

THEOLOGY PROPER

The Incommunicable Attributes of God – Pt. 1

Brandon Ragsdale

February 24, 2026



Institutes of
Theology

SEMESTER 4

2026

THEOLOGY PROPER

The Incommunicable Attributes of God – Pt. 1

I. Why Study the Attributes/ Perfections of God

- Because genuine love for God begins and is cultivated through knowing God.
- Because it is essential that we worship the God of the Bible and not a god made in our own image.
- Because an accurate understanding of the Attributes of God transforms the way we think, speak, act, and drives our motives.
- Because studying God's perfections brings humility, as we are rightly confronted with our own insignificance in light of God's infinite significance.
- Because knowing God is our greatest (and only) boast (Jer 9:23-24)
- Because knowing God ought to be the believer's primary goal in life (Phil 3:7-11)



J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*

“Our aim in studying the Godhead must be to know God Himself better. Our concern must be to enlarge our acquaintance, not simply with the doctrine of God’s attributes, but with the living God whose attributes they are.”



THEOLOGY PROPER

The Incommunicable Attributes of God – Pt. 1

- I. Why Study the Attributes/ Perfections of God
- II. The Definition of the Perfections of God
 - Distinguishing Characteristics of the Divine nature, which are Essential and Indispensable to the very Essence and Nature of God.



James Mook, *TH 605 Theology 1 Class Notes*

1. The perfections of God are the characteristics of God
2. They are necessary to His Divinity and, therefore, necessarily, absolutely perfect
3. Without any of these perfections as perfections, God would not be God



A.W Pink, *The Attributes of God*

“The perfections of God are the excellencies of His divine nature, the glory of His being, the foundation of His works.”



Jonathan Edwards, *The End for Which God Created the World*

“God is God, and distinguished from all other beings, and exalted above them, chiefly by His divine perfections.”



John MacArthur, *Biblical Doctrine*

“A general definition of perfections is as follows: God’s perfections are the essential characteristics of His nature. Because these characteristics are necessary to His nature, all His attributes are absolutely perfect and thus rightly called perfections. Further, since these perfections are essential to God’s nature, if any one of them were denied, God would no longer be God.”



Louis Berkhoff, *Systematic Theology*

“God has revealed Himself, including His perfections, in the Bible. This is the only means for man to have an assured accurate understanding of the Divine perfections. Of course, for this revelation to be relatively comprehensible, man must be created and re-created in God's image and, therefore, have analogies to God's perfections in himself. This is where the Scholastic arguments could serve in a secondary, confirmatory way. But even the assurance of this confirmation would be based on the revelation of Scripture concerning God and man.”



THEOLOGY PROPER

The Incommunicable Attributes of God – Pt. 1

- I. Why Study the Attributes/ Perfections of God
- II. The Definition of the Perfections of God
- III. The Introduction to the Perfections of God



James Mook, *TH 605 Theology 1 Class Notes*

“All classifications of God's perfections have the same weakness. They seem to divide God in two, leaving no harmony between the attributes, no unity in God.”



Louis Berkhoff, *Systematic Theology*

“This weakness must be overcome by seeing the first class of attributes as qualifying the second class and vice versa, “so that it can be said that God is one, absolute, unchangeable and infinite in His knowledge and wisdom, His goodness and love, His grace and mercy, His righteousness and holiness” [and vice versa].”



John MacArthur, *Biblical Doctrine*

“God is fully each of His perfections. Whatever God is, he is totally in his essence, If God is not fully and absolutely love, or fully and absolutely holy, or fully and absolutely good, then he is not fully and absolutely God.”



John MacArthur, *Biblical Doctrine*

“God’s essence is identical to His perfections. There is no essential distinction between God’s essence and His perfections, and there is no essential difference between God’s perfections to one another. Each perfection characterizes God’s complete essence simply and eternally. That is to say, God is what He has. He does not merely possess love, justice, and goodness; He is love and justice, eternally, fully, and completely. God is eternally all-powerful, all-holy, and all-loving.”



THEOLOGY PROPER

The Incommunicable Attributes of God – Pt. 1

- I. Why Study the Attributes/ Perfections of God
- II. The Definition of the Perfections of God
- III. The Introduction to the Perfections of God
 - A. Less Communicable - Having little analogy in human beings



Jonathan King, *Lexham Survey of Theology*

“God’s incommunicable attributes are those divine attributes that cannot be communicated (i.e., shared) by humanity; they are unique to God’s nature and character.”



THEOLOGY PROPER

The Incommunicable Attributes of God – Pt. 1

- I. Why Study the Attributes/ Perfections of God
- II. The Definition of the Perfections of God
- III. The Introduction to the Perfections of God
 - A. Less Communicable - Having little analogy in human beings
 1. God Is Holy, Eternal, Immutable, Infinite, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Self-existent, Self-sufficient, Sovereign, Spirit, Transcendent, Unique
 2. Ps 145:3-5; Is 40:18; Is 55:9; Jer 10:6-7



THEOLOGY PROPER

The Incommunicable Attributes of God – Pt. 1

- I. Why Study the Attributes/ Perfections of God
- II. The Definition of the Perfections of God
- III. The Introduction to the Perfections of God
 - A. Less Communicable - Having little analogy in human beings
 - B. More Communicable – Having more analogy in human beings



Jonathan King, *Lexham Survey of Theology*

“The communicable attributes of God describe God’s intrinsic character, particularly in his activity toward creatures; these attributes are therefore predicated analogically of creatures, chiefly of those created in his image.”



THEOLOGY PROPER

The Incommunicable Attributes of God – Pt. 1

- I. Why Study the Attributes/ Perfections of God
- II. The Definition of the Perfections of God
- III. The Introduction to the Perfections of God
 - A. Less Communicable - Having little analogy in human beings
 - B. More Communicable – Having more analogy in human beings
 1. God acts in perfect Wisdom, Love, Grace, Truth and Faithfulness, Mercy, Longsuffering, Justice, Will, Jealousy, Holiness, Blessedness, and Glory
 2. Ex 34:6-7; Deut 10:17-18; Ps 86:15; Ps 103:8



John MacArthur, *Biblical Doctrine*

In summary, God's perfections constitute His essence, or character, which far transcends all created things in greatness. God's essence is one indivisible whole, so that each and all of His perfections actively characterize God's entire being. God's perfections must be thought of as always actively present together and mutually influencing each other without any hierarchy, even when they are not all mentioned in a given passage of Scripture. God in His essential nature is truly beyond human understanding, and the only appropriate responses to studying even the fringes of His ways (cf. Job 26:14) are awe-filled reverence, worship, adoration, trust, and service.



THEOLOGY PROPER

The Incommunicable Attributes of God – Pt. 1

The Holiness of God



Louis Berkhoff, *Systematic Theology*

“It does not seem proper to speak of one attribute of God as being more central and fundamental than another; but if this were permissible, the Scriptural emphasis on the holiness of God would seem to justify its selection.”



THEOLOGY PROPER

The Incommunicable Attributes of God – Pt. 1 *The Holiness of God*

I. Definition of God's Holiness



John MacArthur, *Biblical Doctrine*

“God's inherent absolute greatness, by which He is perfectly distinct above everything outside His essence and is absolutely morally separate from sin.”



THEOLOGY PROPER

The Incommunicable Attributes of God – Pt. 1

The Holiness of God

I. Definition of God's Holiness

- The holiness of God means that He is completely “other”- completely distinct from both His creation and from sin.



Ed Welch, *When People are Big and God is Small*

“Holy can be defined as “separate,” “set apart,” “distinct,” or “uncontaminated.” In reference to God, “holy” means that He is different from us. None of His attributes can be understood by comparison to his creatures... Holiness is not one of many attributes of God. It is his essential nature and seen in all His qualities.”



Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness*

“Holiness is the perfection of all [God’s] other attributes. His power is holy power, His mercy is holy mercy, His wisdom is holy wisdom. It is His holiness more than any other attribute that makes Him worthy of our praise.”



THEOLOGY PROPER

The Incommunicable Attributes of God – Pt. 1

The Holiness of God

I. Definition of God's Holiness

- The holiness of God means that He is completely “other”- completely distinct from both His creation and from sin.
- The Scriptures clearly define these 2 Aspects of God's Holiness:



THEOLOGY PROPER

The Incommunicable Attributes of God – Pt. 1 *The Holiness of God*

I. Definition of God's Holiness

- The Scriptures clearly define these 2 Aspect of God's Holiness:
 1. God is completely ***distinct*** from his ***creation***
 - *Exodus 15:11* – Separation from His Creation/Creatures – God is Incomparable....He is in a category all by himself...
 - *Ps 50:21* – God's holiness speaks of his ontological otherness
 - *Isaiah 40:18, 25* – God is unmatched in his uniqueness
 - *Isaiah 55:8-9* – God's thoughts and ways are of a totally different nature not simply a different degree of thinking and doing
 - *Acts 17:24-25* – God as the Creator is always the giver, never the receiver



THEOLOGY PROPER

The Incommunicable Attributes of God – Pt. 1 *The Holiness of God*

I. Definition of God's Holiness

- The Scriptures clearly define these 2 Aspect of God's Holiness:
 1. God is completely **distinct** from his **creation**
 2. God is completely **separate** from **sin**
 - *Leviticus 11:44* – Separation from any and all impurity/sin....Holiness is God's essential nature
 - *Job 34:10* – It is not possible for God to do anything evil
 - *Psalms 5:4-5* – No evil cannot dwell with God
 - *Habakkuk 1:13* – God's purity cannot allow him to look on any form of wickedness with any inkling of approval
 - *James 1:13* – Sin has no connection to God...it does not tempt him...nor does he tempt anyone towards it
 - *1 John 1:5* – The fact that God is absolute light highlights the complete inability for any darkness/evil at all to coexist in his being



THEOLOGY PROPER

The Incommunicable Attributes of God – Pt. 1 *The Holiness of God*

I. Definition of God's Holiness

II. Examples of God's Holiness

- Moses Strikes the Rock – Numbers 20:8-13
- Nadab and Abihu – Leviticus 10:1-7
- Ananias and Sapphira – Acts 5:1-11
- The Cross – Isaiah 53:4-6, 10



THEOLOGY PROPER

The Incommunicable Attributes of God – Pt. 1

The Holiness of God

- I. Definition of God's Holiness
- II. Examples of God's Holiness
- III. Implications of God's Holiness



THEOLOGY PROPER

The Incommunicable Attributes of God – Pt. 1 *The Holiness of God*

- I. Definition of God's Holiness
- II. Examples of God's Holiness
- III. Implications of God's Holiness
 - **Justification** – Rom 3:21-26



A.W Pink, *The Attributes of God*

“God’s holiness is manifested at the Cross. Wondrously and yet most solemnly does the atonement display God’s infinite holiness and abhorrence of sin. How hateful must sin be to God for Him to punish it to its utmost deserts when it was imputed to His Son!”



THEOLOGY PROPER

The Incommunicable Attributes of God – Pt. 1 *The Holiness of God*

I. Definition of God's Holiness

II. Examples of God's Holiness

III. Implications of God's Holiness

- **Justification** – Rom 3:21-26
- **Sanctification** – 1 Pet 1:14-16



JC Ryle, *Holiness*

“Sanctification is that inward spiritual work which the Lord Jesus Christ works in a man by the Holy Ghost, when He calls him to be a true believer. He not only washes him from his sins in His own blood, but He also separates him from his natural love of sin and the world, puts a new principle in his heart, and makes him practically godly in life. The instrument by which the Spirit effects this work is generally the Word of God.”



THEOLOGY PROPER

The Incommunicable Attributes of God – Pt. 1 *The Holiness of God*

I. Definition of God's Holiness

II. Examples of God's Holiness

III. Implications of God's Holiness

- **Justification** – Rom 3:21-26
- **Sanctification** – 1 Pet 1:14-16
 - *Positional* – We have been set apart as holy by God
 - *Progressive* – We are constantly being made more into the image of Christ as we fight sin and pursue holiness



THEOLOGY PROPER

The Incommunicable Attributes of God – Pt. 1 *The Holiness of God*

I. Definition of God's Holiness

II. Examples of God's Holiness

III. Implications of God's Holiness

- **Justification** – Rom 3:21-26
- **Sanctification** – 1 Pet 1:14-16
- **Glorification** – 1 John 3:2



John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin*

“The contest with sin will continue whilst we live in this world; but the absolute conquest and destruction of it is reserved for glory alone.”



John Calvin, *Commentary on Romans* 7:24-25

“Believers groan under the burden of sin, but the Lord will at length deliver them, when He shall fully restore them to holiness.”

