

DAILY DOSE OF DOCTRINE

October 1 – 5, 2007



October 1, 2007

God is Absolutely Perfect

*“Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;
his greatness no one can fathom.”¹*

God is perfection itself and all of his attributes are infinitely or absolutely perfect. This is a qualitative matter. God is, for example, ‘perfect’ in his holiness. That is to say, his holiness is without limitation or defect – a flawless diamond!

In a similar way, as we shall see in the course of examining his other attributes, God is also absolutely perfect in his righteousness, love, knowledge, mercy, justice, etc.

Jesus’ statement, “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect,”² affirms this, but raises the question as to how we mere mortals are to attain it!

It may refer to ‘imputed’ righteousness: that God ‘imputes’ or credits to us the sinless perfection of Christ when our sins are washed away by his blood.

It may refer to the future ‘perfection’ we shall achieve in heaven – glorified saints without flaw or defect.

Or it may be calling us to pursue a path toward perfection by following Christ here and now. As he said to the rich young ruler, *“If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”³*

“Perfection consists in so identifying with our Lord by loving trust and attachment to his person that we take on his ways of thinking, acting and relating to others in the measure of our abilities.”⁴

¹ Psalm 145:3 (TNIV) See also Job 11:7-10

² Matthew 5:48

³ Matthew 19:21 (TNIV)

⁴ Abbot John Eudes Bamberger,
www.abbotjohnneudes.org/c06jul03.html

October 2, 2007

God's Eternity

*"Before the mountains were born
or you brought forth the whole world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God."¹*

The concept of God's infinity in relationship to time is one of the most difficult things for us to grasp. The Bible tries to convey it in popular language, by stating that God has always and will always exist.

But we humans are *bound* by time. Our lives are a series of events marked by seconds, minutes, days, weeks, months, years. We think in terms of past, present and future because that is our reality. Not so with God.

As creator of time and space, the eternal God is free of time's limitations. *"But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day."²* God fills all of time and stands above it. For God, all of our moments, past or future, exist in the present: *"Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"³*

While hard for us to grasp, the eternity of God is a source of reassurance to us. God is able to be present with each of us in every moment. While we may be impatient at God's apparent 'slowness' as we wait for him to act in our circumstances, he does providentially order all things to happen at just the right time. And at some point he will call us to cross the threshold of this present world into a new one of unending glory.

¹ Psalm 90:2 (TNIV) See also Psalm 102:12, Eph. 3:21

² 2 Peter 3:8 (TNIV)

³ John 8:58 (TNIV)

October 3, 2007

God's Immensity & Omnipresence

"But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!"¹

Just as God transcends time, he also transcends space. The 'immensity' of God affirms that he is not bound to exist in one place at a time, as we are. As the creator of space, he exists 'above' it.

At the same time, God is 'omnipresent' – he exists everywhere. *"God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'"²*

God is present simultaneously in all places with his whole Being.³ "With his whole Being" is important because it wards "off the idea that God is diffused through space, so that one part of His Being is present in one place, and another part in some other place."⁴ 'Bits' of God are not diffused through the universe – all of God is present everywhere at all times.

The Bible affirms that the omnipresence of God is of great significance for our lives. God is always with us. *"Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn; if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand hold me fast."⁵*

¹ 1 Kings 8:27 (TNIV) See also Isa. 61:1

² Acts 17:27-28 (TNIV)

³ See Jeremiah 23:23-24

⁴ L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 60-61

⁵ Psalm 139:7-10 (TNIV)

October 4, 2007

God is a Personal Being

“Jesus answered: “Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’”¹

In his various Star Wars movies, George Lucas popularized the notion, loosely based on Eastern religious thinking, that the universe is ordered by an impersonal, spiritual ‘Force’. The ‘Force’ inhabits and energizes all things, has both good and evil dimensions and can be accessed for power or direction. This is attractive in that it offers a hope that there is something ‘bigger’ than ourselves which we can tap into, while we remain firmly in the driver’s seat of our own lives. The ‘Force’ is a-personal.

It is also very different from what the Bible reveals to us about God. While the Bible does not use the word ‘person’ of God, it presents him to us in ‘personal’ terms: God creates, God speaks, God rejoices, God is angered, God walks with Adam and Eve in the cool twilight of the day². While these are all ‘anthropomorphic’ representations (i.e. God may not have legs and really ‘walk’), they would still be way out of line if God were not in some sense a real personal being with personal attributes. God is, of course, without human limitations, but still, as we are ‘created in his image’, there is some correlation between his ‘personhood’ and our ‘personhood’.

The bottom line for us is that we are able to have a person-to-person relationship with God. We can communicate with him, love, trust and enjoy him. And our clearest revelation of God is in a person: Jesus Christ.

¹ John 14:9 (TNIV)

² See Genesis 1-3

October 5, 2007

God's 'Free' Knowledge

"Do not keep talking so proudly
or let your mouth speak such arrogance,
for the LORD is a God who knows,
and by him deeds are weighed."¹

Before looking at the extent of God's knowledge (his omniscience), it may be good to note that 'how' God knows things is somewhat different from the way in which humans come to know things.

Humans gain knowledge 'from without' – by processes such as observation, deduction or having things communicated to us. We can conjecture about possible events or alternative outcomes, but our 'guesses' are uncertain as to their accuracy since we cannot know all the possibilities.

God's knowledge is perfect in that it is innate – from within himself and not dependant on outside sources of information. It is 'free-standing'.

'Before' creating, God knew the physical realities of all things that would come into existence. That knowledge was simply within him. He did not observe it or put it together piecemeal from various ideas – the way we 'create' something. Because God is omnipotent (able to do all things), he knows not only the things that have been, are and will be, but also the infinite number of possible events/things that could be. God doesn't 'guess' – God knows.

If this makes our heads spin, that may be a good thing. We have a tendency to become frustrated with God's will perhaps, in part, because we think we're closer to the situation and know better. Though we boggle at how he knows, God does have the complete picture. He wants us to trust him with that.

¹ 1 Samuel 2:3 (TNIV) See also Isaiah 40:27-28