

## The Lost Attribute of God

I grew up in church – it was not there. I went to seminary – it was not there. I have read countless theological books – not there. Listened to and preached countless sermons – not there. Yet there it is in the Bible, and I dare say, on every page. What is it? Something missing. God's lost attribute.

My brother and I were talking, and the subject of God's attributes came up. Omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence (fancy words for all-knowing, everywhere, and all-powerful) His love, justice, mercy... Hey let's just get this over ... Wikipedia what are they?

1) Aseity, 2) Eternity, 3) Goodness, 4) Graciousness, 5) Holiness, 6) Immanence, 7) Immutability, 8) Impassibility, 9) Impeccability, 10) Incomprehensibility, 11) Incorporeality, 12) Infinity, 13) Jealousy, 14) Love, 15) Mission, 16) Mystery, 17) Omnipotence, 18) Omnipresence, 19) Omniscience, 20) Oneness, 21) Providence, 22) Righteousness, 23) Simplicity, 24) Sovereignty, 25) Transcendence, 26) Trinity, 27) Veracity, 28) Wrath.

There .... posted right from the pages of the closest thing to an omniscient source. Yet one is missing. It's in the first chapter of Genesis. In the last chapter of Revelation. Every page in between. Why do theologians leave it out? Don't know, but they do. Ready? Here it is. The lost attribute of God. Humility.

"Wait," you quickly say, "That is an attribute of Jesus. Not of God."

Let me follow that up with a quick question. Who was Jesus? God? Does it not flow then, that one of God's key attributes is humility? Indeed, it does seem like it should. But it is not there in any list of attributes I have ever read. Why not?

So, what are your thoughts as to why it is missing? I think I have figured it out.

We know that we are humans, and we should be humble before God. *Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God so that he may exalt you at the proper time.* Verses like that are written

all over the Bible. So, we deduce that Jesus, in his humanity, was here to show us how to be humble. He is our example. This is his human role. And a darn good job he did of it too!!

Therefore, it is relegated as an attribute of the human Jesus, but the humility of God is simply not spoken of.

So here is the question: Is God really humble? Does the scripture really teach this on every page? How? Where? In what ways?

God is humble. He is humble in the most profound and significant ways. We are told to be humble, not because there can only be one proud one – God – and the rest had better get in line, hunched over carrying their bag of humility. But we are told to be humble because God too is humble, and we are called to be like him.

Genesis 1:28: *Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it.*

Right after God creates man and woman in His image, He commissions them to take His image to the ends of the earth. Can you not clearly see the Humility in that? God creates a vastly inferior being than Himself – one that is far from all knowing, one that is not all powerful, one that is not everywhere, and he entrusts us to do a job. He could have done far, far better Himself. What does that take but humility?

Two chapters later we see that the original source of evil is dwelling here on this planet. We are told to subdue this planet with the image of God, but we have an enemy who is seeking the same – total subjugation of the earth. So, God is calling man and woman and their offspring to wage war on evil, even though He knew their high probability (100%) of failure. In fact, we know who has indeed subdued this planet as John has clearly stated – and “*we know the whole world is under the control of the evil one.*” God could have wiped out evil from its very onset with a simple snap of His fingers but chose not to. He chose us even knowing our frailty. But even with our original failure in the Garden and our repeated and multiple ongoing failures, He still has not taken that task from us. It is our task, and we are to carry it out in His name. Crush the Serpent’s head. Take down the evil one and overcome evil with good. Take the goodness and love of God to the ends of the earth.

Imagine with me - a carpenter and his son. The carpenter is given a great task... to refurbish the Whitehouse... Big. Now his son is just a boy. Yet, the master carpenter desires not his own glory but that of his child, so he entrusts to him the noblest of all carpentry jobs. He will be there for him but will not do it for him. The responsibility is given to his son. His son is not nearly as talented, nor as experienced, nor as capable, but he gives the most important cabinetry job in the nation's history away to his son. His son works, he tries, he is coached by Dad, but there is mistake after mistake made. Perfection is not there, and there are some serious flaws in the work. Yet the day comes that it will be unveiled. It is unveiled. And guess what? It is lacking. There is some disappointment. Is this the best this master carpenter could do? *"What kind of master carpenter is this?"* The media asks. Yet there the master stands taking the blame for the less than perfect work. It was the master's job, and he did it – but through his child. He is proud of his son's work – even though it is making him look poorly in the sight of many, including the president. Ouch! Humility.

This is the humility of God. He puts the development of his imperfect children above the glory of his own perfection.

**Adam and Eve.** They were commissioned to take out evil, and the evil one, by taking God's goodness – his image – to the ends of the earth... failure... traitors – both of them. Siding with the enemy... God's humility.

**Israel.** A people for God's own possession through whom he will be made known. Read the Old Testament and see how well they did. God does not end up looking so good folks. His name has been dragged – by the people bearing his name – through the mud.

**The Church.** The people who bear his name have been doing so for the past 2000 years. I personally like to call myself a Jesus follower and not "Christian." So, let's see, am I embarrassed to throw my name in there with "Christians," even though Jesus gives his name to them?

**Me.** Boy, I am sure glad I have never done anything that would diminish His glorious name.... Right! If he really was all about his reputation, I would have been taken out years ago!

Why would God entrust something so important to someone so far less capable and competent than himself? There are other possible reasons, but none quite as clear as this: humility.

### ***Soli Deo Gloria?***

“To God alone be the Glory” This is one of the cries of the Reformation and is perhaps one of the reasons we teach not the “humility of God.” Yet, what if this God, in all his Glory, decides to share His glory with much inferior creatures – like us humans? Because the Bible is clear that this is exactly what He has done. One verse Isaiah 42:8 is often taken out of context – “*I will share my glory with no one.*” The context here means with other gods or idols of that day. But many today hold to this verse as though it applies to everyone - forever. Yet there are many, many verses that God show that He has indeed decided to share His glory with His created beings – humans. Here are just few...

*Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God.* Romans 5:2

*Yet thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor.* Psalm 8:5

*Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. [2] For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.* Isaiah 60:1-2

*. . . the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.* Isaiah 60:4

*How can you believe, who receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?* John 5:44

*The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one.* John 17:22

*For he will render to every man according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; . . . There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and*

*honor and peace for every one who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. Romans 2:6-7, 9-10*

*What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the vessels of wrath made for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for the vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory. Romans 9:22-23*

*But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. 1 Corinthians 2:7*

*And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18*

*...to lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. 1 Thessalonians 2:12*

*To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians 2:14*

*If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. 1 Peter 4:14*

*So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed. 1 Peter 5:1*

*His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature. 2 Peter 1:3-4*

So, the morally perfect, infinite Creator of the universe has decided to share His glory with finite, sinful human beings? How humbling for a morally perfect God is that? Not just

humbling... humiliating. Jesus hanging naked on a cross dying a criminal's death. This is the high cost of sharing His glory with us.

The Great Commission is ours. He gave it to us. He empowers us through His Spirit to take His kingdom to every tribe tongue and nation. He could have “zapped” evil forever the very moment it appeared, but He chose to assign us to the most significant known task in the Universe. He could have reached the world with the Gospel message Himself, much more efficiently, but He chose us – His Church – for the greatest endeavor in history: To overcome and take out evil with good – forever. God, who could have crushed the serpent in less than a second, sends a human/God Jesus to bruise the serpent's head and then commissions His very “human” and inefficient church to do the final crushing (*Romans 16:20*). And the Church has indeed been so slow...so disobedient... so ineffective... in other words, so humbling to the One who called us. We have brought His name down, yet still He entrusts us with that Holy task. And in as much as we share in that commission and taste that final victory we will share in His glory – forever. Wow. We serve a very humble God.

So, church leaders ...

*Be humble as God is humble.*

Many Christian leaders build movements around their personalities because they are the brightest, the most gifted, the most trained, and the most educated. They dare not trust decisions to those who are weaker and beneath them lest the job get done any less than the “perfect” way than they have dreamt it to be. This is not Christian. It is not of God. Why?

Because it is not like God at all. He is humble. He entrusts His work to uneducated fishermen, a despised tax collector, a demonized prostitute, and his money box to Judas (I have been trying to let that sink in). ... Humbling.

God is not a micromanager of His people. Micromanagers in the church have major pride issues. They really believe their way is best and therefore all must be done their “perfect” way. Now if God – who really does have all knowledge and power and authority – chooses to empower and entrust others infinitely less competent than himself to carry out a task, how

much more should deeply flawed human leaders be willing to do so? We in the West so value pragmatism and efficiency – but these are not attributes of God. He values the development of His people far above the speed, price, perfection, or practicality of getting things done.

By commanding and controlling others these micromanagers build all things around their vision, and they use others to carry out their dreams and to build their own personal kingdoms right down to the meticulous details. They not only create cultures of fear and intimidation and make everyone working for them miserable, but they are not being neither like Jesus nor like God the Father. For God actually gives us – losers – real authority and real responsibility.... And real glory! Wow. How can we not pass this on to others we are asked to serve? So, to seek to control and micromanage God's people is about as far from God as you can get. God empowers and entrusts the weak at the cost of his own reputation. It is Satan who creates cultures of fear, control, and oppression.

If, as leaders, we can't let our image be stained by others' weaknesses, shortcomings, and even – dare I say – sin, then we are the ones who are weak, we are the ones who are afraid, we are the ones who are proud, and we are the ones sinning.

Be like the God who called you – be humble and give the kingdom away to the weak and impoverished like He did and still does so freely. Let your reputation be ruined as you step down to empower others to rise to know the “glorious” calling of God and let those you serve relish in the fact that God shares His glory with humankind and He lets us share the name of His beloved son. Joy will reign in such a culture as the Spirit is free to bear His fruit. And may this once hidden but glorious attribute of God be evident in you who bear His humble name. Amen

*7 Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. 8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, 10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence*

through our faith in him. **13** So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

**20** Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, **21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.**