

Lesson 2

God is Self-Containing

One of the most embarrassing facts I know is that millions who live in Bible lands, who belong to churches and even labor to promote the Christian Faith, go all through life on this earth without thinking seriously about the person of God. Comparatively few know the awe-inspiring and worship-provoking grandeur of God's perfections.

A study of God the Father should cause us to cry out as did Moses, ***"Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?"*** (Exo. 15:11)

In this lesson, we are going to look at the self-existence, independence and self-sufficiency of God. I am going to ask you to put on your thinking caps and listen carefully as we who are finite seek to know an infinite God.

GOD IS SELF-EXISTENT

The first four words of the bible say, ***"In the beginning God"*** (Gen. 1:1); yet, how many of us really have a good understanding of the God of Scripture? In Exodus 3:14 God calls Himself ***"I AM THAT I AM"***; and when this title is contemplated it causes the human mind to "short out," for no man can really plumb the depths of an infinite Creator.

God is uncaused. When speaking of God's self-existence, we mean that God has no origin, for "origin" is a word that belongs to created things and God is not created. When we think of anything that has origin, we are not thinking of God, for God has no origin. God is the final absolute and the ultimate ground of all things, who voluntarily enters into various relations with His creation. As soon as a human being asks, "Where did God come from?" he is thinking as a mere human who is a victim of time and space. God is independent of both time and space because He created them. God is unaffected by time or motion and owes nothing to the things He has created.

The human mind is a product of time and space, and it is trained to think in terms of cause and effect. We look around and see that buildings are the result of carpenters, children are the product of parents and works of art are the effect of an artist's pen. Logically we might conclude that the cause of the world and universe is God. But a keen philosopher would say, "Yes, but who or what caused God?" When this question is asked, men are only showing that they are creatures with limited minds. The Bible teaches that God is and that He is the final point of predication in all things. Man must be educated to the fact that God has no origin, and he will find this concept hard to understand since it introduces a category that his natural intelligence is not able to fully grasp. This is why God had to give special revelation in the Bible as to what He is like.

Contemplation of God is often very painful, for the human mind, being created, has an uneasiness about the uncreated. It is difficult for a finite being to allow for One who is wholly

outside of the circle of his knowledge. It bothers man when he thinks about God who does not account to man for His being, who is responsible to no one and who is self-existent, self-dependent and self-sufficient. To admit that there is a God who is beyond us, who exists outside all our categories and who is not subject to man's reason, requires a great deal of humility, more than most men possess; so they save face by thinking God down to their level or at least down to where they can manage and control Him.

GOD IS INDEPENDENT

As a self-existent God, He is not only independent in Himself, but also causes everything to depend on Him. He is independent of all things and forces and yet all things exist only through Him.

“To whom, then, will you compare God? What image will you compare him to? Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood since the earth was founded? He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in. He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.” (Isa. 40:18, 21-23)

How much different is the God of Scripture from the “god” of the average pulpit! God is independent in His thought (Rom. 11:33, 34), His will (Dan. 4:35, Eph. 1:5), His power (Psa. 115:3), and His plan (Psa. 33:11).

“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” (Rom. 11:33-34)

“All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: ‘What have you done?’” (Dan. 4:35)

“He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.” (Eph. 1:5)

“Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.” (Psa. 115:3)

“But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.” (Psa. 33:11)

These are strange sounds to the contemporary Christian's ears, but it is God's description of Himself. Modern man must realize that it is impossible to bring the Almighty under obligation to the creature.

GOD IS SELF-SUFFICIENT

God in Himself is self-sufficient and self-satisfied with Himself. Whatever God is, and all that God is, He is in Himself. God is power, spirit, life, love, knowledge and many other attributes in Himself and can receive none of these things from another source. To admit the existence of a need in God is to admit incompleteness in the essence of God. God has no needs. "Need" is a creature word but can never be used in a description of the Creator. God has no necessary relation to anything outside of Himself and voluntarily enters into various relations with His creation. God needs nothing or no one to complete Him. A. W. Tozer, the late great Christian Missionary and Alliance preacher, said:

"His (God's) interest in His creatures arises from His sovereign good pleasure, not from any need those creatures can supply nor from any completeness they can bring to Him who is complete in Himself." (The Knowledge of the Holy)

It is a fact that no created being either completes or takes away from the perfections of God. He is God above, beyond and apart from all actions and thoughts of men. If every man on earth were to become an atheist, this fact could not affect God in any way. He is what He is in Himself without regard to any created intelligence. To believe in God adds nothing to His perfections; to doubt Him takes nothing away. God is not the loser when men fail to believe in Him, but men are the losers.

The implications of the self-sufficiency of God are enough to "blow the mind." Think about it! In eternity past God was alone, self-contained, self-sufficient and self-satisfied. He needed absolutely nothing. The universe, angels and human beings were in no way necessary to Him. The creating of them added nothing to God's essence. While we do not know everything about God's original creation, we do at least know that He did not bring His world into being to meet some unfulfilled need in Himself. God was under no constraint, no obligation, no necessity to create. He chose by a sovereign act to create and this creation was caused by nothing outside of Himself and determined by nothing but His own good pleasure. That he did create was simply for His own glory.

Another implication of God's self-sufficiency is God's love was satisfied within Himself and He had no need to be loved nor was He under obligation to love. God loved because He willed to love, and how He loves and whom He loves is according to the good pleasure of His will. There is so much shallow talk today about how God needs man's love and fellowship, how He longs for man to love Him. How blinded can men be! It is not God who needs man, but man who needs God. God needs no one; but if He voluntarily chooses to love men through Christ, it is a pure act of His grace and mercy, for no man deserves God's love and fellowship. God requires and expects love for Himself from those He has redeemed through Christ Jesus.

MAN IS IN CONFLICT WITH GOD

Some of you may be saying, "What bearing does the concept of a self-containing God have on my life? How can this doctrine be made practical?" A knowledge of the self-existence of God is indispensable to a sound philosophy of life. Man can never know who or what he is until he knows who God is.

For reasons known only to God, He chose to create man in His own image. Man is a created being who within himself possesses nothing for existence, but has been so created to be dependent each moment for his existence upon the One who created him after His own likeness. God is everything and man is nothing, for God is necessary to man's existence. Rationalize God away and man has no ground for existence.

Because man has been created in the image of God, he has been given the right of choice. He was originally designed to know God with the mind, to obey God with the will and to love God with the heart. However, because of sin in man, he chooses to be independent of God. Man asserts his own will against the will of God. The problem is that man claims absolute selfhood against God, who is the only Absolute self in the universe. Sin is assertion of self against God. Because man is born a rebel he is unaware that he is one. His constant assertion of self seems perfectly normal to him. Natural man may be willing to share himself and even sacrifice himself for a certain end, but he will not dethrone himself. Sin in essence is self sitting on the throne of one's life in opposition to God. While sin has multiple manifestations, it can ultimately be traced to the ego.

Since sin is to set our will against the will of God so as to dethrone God and to make ourselves supreme in our little kingdom, this gives us an answer to why so many people are frustrated, lacking inner peace and stability. The problem is that men are unconsciously or consciously living for self. Man has been created for dependence on God and only when he loves and obeys God will he begin to fulfill the purpose for which he was originally created.

You say, "How can this transcendent God be known?" The Bible tells us that God can be known only through Jesus Christ, who, through His death and resurrection, can bring men into a right relationship with God the Father.

"Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

CONCLUSION

Only Jesus Christ can dethrone the self in man and bring him to total dependence upon a self-containing God, restoring man to fellowship with his Creator. Only Christ can forgive sins and grant eternal life, and He does this when men cast themselves wholly upon Christ for salvation.

Are you ready to say "I will" to the Great I AM? Christ said, ***"I AM the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me."***