

BC 1, Romans 1:20 – God is Invisible but never Absent

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: The Belgic Confession of Faith was written in 1561 by Guido De Bres in the south of The Netherlands. That part is now called Belgium, hence the name Belgic Confession of Faith. It is 1 of the 3 doctrinal standards that we hold. We call the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort the 3 forms of unity.

The first topic of the Belgic Confession is the doctrine of God. I would venture to guess that the ignorance of the Doctrine of the Bible and the Doctrine of God has resulted in most of the modern day heresies. So it is important to get these two doctrines right.

We will highlight one aspect of the doctrine of God today, focusing on the invisibility of God.

One of the games you play with a baby is the “disappearing toy.” You hide a toy behind your back and he thinks it’s gone. You pull it from behind you and he is happy to see it. Kids are not so smart. When something is not visible, they think it doesn’t exist and they look for something else to play with. **Unfortunately, that is what the world often thinks about God**...because they don’t see him, they think he doesn’t exist and they can do whatever they want. Unfortunately, some Christians think in a similar way. Many, by the way they live, act as if God made us and went on a long journey. They then live however they want. This is why this doctrine is so important.

Our goals are: That as the redeemed children of God through Jesus Christ, you will learn of the presence and power of the invisible God as you play your part in building his kingdom.

Our headings are:

Doctrine of the Invisibility of God

Applications of the doctrine of the invisibility of God

Doctrine of the invisibility of God

1. Your God is invisible.

God is Spirit – a pure Spirit. Jesus said so to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4. All 3 persons are spirits. The Father is Spirit. The Son is Spirit – who took on a human body. The Spirit is, of course, Spirit.

Colossians 1:15 The Son is the **image of the invisible God**, the firstborn over all creation.

Because God is spirit you cannot see him. You only see Jesus because he took on human nature.

2. While your God is invisible, you still know some things about his character and nature in the world around you.

You can learn about the existence of God from “general” revelation.

Psalms 19:1 The **heavens declare the glory of God;** the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

When you look at the world, **you can know that someone created it.** The heavens speak! The heavens speak just like you might look at a certain style of painting...and you can have an idea who the painter is.

When you look at the world
...you can learn of the **power of God**
...you can learn of the **orderliness of God**
...you can learn of the **wisdom of God...this is why you have two ears and one mouth!!!**
...you can learn of God's **common grace...the rain and sunshine...and snow...lots of snow.**
...you can learn that this world was **created by God, not by time, chance, and matter.**
You do not deny that the wind exists because you have never seen it.

God is not just seen, he is clearly seen!

Romans 1:20 **God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen,** being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

But there is a limit to what you can see in nature: You can't understand the holiness of God, the depths of sin, and the need and work of the Savior.

3. Your God is invisible, but he has revealed much about himself to you through his Word.
This is called special revelation.
In God's Word you learn of his holiness and his hatred for sin.

In order to see your invisible God as revealed in his Word, you must have faith. He gives you that faith to see him.

Hebrews 11:6 And **without faith it is impossible to please God,** because anyone who comes to him **must believe that he exists** and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

4. Your God is invisible but he is omnipresent; he is invisible but he is not absent.
This means that God is not bound by molecules, atoms, and quarks. If God were bound by material things, he would not be able to be omnipresent.

5. Your God is invisible, and he had to be invisible to not be bound by time.
Every visible thing is bound by time, **but one has to be invisible to not be bound by time.**
(Of course not all invisible things are timeless, but you have to be invisible to be timeless.)

Remember how God rebuked Job when he wondered if God were missing from his troubles. God reminded Job that he was not bound by time as Job was....and he was still around during Job's life...and would still be there long after Job.

Job 38:4 "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?"

Tell me, if you understand. ⁵ Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? ⁶ On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone—

Application of the Doctrine of the Invisibility of God

1. Your God is invisible but he is always near to you his children.

Psalms 139:7 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I go up to the heavens, **you are there**; if I make my bed in the depths, **you are there**.⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, ¹⁰ **even there your hand will guide me**, your right hand will hold me fast. ¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," ¹² **even the darkness will not be dark to you**; the night will shine like the day, for **darkness is as light to you.**

God's nearness to his children is not to take up space...**but to help!** Look at evidence:

Matthew 28:19 ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And **surely I am with you always**, to the very end of the age."

What a comfort this must be to someone who is about to die...or someone going through loneliness...or sickness! Remind yourself of this daily. Don't just have this knowledge as doctrine!

2. Your God's nearness gives specific benefits to you.

a. You can know God personally.

You see this vividly displayed in the life of Jesus. He was called Immanuel – God with us – not a God far away.

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. **We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son,** who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

One of the striking sadness of Islam is that Muslims only have a submission relationship with their god. They dare not call their god “father.”

b. You can feel God...experience him.

You know that the Lord sees all the troubles you go through.

Psalms 139:10 **even there your hand will guide me**, your right hand will hold me fast.

This removes fear.

Isaiah 41:13 For I am the LORD your God **who takes hold of your right hand** and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.

This gives confidence to go on when a loved one dies, or when you lose your job, or when a relationship ends.

c. You can talk to him.

Psalm 88:1 LORD, you are the God who saves me; day and night I cry out to you.

Who cries out to those who are far away who don't hear? **You only cry out to the one who is near!** Hear my cry O Lord, attend to my prayer! This applies to the one who is lonely, sad, or frustrated. Remember, if God were visible with a body like men then it would have been impossible for him to be everywhere. But because he is Spirit, he can be everywhere.

d. You can listen to him...

Elijah looked for some dramatic voice from God, but God spoke quietly.

1Kings 19:10 He replied, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

11 The LORD said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.”

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. **12** After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. **And after the fire came a gentle whisper.**

The Lord does teach. Are you listening?

Psalms 16:7 I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me.

Isn't this an awesome privilege?

3. God is invisible, but he sees all sins.

So this is a warning to those who want to live in sin! The first couple tried to hide from the Lord, but he called them out! They could not hide in their sins! Following his parents, Cain did the same thing as they: He tried to hide his sin by burying his brother.

But the Lord unearthed his sins! Just like he did Adam and Eve's sins!

Genesis 4:8 Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field."¹ While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. ⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "**I don't know,**" he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" ¹⁰ The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! **Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.**

What a shock that must have been to Cain! And this is a natural tendency. This is why people watch all kinds of filth when they are in a hotel room by themselves. They think no one is watching. But God is!

Young people, would God be pleased with what you did last night?

So while God's invisibility is a comfort for the faithful Christian, it is a condemnation for those who want to live their own way...or for those who don't believe in Jesus.

4. God is invisible but he protects you.

God is not next to you to take up space. He is there to help.

Psalms 66:9 Who keeps our soul among the living, And does not allow our feet to be moved.

...he has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping.

Everyone knows: Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...I will fear no evil...for you are with me! You can go to sleep and not worry about ISIS or Corona.

Psalms 121: He will not let your foot slip— he who watches over you will not slumber; ⁴indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

5. God's invisibility means you have to worship him with that in mind.

It is easy to treat God's worship with contempt because you can't see him. But...

John 4:24 God is spirit, and **his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.**"

Conclusions

God is always invisible, but never absent. He is near, near to help. You are never alone.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Since your God is near you, do you take the time to get to know him and all his benefits?

This is how he equips you to fight for his Bride. Doctrine is a most effective weapon.

2. Since your God is near, and has equipped you with all you need to fight, are you fighting for Christ and his church or are you being lazy? When you think your parents aren't coming back home soon, or when you know the boss is not going to be back for a time, consider how you waste time! **But remember, you were saved by the blood of Jesus – you belong to him, and you were equipped by Jesus – so fight for him!** Fight against false teachings that are creeping in God's church. Fight against false religions that are spreading rapidly.

3. Since your God is near, you can find comfort when you feel depressed, alone, suicidal, feel struggles in your marriage, and frustrated. You never, ever, walk alone.

Finally, if you are not a Christian, God sees everything you do...even how often you have broken his law in thought, word and deed. But he doesn't have to destroy you if you ask him to count Jesus' life of obedience, and Christ's sacrificial death as yours.