

Biblical Theology by Dr. Chuck Baynard

Lesson 5 (HCLD 6)¹

Preparation: Open and end each study period with prayer. Make a list of the attributes of God and divide this list into two headings, communicable and incommunicable.

Background reading: Read the Scripture verses in footnote # 2. Read each of these passages with pauses for thought and prayer asking God to guide your thoughts.

Vocabulary: Attribute, Communicable, Incommunicable, Patriarch, and Blessed.

Question: What is God?

Answer: God is a Spirit, in and of himself infinite in being, glory, blessedness, and perfection; all-sufficient, eternal, unchangeable, incomprehensible, everywhere present, almighty, knowing all things, most wise, most holy, most just, most merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.²

The definition of what God is with His physical properties, or lack of same as we see it from earth can be elusive. The Westminster Divines were forced at this point to give the references declaring God's attributes in their attempt to answer the question, "what is God?" That is the correct wording, forced, because there is little else revealed in the only source that reveals God to mankind. Nature speaks volumes about God, but the true revelation of God is the Scripture.³

¹ HC- Q19: From where do you know this?

A19: From the Holy Gospel, which God Himself first revealed in Paradise,[a] afterwards proclaimed by the holy Patriarchs [b] and Prophets, and foreshadowed by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law,[c] and finally fulfilled by His well-beloved Son.[d]

a. Gen. 3:15

b. Gen. 22:18; 49:10-11; Rom. 1:2; Heb. 1:1; Acts 3:22-24; 10:43

c. John 5:46; Heb. 10:7

Rom. 10:4; Gal. 4:4-5; Heb. 10:1

HC-Q2: How many things are necessary for you to know, that in this comfort you may live and die happily?

A2: Three things:[a] First, the greatness of my sin and misery.[b] Second, how I am redeemed from all my sins and misery.[c] Third, how I am to be thankful to God for such redemption.[d]

a. Luke 24:46-47; I Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:3-7

b. John 9:41; 15:22

c. John 17:3

d. Eph. 5:8-11; I Peter 2:9-12; Rom. 6:11-14; 7:24-25; Gal. 3:13; Col. 3:17

² a. John 4:24 b. Exod. 3:14; Job 11:7-9 c. Acts 7:2 d. I Tim. 6:15 e. Matt. 5:48 f. Gen. 17:1 g. Psalms 90:2
h. Mal. 3:6; James 1:17 i. I Kings 8:27 j. Psalms 139:1-13 k. Rev. 4:8 l. Heb. 4:13; Psalms 147:5 m. Rom. 16:27 n.
Isa. 6:3; Rev. 15:4 o. Deut. 32:4 p. Exod. 34:6

³ Heb. 1:3

Dr. Roger Nicole in one of the first classes I attended while studying systematic theology assigned as homework the requirement that we list the attributes of God. He continued that if we could list less than eighteen to keep studying until we could name at least eighteen attributes. He further required that each attribute have a Scripture proof and the whole be divided into two headings, communicable and incommunicable. It was not until much later in my personal studies that I appreciated the foundation this exercise had placed in the knowledge base upon which I was to build my understanding of all theology later in my career.

When we understand that God's attributes are perfect in all aspects and as such are God we have boundaries for all future studies. For example when we realize that God is one we understand that we cannot divide the attributes whereby we have a vengeful Father, a loving Son, and a gift giving Spirit. All of the attributes rest in perfect harmony within the whole of the Godhead. So while most will readily understand we cannot divide the Trinity, we do often appear to divide the perfections of God among the persons of the Trinity. The fact is that God's justice must always be in perfect tension with God's mercy and love, as an example of what can be seen as conflicting attributes in the Godhead. The attributes of God are perfect and cannot be divided anymore than the Trinity is an important fact for us to remember as we begin to develop a full theology. In other words if we have faith from God it is a sufficient faith for all our needs. Thus while we can grow in faith and grace as examples, it is not because any gift of God lacks sufficiency, but the ability of man to exercise the gift given. Thus while God gives faith and says it is sufficient, we find believers at times still struggling as if they did not have the gift of faith.

I would also point out here that this is also where we should list "positions" that God fills in relation to His creation and its continuing existence. Thus we would find that God is the sustainer of all things, That God is a Sovereign King, God is our Heavenly Father; and the list could continue. I would direct our attention to two of these as worthy of much thought and study, for I think they are the key to being able to grasp, and more important use the other knowledge of God revealed in the Bible; God is the Creator and God is Sovereign. God's sovereignty could be a one-word answer to the question of "What does the Reformed Church believe?" I have often spoken to people who knew this answer that were not of the Reformed church and considered it a negative. Someway tied to predestination, which they thought might be some contagious disease. As I pondered this question anew to prepare this commentary my mind was drawn to a time when I was taking my first faltering steps toward entering the ordained ministry. I was invited to preach at a large local Methodist church. Prior to this I had spoken in a few smaller churches, primarily in evening services. To be able to preach in an uptown church was exciting. Then the wife of a friend came by the office and told me they were glad I was getting the opportunity to preach in their church, but they would not be there Sunday. Upon inquiry, I was told they would not be there because I was Presbyterian and into all that pre-destination stuff. I assured her it was not catching and my sermon had nothing to do with this and her family would be safe. Needless to say, they were conspicuous in their absence.

While I would agree one could move to a "hyper-Calvinist" position and perhaps even enter into error here; we must some way bring the fullness of God's sovereignty into

focus in a way we can understand and apply to our daily lives. Knowing and understanding God's attributes, and in my opinion the positions He holds in the life of His people establishes us on firm ground for the understanding and right application of our beloved doctrines, which are Scripture.⁴ It is only from this knowledge of God that we can arrive at the proper respect and reverence for the Bible, so it in reality does become the only guide of faith and practice. It is here where we find the answers so desperately needed by a struggling church, faced with the onslaught of modern humanism, preaching a Jesus who appears more as a sixties flower child than the Creator, King, and Judge, having all authority over all things the Lord of Scripture is revealed to be. "All hail King Jesus" is not heard often enough, or loud enough from the pulpits of the Christian church.

The awesome truth revealed here cannot be grasped and understood in its fullness by the finite mind of man. That which we do not understand we are either indifferent toward, or ignore altogether. These are luxuries the church cannot afford, and the source of the illness that has beset us for the last hundred and fifty years. These precious truths presented so beautifully by our forefathers, have taken back seat to so called scholarship, as the devil himself having become a member of the church, now sends forth his children to take their place in the leadership of the church. The church wears a human face, but her heart must not be of this world.⁵ The consideration of one of the foremost attributes of God would bring the healing needed to return us to our moorings in the Bible. God is Holy!⁶ We sing it, but do we understand it? I dare say not. God is almighty!⁷ Then why do we run at the shadow of the enemy? God is unchangeable!⁸ Then why do we distort the Reformed and always reforming credo of our forefathers to mean shifting with humanity and denying God's sovereignty? God is all-sufficient!⁹ Then why are so many of His children hungry, and eating at the table of Satan? God is incomprehensible! Then why do we attempt to define Him in human terms and supposedly good deeds taken on to soothe our hurting conscience? God is omnipresent!¹⁰ Yet when we live as if we can hide a portion of our lives from God it makes no sense. But we do love the ones that speak of love, mercy, goodness, and most of all long-suffering. We use these to justify our failure to learn of Him and to make use of the attributes most needed to face the world, and through Christ be more than conquerors. But the former require us to get off our duffs and do something; to take responsibility for our actions.¹¹ The latter lets grace reign supreme, and presents a bleeding savior, that makes no demands of those He has purchased with this blood.

I thank God it never had to be proven, but I have no doubt in my mind that I would have shot the first soldier that failed to do what I said or follow me into battle. His rebellion would have spread and caused the loss of all. I do not think the Commander of the host

⁴ 2 Tim. 3:16

⁵ Rom. 12:2

⁶ 1 Pet. 1:15

⁷ Gen. 17:1

⁸ Heb 6:17

⁹ 2 Cor. 12:9

¹⁰ Ps. 139:7

¹¹ Rev. 20:13

of heaven will take any less action, and how fearful the words of our Lord saying “depart from Me, ye that work iniquity, for I never knew you.”¹² This alone should be cause enough for all to hunger for the truth revealed here, and “work out their salvation in fear and trembling!”¹³

Here in the person of God, our faith was born. In this fertile soil the five classic tenets of the Christian faith were planted deep and watered by the Spirit of God. Here the true church has stood for over 450 years. This is the touchstone we need to carry us into whatever the future may bring, in the hope of the Glory of God.¹⁴ Here is our strength and salvation!¹⁵

Read again all of the references for this question. Look up each of the attributes listed in the Scriptures in a good theological dictionary (Smith’s and Easton’s being two that are readily available). Feed here until you receive that power from on high.¹⁶ Return here often to receive the salve needed to bring comfort and healing from the scars of spiritual warfare. Here in the person of God we were born, are sustained, and will abide forever.

Suggested Sermon Outline:

God and Man

Why must He be a true and righteous man?

Because God's righteousness requires that man who has sinned should make reparation for sin, but the man who is himself a sinner cannot pay for others.

Why must He at the same time be true God?

So that by the power of His divinity He might bear as a man the burden of God's wrath, and recover for us and restore to us righteousness and life.

Who is this mediator who is at the same time true God and a true and perfectly righteous man?

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is freely given to us For complete redemption and righteousness.

Whence do you know this?

From the holy gospel, which God Himself revealed in the beginning in the Garden of Eden, afterward proclaimed through the holy patriarchs and prophets and foreshadowed through the sacrifices and other rites of the Old Covenant, and finally fulfilled through His own well beloved Son.

I. Only a True and Righteous Man Can Save Sinners

¹² Mt. 7:23

¹³ Php. 2:12

¹⁴ Rom. 5:2

¹⁵ 2 Pet. 3:15; Rev. 12:10

¹⁶ Acts 1:8

A. Only a man can make reparation for sin. Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. (Romans 5:12) But not as the offence, so also is the free gift For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. (Romans 5:15)

B. No ordinary man can be free enough from personal sin to become the savior. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: (I Peter 3:18)

C. Isaiah prophesied of a savior who would make the substitutionary atonement. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:3-5)

II. The Savior Must Also Be God

A. Only the power of God could bear the burden of God's wrath for sin. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living. for the transgression of my people was he stricken. (Isaiah 53:8)

B. As the son of God, Jesus was able both to experience and endure the punishment. Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. (Acts 2:23-24)

C. In Christ the various claims of the atonement come together. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

D. Here is how the substitutionary atonement works. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

III. Only Jesus Christ Meets the Double Demand

A. Our Lord Jesus Christ was both God and man. 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. (Matthew 1:23)

B. Jesus Christ not only meets the double demands of the problem but also does it according to the long line of prophecy. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:11)

C. Christ satisfies the promises made in the Garden of Eden. And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. (Genesis 3:14-15)

D. The prophets and patriarchs expected a Saviour like Jesus. God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; (Hebrews 1:1-2)

E. The New Testament preachers and prophets identified Jesus as the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies and the ultimate purpose behind the forms and ceremonies of the old order. Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures), Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ (Romans 1: 1-6)

F. Everything in the history of grace came into focus with the God-Man, Jesus Christ. But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (Galatians 4:4-5)