable Attributes, those he does not share with his creatures.

God is omnipresent. By omnipresent we mean that God is fully and simultaneously present everywhere. God's omnipresence interrelates to all his attributes, but two are noteworthy.

God as spirit and God as infinite. He is spirit, not physical, so his presence is as spirit, but genuine nonetheless. God is infinite, and his omnipresence is essentially his infinity related to the category of space.

Where is God? He is here right now, and he is there right now. God is everywhere. There is nowhere that God is not.

God cannot be contained by a set of coordinates on a GPS. God exists as fully and simultaneously present in all sets of coordinates. The Bible speaks of how God is both near and far, Jeremiah 23:23 and 24.

In the context here, as frequently in Jeremiah, God is speaking against the false prophets. Verse 16 thus says the Lord of hosts, do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord.

They say, no disaster shall come upon you. Verse 21, I did not send the prophets, yet they ran. I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied.

But if they had stood in my counsel, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way and from the evil of their deeds. Am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God far away? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him, declares the Lord? The Lord, Jeremiah 23, 24. Do I not fill heaven and earth, declares the Lord? I have heard what the prophets have said, who prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed.

How long shall there be lies, how long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets, who prophesy lies, who think to make my people forget my name by their dreams, that they tell one another, even as their fathers forgot my name for Baal. Let the prophet who has a dream tell a dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. The Lord is not happy, needless to say.

Am I a God who's only near? The Bible speaks of God as both near and far. Am I a God who's only near and not a God who's far away? Can a person hide in secret places where I cannot see him? Do I not fill the heavens and the earth? Jeremiah 23:23 and 24 is a key passage concerning omnipresence. God is transcendent, far away, removed from his creation, beyond his creation, and not trapped in it.

Isaiah 40:22. God is enthroned above the circle of the earth. Isaiah 40:22.

So that quote, even heaven, the highest heaven, cannot contain him. 1 Kings 8:27. 2 Chronicles 6:18.

So, God is transcendent. He's outside of his creation. He's far away, in the words of Jeremiah, but he's also near.

He's also imminent, present in his creation, though not a part of it. For quote, in him we live and move and have our being, Acts 17, 28. Indeed, Isaiah comforts God's people with his caring presence.

Isaiah 40:11. He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them in the fold of his garment. Isaiah 40:11.

Contemplating God's omnipresence raises several questions. God is present in and with Christ in a unique way, for Jesus is God incarnate. As the God-man, Christ is God himself.

As the God-man, he is endued with the Spirit beyond measure, Isaiah 61:1 through 3, John 3:34. The Holy Spirit is with Christ as he is with no one else. As we will see, the Spirit is upon Christ from his conception through his resurrection, enabling him to accomplish the work of salvation.

Although the Spirit is with Jesus as Lord and Savior in an absolutely unique way, he is also present in a special way with those Jesus saves. God is everywhere present in the sense of existing fully and simultaneously everywhere, but he is not equally present everywhere or with everyone in terms of his covenantal or saving presence. Importantly, he is with believers in a special way, including as we carry out his Great Commission to make disciples of all nations.

Jesus reassures us, quote, I am with you always to the end of the age, Matthew 28:20. And the Spirit is in and with us as the Spirit of life and truth, John 6, 63 and John 14:17. I want to read those because I sort of spoke of the limitations of John's doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and I want to emphasize that he does teach that the Holy Spirit is with God's people.

He just doesn't always coordinate that with other teachings as systematic theology does. Jesus had just spoken about, although John has no institution of a Lord's Supper passage, John 6 pertains to the teaching of the Supper because it teaches union with Christ, and Jesus uses the imagery of drinking his blood and eating his flesh, which scandalized his hearers. When many of his disciples heard it, they said, this is a hard saying.

Who can listen to it? But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life, capital S. The flesh is no help at all. The words I have spoken to you are spirit, small s, and life. But there are some of you who do not believe.

For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe and who it was who would betray him. How could he handle that knowledge? There was never any hint of unequal treatment of Judas because the eleven were totally surprised when he went out to do his betrayal. How could Jesus do that? I can't comprehend.

This is why I told you no one can come to me except it is granted him by the Father. The Spirit is in and with us as the Spirit of life. It is the Spirit who gives life, Jesus says, John 6:63, and the Spirit of truth, John 14, John 14.

If you love me, 14:15, you will keep my commandments and I will ask the Father and he will give you another helper. To be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him or knows him. The world is hopelessly empiricist.

It only knows what its senses tell it. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you, the Spirit of truth. Jesus reassures his disciples, I'm with you always to the end of the age.

The Spirit is in and with us as the Spirit of life. He gives life and the Spirit of truth. As a matter of fact, in both of those capacities, he is the alter ego of Jesus.

Jesus was the revealer of the Father. That's what he means when he says, I am the truth. Jesus was the giver of eternal life.

I am the life, the way, the truth, and the life. When Jesus goes, he doesn't leave his disciples as orphans. He sends the Spirit, and the Spirit is the Spirit of truth and life, carrying on Jesus' ministries.

He carries on more than that, but that's enough for right now. The Spirit joins us to Christ in salvation, indwells us, and keeps us saved. Ephesians 4.30 just eluded me.

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Actually, I have told the Bible people at Crossway that it's not by whom; it's with whom you were sealed. The Spirit is not the sealer.

The Spirit is the seal, but it is absolutely true that the Spirit keeps us saved as God's seal upon us. Though God is omnipresent, he manifests his presence in a special way at certain times and places. In the Old Testament, God is everywhere present, and in that way, as much present with the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Persians as he is with Israel.

Ah, but yet he dwells with Israel in a special way, and he dwells in tabernacle and temple in a very special way, where he chose for his name, his presence, to dwell. 1 Kings 8:13, 16, and 20. Now believers, corporately and individually, are God's temple, where he especially dwells.

In 1 Corinthians 1, it is the corporate, sorry, 1 Corinthians 3, it's the corporate nature of the spirits in dwelling that is emphasized. In chapter 6, it is the individual nature of the spirits in dwelling. 1 Corinthians 3, 16.

Do you not know that you, plural, are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? It is my favorite commentary on 1 Corinthians by Ciampa and Rosner that helps put this in context. The Jews revered Solomon's temple, and even the second temple, which was no match for it still, was a special house of God. For Paul to say that they are God's temple is just staggering to their minds.

Do you not know that you, plural, are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? Well, God's Spirit is everywhere, but he dwells in the tabernacle and temple in a special way, and he dwells in his people corporately in a special way as they gather as the church. If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

It's an inclusion. Verse 16, you are God's temple. Verse 17, you are that temple.

There is the indwelling of the Spirit in the people of God as a whole, especially when they come together in corporate communal groups. In chapter 6, in the context of sexual immorality, he quotes Genesis, the two will become one flesh, as God's principle for marriage. Flee from sexual immorality.

1 Corinthians 6:18. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? This, speaking of sexual immorality, speaks of the, not the corporate, but the individual indwelling of the Spirit in the believers.

You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. First Corinthians 6, 20. So glorify God in your body.

A shocking notion for Greek and Roman religion. Believers, corporately and individually, are God's temple, where he especially dwells. He dwells everywhere, and he dwells in heathen temples in that sense of omnipresence.

He's not absent from their space, but he's not present there as he is with his people. As a matter of fact, you could say he's present in the heathen temple in judgment, as his special demonstrations of that when the Philistines grabbed the Ark of the Covenant, and God kept knocking the god Dagon over. Their fish god, he kept knocking him over on his head, breaking off limbs.

The Bible is funny and sometimes in a sort of sarcastic way. Distinguishing between God's general omnipresence and his special presence helps us answer the common question of whether God is in hell. The answer is yes because he's everywhere present.

But wait a minute, isn't there a sense, 2 Thessalonians 1, that God is not present in hell? Yes. You can't have it both ways. Oh yes, I can.

He is present in hell in his omnipresence, but he is not present in hell in the same place he is present in heaven. He is present in heaven and will be in the new heavens and new earth in a different way than he is present in hell. He is present in heaven in grace, comfort, and blessing.

He is not in hell in those ways. 2 Thessalonians 1:9. As a matter of fact, Paul usually just uses shorthand and talks about the wrath of God, uses some other terms that I'm not finding on the tip of my tongue, but this passage in 2 Thessalonians 1 is his primary passage. There it is, on the doctrine of hell.

Those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. Remember when I said 1 Peter 1:1 and 2, obedience to Jesus Christ meant faith in Christ, and that Peter sometimes uses obey for belief and disobey for disbelief, and I said Paul does the same. Here's an example.

Those who do not obey the gospel of Christ, the gospel is a command and the response to it could be expressed as disobeying that command. It's expressed in other ways, too, because the gospel is more than a command, but there's a place. They, those who don't obey the gospel, those who don't know God, will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints and to be marveled at among all who have believed.

So, there is a sense that people in hell are away from the Lord, away from his presence. Yes, they're away from his presence of joy, grace, blessing, and fellowship. He is not in hell in those ways, 2 Thessalonians 1:9, but instead, he is present in holiness, justice, power, and wrath.

Revelation 14:10 ESV. John's favorite picture of Christ is the word lamb, and every time but one it is used of Christ, that one is in a simile: the beast from the sea has horns like a lamb. Every other time it's a symbol, that's the right word, it's a symbol for Christ.

Idolaters will drink, Revelation 14:10, the wine of God's wrath poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and the idolater, it's single at this point, will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels, and here it comes, and in the presence of the lamb. Christ is present in hell, not as savior, but as judge, and the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest day or night, those worshippers of the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of its name, is actually another inclusion with the words up above that I did not read, the words of verse 9, Revelation 14.9. Indeed, hell is a place of banishment, a place of exile, a place outside of God's kingdom, and a special covenantal presence. Matthew 7, 21 to 23, then I will say to those, Jesus said, who did miracles in his name, who prophesied in his name, who cast out demons in his name, depart from me, you workers of lawlessness, I never knew you.

Unfortunately for them, they cannot absolutely depart from him, but they're going to depart from his presence of joy, grace, and blessing. Matthew 25:31 to 46, historically, the most powerful passage on hell, the sheep and the goats. To the goats, he says, in verse 41 of Matthew 25, depart from me, you cursed, depart from me again, into the eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

Revelation 20:10 tells us what that is, it is eternal suffering in the lake of fire. Revelation 22:15, outside of the new Jerusalem, outside of the city of God, which is the people of God, are the dogs and sorcerers, and the sexually immoral, and murderers, and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. God is present in heaven, in grace, comfort, and blessing.

He is not in hell in those ways, instead is present in holiness, justice, and wrath. Indeed, hell is a place of banishment, exile, a place outside of God's kingdom, and special covenantal presence. God's omnipresence and special presence with us are great encouragements.

On the other hand, to unbelievers, it is bad news, and if they hear the bad news in this life, they might embrace the good news. But God's omnipresence and special presence with his people bring great blessing. We cannot get away from God, even on days we might want to.

Psalm 139:7 through 10. I love Psalm 139. It is part of the inspired handbook of worship, hymn book of worship of ancient Israel, and as such, there's a communal aspect to every psalm, but this psalm, along with some others, also speaks personally.

Now, as each Israelite says, you know me when I sit down and when I rise up. Altogether, it's corporate, but they say you know me when I sit down and when I rise up. So it's both personal and communal.

7 through 9 says, where shall I go from your spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, in the grave, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there, your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me in comfort and blessing and care.

Everywhere God's hand leads and holds his people. The verse I just read is Psalm 139, verse 10. Some days we may ask, where is God? Scripture is clear.

He is right here, fully present with us. God is omnipotent. By all-powerful or omnipotent, we mean God has unlimited power to do anything he wants to do, as scripture does when it calls him the Almighty.

Genesis 49:25 for example. Jacob is blessing his sons, and to Joseph, he says, by the God of your father who will help you, by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above. God is Almighty God.

He is all-powerful. God's omnipotence interrelates with all his attributes, but two require special mention. God's sovereignty and God's infinity.

We'll take up God's sovereignty as an attribute of God later, but we note here that sovereignty expresses authority or domain. Omnipotence stresses power or ability. They overlap but are not identical.

In that way, omnipotence is the foundation for sovereignty. Before omnipotence stressed power or ability, not especially put to use, but sovereignty emphasizes power and ability indeed put to use, exercising God's authority or his domain as in his kingdom. God is also infinite, and his omnipotence is essentially his infinity, which is related to the category of power.

What is God able to do? Anything he pleases. There is no power in the universe that compares to his. No one is his equal.

Indeed, there's no use trying to quantify infinite power in terms of wattage, ergs, horsepower, or the like, because God's power is unlimited and beyond any measure. Some interpret omnipotence in peculiar ways that we should avoid. God's omnipotence does not mean he can make a rock too large for him to lift.

This is a logical impossibility. And God can't make a married bachelor either or a square circle. God's being all-powerful means he can do anything that power can do.

Power can't make a square circle, a married bachelor, or a rock too hard for God to lift. As C.S. Lewis famously said, quote, nonsense remains nonsense even when we talk it about God. Nonsense remains nonsense even when we talk it about God.

So, if we define it carefully, omnipotence doesn't mean that you can't use the sentence God cannot because the scripture says God cannot be tempted, God cannot sin, God cannot lie, and so forth. But it means God can do anything that power can do. So, if there are things that power can't do, that's not a challenge to God's omnipotence.

Further, God's power, as is all of his other attributes, is not disconnected from who he is. His power is not only related to his sovereignty and infinity but also his power is related to his holiness, love, etc. God can do whatever he wants but what he wants is not free-floating or capricious.

It is linked to his love, holiness, goodness, and all that he is. God is holy, and he does not use his power to do evil. God is loving, and he does not use his power to betray his people.

To do so, he would not be God. God is true. He does not use his power to deceive.

Titus 1:2 speaks of God, who cannot lie. God's power is harnessed for good and is united with all his other perfections. That's a Puritan word but I really like it.

The attributes of God are the qualities of God seen from another perspective. They are his divine perfections. The Bible describes power in many ways and with considerable frequency.



Images of God that pertain to omnipotence include Potter, Isaiah 29:15, and 16, and warrior. Let's do warrior first. Exodus 15-3, as God delivers his people from Egyptian bondage, cruel Egyptian bondage, we learn in the song of Moses, I will sing to the Lord for he has triumphed gloriously.

The horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song. He has become my salvation.

This is my God, I will praise him. My Father's God, I will exalt him. The Lord is a man of war.

The Lord, Yahweh, is his name. A biblical-theological picture that pertains to omnipotence is a warrior. God is a powerful warrior.

Potter is another image that pertains to the same. Isaiah 29, 15, and 16. Ah, you who hide deep from the Lord, your counsel, whose deeds are in the dark, and who say, who sees us? Who knows this? You turn things upside down.

Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, and the thing made should say of its maker, he did not make me, or the thing formed of him who formed it. He has no understanding. Oh my, sin sure messes with the minds of unsaved human beings.

It even saves human beings, does it not? Every section of both Testaments declares that God is powerful. Law, Deuteronomy 4, 37. Because he loved your fathers, he chose their descendants after them and brought you out of Egypt by his presence and great power.

Deuteronomy 4:37. The writings. Psalm 89:13.

You have a mighty arm. Your hand is powerful. Your right hand is lifted high.

Psalm 89:13. Prophets. Isaiah 40, verse 26.

He brings out the stars by number. He calls all of them by name. Because of his great power and strength, not one of them is missing.

Exodus 40:26. Gospels. Matthew 19:26.

Jesus looked at them and said, with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. The rich young ruler went away downcast because he had many possessions. And Jesus said, sell what you possess, give it to the poor, and you'll have treasure in heaven.

And come, follow me. When the young man heard this, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Jesus said to the disciples, truly I say to you, only with difficulty you will be a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven.

In a way we can understand their quandary, for don't the Proverbs say God will bless his people and bless the industrious with prosperity? In a sense, yes. And Jesus is shocking them. Truly I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven.

Again, I tell you, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. In other words, it is impossible for human beings to save themselves. When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, who then can be saved? But Jesus looked at them and said, with man, this is impossible, but with God, all things are possible.

Acts chapter 4 verse 7, by what power or in what name have you done this? The authorities say to Peter and the others. Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, let it be known to all of you that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified and whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing here before you healthy. Acts 4:7, 8 and 10.

The epistles. We are showing that the Bible waxes eloquent concerning God's mighty power. Ephesians 1:19.

May God give you a spirit of understanding in the inner man that you might know, quote, the immeasurable greatness of his power to us who believe according to the mighty working of his strength. Ephesians 1:19. Revelation 11:16, 17.

The 24 elders fell face down and worshiped God, saying, we give you thanks, Lord God, the Almighty, who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. Revelation 11:16, 17. God manifests his awe-inspiring might in many spheres.

In fact, the Lord, who is, quote, great, vast, in power. Psalm 147:5 displays it in creation. Psalm 65:6. Providence.

Psalm 107:23 to 43. And redemption. Psalm 77:15.

In addition, scripture ascribes to Christ divine power. Exercise in creation. John 1:3. All things were created by him.

Providence. Hebrews 1:3. He upholds all things by the word of his power or by his powerful word. So, what we're saying here is, and we'll show this for a number of God's attributes, the Son of God has the same attributes.

Some of the same attributes are ascribed to Christ. This is another way of saying that he is God and even God incarnate. Scripture ascribes to Christ divine power.

Exercise in creation. Providence. Healing and exorcism.

Acts 10, 38. Speaks of Jesus, whom God anointed, Jesus of Nazareth. He anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power.

He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. Raising himself from the dead. John 10, 17 and 18.

The New Testament, in general, ascribes to the Son works that in the Old Testament are ascribed to God generically. God creates, God does the work of providence, God saves, God consummates. Jesus is the Father's agent in creation.

Jesus does exercise providence. Colossians 1:16. Hebrews 1:3. Jesus does the work of salvation.

Jesus takes part in the consummation. But the Gospel of John goes beyond the general New Testament tendency to ascribe God's generic work from the Old Testament to Christ. And it ascribes, as I said earlier, election to Jesus in John 15 uniquely.

John 15:16 and 19 of that chapter. Uniquely in all of scripture. Only there, Christ is the author of the election.

Furthermore, in scripture, the Father usually raises the Son by direct statement or by what we call the divine passive. Jesus was raised from the dead as a reference to the Father's raising him. A few times, the Holy Spirit is said to have raised Jesus.

The beginning of Romans for example. Romans 1: 4 I think. But twice, only twice, and only in the fourth Gospel does Jesus raise himself.

John 2, destroy this temple and in three days I'll raise it again. He was talking about the temple of his body. In John 10, we read about the good shepherd.

For this reason, the Father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have the authority to lay it down and take it up again.

This charge I have received from my Father. So, we see omnipotence or at least great power ascribed to Jesus in his work of creation, providence, healing and exorcisms,

raising himself from the dead and transforming our bodies in resurrection.  
Philippians 3:21.

He will transform our lowly bodies to be made like his glorious body with the power he has to subordinate everything to himself. The ramifications of God's being all-powerful are magnificent. The Almighty loves us as his sons and daughters.

2 Corinthians 6:18. The Almighty loves us. He protects us.

Psalms 91: 1. And keeps us saved. 1 Peter 1:5. He empowers us to live for him. Isaiah 40 and verse 29.

Even though young men grow weary and grow faint, he gives to his people, he calls his people to mount up with wings like eagles, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint. 2 Peter 1:3. He gives us everything we need for eternal life and godliness. God empowers us, especially in our weakness.

2 Corinthians 12:9. God says my power is made perfect in weakness. My grace is sufficient for you, Paul. Specifically, God gives the power to spread the gospel.

Acts 1:8. You'll receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses. For all of this and more, our omnipotent Lord deserves our praise now and forever. 1 Corinthians 2:9, 11.

Revelation 4:8. I'm going to quickly go over this paragraph, which I just read, and give you verses in case you missed them. The ramifications of God's omnipotence are wondrous. He loves us as his sons and daughters.

2 Corinthians 6:18. Protects us. Psalm 91:1. Keeps us saved.

1 Peter 1:5. Empowers us to live for him. Isaiah 40:29. 2 Peter 1:3. He especially makes his power, his enabling grace known in our weakness.

2 Corinthians 12:9. Specifically, he empowers his people to spread the good news. Acts 1:8. And for all of this and more, praise is due his name, is due the name of the Almighty. 1 Corinthians 2:9, 11.

Revelation 4:8. When we take it up again, we will go on to God's being all knowing or omniscient.

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