

The Doctrines of Grace

Doctrine 1-The Absolute Sovereignty of God

Part A/Lesson Two

Part A- The Character and Nature Of God- continued

God is Incomprehensible

Deuteronomy 29:29

The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Psalms 139:1-18

1 O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.

2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

4 For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

13 For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.

14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

15 My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

17 How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!

18 If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.

Isaiah 55:8&9

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

1Corinthians 2:6-16

6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

Two Types of Revelation

No human being has the ability or capacity to completely understand *everything* about God. Because God is infinite and we are finite- God can only be known to the extent that He has chosen to reveal Himself to Man. So the incomprehensibility of God does *not* mean that we know *nothing* about God- but rather that what we *do* know about God is *limited*- and it has been limited by God Himself.

God Almighty has chosen to reveal Himself to Man in two ways:

1. By and through His Creation (Nature)
2. By and through His Word (Scripture).

General and Special Revelation

The Revelation of God that is achieved through the Wonder and Brilliance

and Majesty of Creation is called, "**General Revelation**" in that through Creation- Mankind can have a *general* idea about God from watching and studying that which God has made (i.e., God is higher, wiser, and more powerful than Man).

The Revelation of God that we get from Scripture is called "**Special**" or "**Specific Revelation**" as it goes into much greater detail than does Creation. While we can know some things about God through observing what God has made- we must have God's "**Special Revelation**" (Scripture) to know about things like:

- ✓ Salvation
- ✓ The formation and operation of the Church
- ✓ What Heaven and Hell are like
- ✓ The distinction between that which is holy and that which is profane
- ✓ What to teach God's people on how to live godly lives on earth after Salvation
- ✓ Qualifications of leadership in the Church, etc.

... things that we simply cannot know and understand from God's "**General Revelation**" in Creation.

So while God knows each of us in totality- at best- our knowledge of God is *limited* and *partial* and falls short of being total and complete. We are able to know God only to the extent that He has *allowed* Himself to be known. The finite (Man) is able to grasp the Infinite (God) to *some* degree- but the finite can never hold the Infinite fully within his grasp. So there is always more to God than what we know and since God has not chosen to reveal any more- we are left then to trust in what we do know.

God is Triune

Deuteronomy 6:4

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:

Matthew 3:16&17

16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Matthew 28:19

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

John 5:17&18

17 But Jesus answered them, **My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.**

18 Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

John 8:56-58

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.

57 Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?

58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

The Acts 5:3-4

3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

2Corinthians 13:14

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

1Peter 1:2

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

The basic concept of the triunity of God is one of the oldest and most vigorously defended Doctrines that the Christian Church has and this Doctrine concerning God boldly teaches that Scripture clearly reveals that the one true living God is:

One in Essence and eternally manifested in three distinct Persons of God the Father; God the Son; and God the Holy Spirit.

Now even though the word, "trinity" is not found in Scripture- the *concept* that the one true living God of the Bible is eternally manifested in three Persons- and that each of those Persons is fully Deity and has their own distinct Personality is clearly taught from cover to cover in the Holy Bible.

The Doctrine of the Trinity teaches that on the one hand- Scripture clearly reveals the unity of God (God is one) while at the same time it also clearly reveals the full Deity of all three Persons of the Godhead: Father, Son, and Spirit.

Since Scripture *cannot* contain any error (infallible), this "apparent" contradiction (paradox) is solved by understanding that God is "triune" in His Existence.

The Doctrine of the Trinity does *not* fully explain all that God is- but what it *does* do is set the boundaries around which the discussion of the one true living God can take place without violating anything that God has revealed about Himself in Scripture.

The Doctrine of the Trinity is vital to Salvation because it affects Who Jesus is. For example- without Jesus being fully God- then He could not have been sinless- because all humans are sinful. Without being sinless- Jesus could not have developed His Own Personal Righteousness (which is imputed to us by Faith). So Jesus being fully Divine is very important to our Salvation.

But at the same time- without Jesus being fully Human- Jesus could not have been tempted in all points like as we are- because God *cannot* be tempted with sin (**James 1:13**).

The Greatest Theological Conundrum

All religions are confronted by this seemingly unanswerable Theological problem:

How Can God be Merciful to Sinners and Remain Just?

This Theological problem arises out of two inescapable Truths about God:

1. Since God is Just He must Judge all Sin
2. Since God is Merciful He Will Pardon Sinners

So just how does God be both Just and Merciful to the same person at the same time without violating His Nature to be equally Just and Merciful?

Exodus 34:6&7

6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD , The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

And the fact is that no other religion or human philosophy in the history of Mankind besides Biblical Christianity provides for God to be both Merciful (in granting Salvation to unworthy sinners) and Just (punishing all sin) precisely because no other religion has a Person like Jesus.

Jesus alone and singularly solves this Theological Conundrum because *in* Him all Sin was forever Judged and Damned (vindicating God's Justice against Sin) and *through* Him- Mercy and Grace are then issued to unworthy sinners for Salvation. No other religion or human philosophy can solve this Theological problem because no other religion or human philosophy has Jesus at its center.

The God/Man

But if Jesus is to solve this problem- He must be both God and Man. Jesus must be God (perfectly sinless) and He must be Man (able to be tempted and judged

for sin)- or He could not fulfill this *dual* role as both the Agent in Whom all Sin is forever Judge and the One through Whom all Grace and Mercy flows to unworthy sinners.

Jesus had to perfectly obey His Father's Law in thought, word, and deed; 24 hours every day and seven days every week for the entire 33-1/2 years He lived upon the earth as a Man in order to achieve the perfect Righteousness that God demanded. By doing that- Jesus developed His Own Personal Spotless Righteousness. This required Jesus to be Deity- in other words- Jesus must be God in a human Body.

John 1:1-4,14

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 The same was in the beginning with God.

3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

John 5:17&18

17 But Jesus answered them, **My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.**

18 Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

Philippians 2:6

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

But in order to be "tempted like as we are" and to fully comprehend our humanity- Jesus must also be fully Human.

Matthew 1:18-25

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.

20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

John 14:28

Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

Mark 15:37

And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

And that dual Role as the God/Man makes Jesus to be the single most unique Person Who ever lived. No one was ever like Jesus and no one will ever be. That is why John calls Jesus- **“the Only Begotten of the Father” (John 3:16KJV)**. That term actually means: “the One and Only of the Father”. The third century theologian, John Chrysostom said that Jesus was,

“Fully God and fully Man in the same body at the same time without conflict or contradiction”¹

So the Doctrine of the Trinity is not a side issue that can be relegated to academia. No, this Doctrine goes to the very core of Christianity and Salvation itself- God being One and yet Jesus (and the Holy Spirit) both being fully Deity at the same time.

The Doctrine of the Trinity has gendered much debate through the centuries but when we discuss God- we must include *all* that God has revealed about Himself and the Son and the Spirit and the various teachings which deny or confuse God’s triunity simply don’t do that.

So The Doctrine of the Trinity remains the only teaching that exists whereby God’s “unity” (God being One) is not abrogated by what the Scriptures clearly reveal about the Deity of all three Persons of the Godhead.

¹ Schaff, Philip, ed., *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 9 (Hendrickson Pub Peabody, 2004) page 361

Recap of Lesson Two

1. What does it mean to say that "God is Incomprehensible"? _____

2. Finish this sentence, "God can only be known to the extent that _____"

3. What are the two types of Divine Revelation? _____
4. Where is "General Revelation" seen? _____
5. What information does "General Revelation" give us? _____

6. Where can "Special Revelation" be found? _____
7. Give some examples of the information given through "Special Revelation"? _____

8. What is one reason why God didn't reveal *everything* about Himself? _____

9. What is the concern about the claim that many make today that Divine Revelation is continuing to come to Man through other methods and means than the two given? _____

10. Does Christianity teach that there are three "God's"?

11. How can God be "one" and still be "three"? _____

12. What does The Doctrine of the Trinity teach? _____

13. Why is this important for us to know? _____

14. What proof can you give that Jesus is fully Deity (God)? _____

15. What proof can you give that Jesus is fully Human? _____

16. Was Jesus "like" God or was Jesus actually and literally God? _____

17. In the first Century, what did it mean for Jesus to say that "God is My Father"?

18. What is the greatest Theological Problem of all time? _____

19. Why is this a problem? _____

20. What is the only thing that solves this Problem? _____

21. How does it solve this Problem? _____

22. What does the term, "The only begotten of the Father" mean? _____

23. Does The Doctrine of the Trinity answer all the questions about God? _____

24. Why is it valuable for us today in the 21st Century? _____

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.