

GOD!
Message 14
Scripture: Gen. 1:26-31

INTRO: We now move into the last section on the doctrine of God for these messages. In the first section we looked at 10 of God's impersonal attributes. These were His Self existence and that He is a spiritual, non-physical being. Then we considered that He is invisible. Then, He is the living God in contrast to all other gods. Then we looked at the three omni doctrines, He is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. Then we saw that He is unchangeable, and we call this immutable. He is also infinite. There are no measurements that confine Him.

Last, we looked at the most controversial attribute in this section, and that is the sovereignty of God! We saw that God is sovereign over the governments of mankind and over individual people. But we saw that this does not mean He has preplanned everything everybody will do so that we have no choice in the matter. We saw we have every choice in the matter! It is up to us to believe and trust in Christ for our salvation!

Now we want to begin looking at God's personal attributes. It is appropriate then that we consider first that God is a Person. In such days as we are where all kinds of Bible translations and books like "The Shack" are making big headways in Evangelicalism, our next point is very, very important! In the book, "The Shack" God and the Holy Spirit are women. That is utter blasphemy! Versions like the New NIV are non gender specific. That is extreme blasphemy! I believe that those who thus dare tamper with God's Word, which He has exalted above all His names, will go to hell! These words are found in almost the second to last two verses of Scripture, "For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." Now people argue and say, "Well, that clearly refers only to the book of Revelation, not the rest of the Bible." Whoever may wish to take that risk may do so at the possible expense of their own eternal well-being.

B. Personal Attributes

1. Personhood

We dealt with the name Jahwey or Jehovah in the first point under God's impersonal attributes. There we centered our thoughts on the 'AM' part of the name 'I AM'. Here we will focus in on the 'I' part of that great name.

Now let me ask you a question: What is the difference between a personal and an impersonal being. For example, what is the difference between a human being and a horse or dog or fish or cat? Have you stopped to ponder that?

Let me reduce a very demanding doctrine to its simple essence as I see it from my own studies. Turn to Genesis 1 (read 26-27). God created man in His own image. It has been a question for theologians all through the centuries as to what the image of God in man is. I say you can find that out by simply asking what God is or has, that man is or has, but the animal is not or does not have. When I taught this in Bible school I would hand out a chart and have students find the the major components of man and animal and then point out the similarities and differences. I will spare you that labor and simply point out that the major difference between God and man as contrasted to the animal is that entity we call "self".

So, just what is the 'self'? I always tell the class that it is that entity of man that cannot be spoken of in the possessive case. So, for instance, you can say, "my soul", thus the soul is not the real me. You can say, "my spirit" or "my body" and so those are not the real me. But the one thing of which you cannot speak in the possessive is the 'self'. So, there is no such phrase possible in language as, 'My self', two words. By that one would be saying, "The self that belongs to me." However, I am the self. So, what we do in language is make the two words 'my' and 'self' into one word, 'myself', and we call it a reflexive pronoun. You cannot speak of

'self' in the possessive case because self is the possessor.

Now most of you will not bother to think through that paragraph because it is very brain taxing. But all of that to say this: A personal being is one that is a 'self'. And therein lies God's image in man, in my understanding. God is a being who is a self. He does not have a self, He is a self. Man is a being who is a self. He does not have a self, he is self. That is why selfishness is the chief sin of mankind. Selfishness turns in on oneself, whereas all our being should be turned toward God. God can turn in on Himself because He is good through and through and it can only reveal more good. Pride, as I see it, is not a sin of the flesh, nor the spirit, nor of the body. It is a sin of self! It is the chief sin of all sins because it is a sin of self, the real person.

So God is a Person. You and I are persons. We can only glorify and worship and honor and praise God because we are persons. All these are choices of the self, the real 'I' or the real person. Now a living person has three major components. They are body, soul and spirit. Within the body, there are many components. within the soul there are numerous components and so it is in the spirit. But the self is the possessor of it all.

So what is the 'self'? Self is the 'person'. Now neither the OT nor the NT have a word for 'person'. However, both testaments use verb endings which we translate into personal pronouns. In the Greek language there are personal pronouns that express masculine and feminine personal pronouns. Then there are impersonal pronouns as well. All of this speaks of what we in English call the 'self'. As a matter of fact, the 1st person singular pronoun in the Greek language is 'ego' (short e). We get our word 'ego', or egotistical from this personal pronoun. Egocentric means self centered. Egoism is inordinate concern with oneself. Egoist is one completely devoted to him or herself. Egoistic is to be concerned with one's own interest. Egomania

is excessive egoism. Egotism is conceited or boastful and so on. So all of this has to do with personhood, **and God is a Person.**

Now, how do we prove that God is a Person? Well, all you have to do is find out if the pronouns used to refer to Him are personal or impersonal pronouns. That is very simple. Now pronouns are words like, I, me, my, us, we, our, you, he, she etc... In Plautdietch we have pronouns just like English, ekj, mie, mient, onnss, juunt, duu, jie etc...

So, let us go to Genesis (read 1:5, 10, 16 etc...) Now it is noteworthy that God is a Person, and it is noteworthy that He is of masculine gender. It should not be necessary to point that out but it is. Let me ask you, in the book the Shack, how is God the Father portrayed? Yes, a woman! That is horrendous blasphemy! I have no question but that the man who wrote that book is now heading for hell. Unless he repents and deals with this blasphemy, He will not be going to heaven! I will show you that later.?? God is a Person and He is male gender. Never tamper with divine truth!

But in Genesis, when we study the pronouns used for God, we come to a difficulty we must deal with. Let us read Genesis 1:26 (read). Now we cannot say God is talking to Himself, as one individual because He says, "Let US make man in OUR image, according to OUR likeness..." Here we have a plurality of personal beings! Now the name used for God here is important. You will notice that it is not LORD or Lord, it is God. The name used for God here is Elohim. Now the 'im' on the end is like putting an 's' on the English word "God". Does that mean God is more than one God? It is further interesting that the word 'image' and 'likeness' are singular. The image and likeness is the same, though there seems to be a plurality in God!

Go with me to the most often quoted OT verse, as far as the Jews are concerned, Deuteronomy 6:4 (read), "Hear O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." Now we have learned that when the

name LORD is all in capitals it refers to Jehovah God, and that is the case here. Here is God Almighty! But it says the Lord is One!

Now it is important to note the word translated 'one' in this verse. It is the Hebrew word 'Echad'. Now go with me to Genesis 2:24 (read). Now note that man and wife become 'one'. The word is 'echad'! Turn to Genesis 11:6 (read). Now note that the people are 'one' echad. Turn to one more reference in Numbers 13 (read 23). The words translated 'one cluster' is the word 'echad'. One cluster but many grapes! So the word 'ehad' speaks of one as a unity, and here we have the biblical doctrine that God exists as a being of more than one person. In the NT we clearly learn that He is a 'Triune' being or Trinity as we know it!

With that, we want to give some time to see that God is One God, but three distinct Persons, or a Trinity.

a. Triune

We have seen from the OT that God is a plurality of beings. That He was a being of three Persons is hinted at in the OT, but it is most clearly proved in the NT. For that we turn to Matthew 28 (read (18-20)). Here is one of the clearest passages where each of the members of the godhead is named and they are Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

A second passage is 2 Corinthians 13:14 (read).

Now what is important to and understanding of this doctrine from Scripture is this: that God is one God, but three Persons. So we say there are three Persons in the divine godhead. Thus we say God is a Trinity, or triunity. Our Catechism deals with this in Part I, chapter 2. The first question goes like this:

1. What do the Scriptures further teach concerning God?

That God revealed himself therein as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14; Matt. 3:16-17).

Now this answer does not say, "The Gods revealed themselves as Father, Son and Holy Spirit." No, it is God, singular, revealed Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Now it is important that we give some time to this doctrine of the Trinity. It is important for all Christians to understand that God is one God, but three Persons. That is how He has always existed and always will. Thus He can be distinguished from all other gods. There is no other God that claims to be one God but three Persons.

Now I need not point out to you that all pronouns referring to Jesus are masculine, for the male gender. But it may be necessary to show that the pronouns referring to the Holy Spirit are masculine as well. Go with me to John 16:7-15. As we read this, note the pronouns Jesus uses to refer to the Holy Spirit (read).

Now let me reread 13-15, "However, when **He**, the Spirit of truth, has come, **He** will guide you into all truth; for **He** will not speak on **His** own authority, but whatever **He** hears **He** will speak; and **He** will tell you things to come. **He** will glorify Me, for **He** will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that **He** will take of Mine and declare it to you." Now there we have ten masculine pronouns referring to the Holy Spirit and it is Jesus speaking. Now when the Holy Spirit is referred to as feminine, that is utter blasphemy!

Now our Catechism gives as proof that the Holy Spirit is God like this:

7. Is the Holy Spirit also called God?

Yes: For when Ananias had lied to the Holy Spirit, Peter said: Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God (Acts 5:3,4).

Now let me just give you the very next question and answer in the Catechism as it confirms all we have been saying:

8. Are then the Father, Son and Holy Spirit three Gods?

No: there is only one God, for these three are one (Mk. 12:29; 1 Jn. 5:7).

Now I have mentioned earlier that God is a unity by the Hebrew word 'echad' that is used for Him. We want to now briefly see what this means, that God is a unity or united.

In this point we want to consider that God, who exists as three Persons, is united. Before we look at that let me say this, that there are all kinds of false beliefs about God in the world. One of those is a belief that there are many Gods. This is called polytheism. But the very fact that God is united is evidence that polytheism, or the view that there are many gods is false.

Now, according to different world views, there are all kinds of gods. Hinduism says that living beings are not apart from god, since he lives in each and every one of them in the form of Atman. So each living being is a unique manifestation of god. Long ago it was believed that there were 330 million living being which gave rise to the idea of the 330 million gods of Hinduism.

Then there is the view of tri-theism, that is the view that there are three gods. Our catechism question and answer that we read earlier refutes this very well. Then there is the view of dualism, there are two supreme beings, the one evil and the other good. All these views are false, if the doctrine of God being a Triune being who is united as one God is true. So we want to look at that as well.

b. United

That God is a unity, or united is an important doctrine and it means that the three Persons of the godhead dwell together in unity. Strongs Systematic theology says that by this we mean that, "...the divine nature is... undivided and indivisible..." When we speak of this aspect of a human being we call him or her an 'individual'. That means he or she exists as a unit. It also means he or she is 'indivisible'. But humans are only one person. God is three Persons, and indivisible.

Now I want to go back to something I have covered already when we talked about God being a living God. I gave you my definition of life thus: **Life is continual, successive, active, productive and energetic existence.** But I want to add to that now. You see, for man to live physically, body and spirit must stay together. James 2:26 says, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." So life is maintained as long as body and spirit continue to exist together. When Jesus died, He said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit." And as soon as He did that He died physically.

But now I want to add to the definition of life I gave you to show how God maintains His life: **Life is continual, successive, active, productive and energetic existence caused by the union of two or more entities or elements.** So in physical life, the union of body and spirit maintains life. For life to continue, it must be maintained and life is maintained by the operation of several parts working in unison. This is true in animate beings, such as humans; animals and insects, or botanical entities such as plants and I think it is true in spirit beings, such as God and angelic entities. For all terrestrial (earthly) beings with life, they are dependent on food to sustain living existence. For God, to remain a 'living God' it is required that the Father,

Son and Holy Spirit operate in unison. Should one member of the Godhead leave, God would cease to exist as God. But God is immutable, that is He cannot change, and so this cannot possibly happen. Therefore He is eternal and eternally the living God.

CONCL: So we conclude with this statement: God is a Person! And then, God is a Triune God. In the unity of the godhead are three divine Persons, God the Father; God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. All three are of masculine gender! And last, God is a unity. The nature of the Godhead is indivisible.

Now let me close with this thought. The image and likeness of God in man is personhood. All people are persons created in the image of God. The real person, the 'I' or 'ego' is the president of the whole being. Galatians 2:20 says, "I am crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." In the NT the 'I' who has been crucified is called the 'old man'. And the 'I' who now lives is called the 'new man' (Col. 3:9-10).

The 'I' is also the home of pride. Roy Hession, in the little book 'The Calvary Road' says, "If, however, we are to come into this right relationship with Him, the first thing we must learn is that our wills must be broken to His will. To be broken is the beginning of revival. It is painful, it is humiliating, but it is the only way. It is being 'Not I, but Christ' and a bent 'I'. The Lord Jesus cannot live in us fully and reveal Himself through us until the proud self within us is broken. This simply means that the hard unyielding self, which justifies itself, wants its own way, stands up for its own rights, and seeks its own glory, at last bows its head to God's will, admits its wrong, gives up its own way to Jesus, surrenders its rights and discards its own glory - that the Lord Jesus might have all and be all. In other words it is dying to self and self attitudes."

He then says, "And as we look honestly at our Christian lives, we can see how much of this self there is in each of us. It is so often self who tries to live the Christian life... It is self, too, who is often doing Christian work. It is always self who gets irritable and envious and

resentful and critical and worried. It is self who is hard and unyielding in its attitudes to others. It is self who is shy and self-conscious and reserved. No wonder we need breaking. As long as self is in control, God can do little with us, for all the fruits of the Spirit..., with which God longs to fill us, are the complete antithesis of the hard, unbroken spirit within us, and presupposes that it has been crucified."

"Being broken is both God's work and ours. He brings the pressure to bear, but we have to make the choice. If we are really open to conviction as we seek fellowship with God, and willingness for the light is the prime condition of fellowship with God), God will show us the expressions of this proud, hard self that cause Him pain. Then it is, we can stiffen our necks and refuse to repent or we can bow the head and say, 'Yes, Lord'. Brokenness in daily experience is simply the response of humility to the conviction of God. And inasmuch as this conviction is continuous, we shall need to be broken continually. And this can be very costly, when we see all the yielding of rights and selfish interests that this will involve, and the confessions and the restitutions that may be necessary."

You see, it is the 'self' the real 'I' where the root of all sin problems are found. It is here that pride holds us fast. It is in that part in us, that is like God and we want God's place! We want to be in control. We do not want Him to have control. And when we give in to Him, we die and become a new person. Yet it is sadly possible to be a Christian and live according to the flesh. It is for this reason Paul said, "I die daily."