

God is Simple and Infinite

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[0 : 0 0] Well, as I mentioned before, we are doing something a little bit different and our normal practice is, as I said, to work through one passage, but we'll be looking at various passages. So the most helpful thing for you is probably going to be the outline today. The Bible verses will be on the screen.

But let me begin by asking you how you're feeling at the moment. Is life a piece of cake? Silence. So possibly not then. I wonder how you're feeling. Are you feeling tired or exhausted?

Yes, perhaps worried, fearful or even overwhelmed. Well, we could all feel those kinds of things at different points in life, can't we?

And what's more, God has something to say to us in each of those situations. But there's also great encouragement in thinking not about our situation, but about God who is above our situations.

In other words, there's great worth in lifting our eyes from ourselves to think about God, which ends up encouraging us anyway, actually.

[1 : 1 4] And so that's what I'm hoping to do in this series, to lift our eyes from our real situations. I'm not dismissing them. But I want us to lift our eyes from them to think more deeply about God and who he is, that we might be encouraged anyway to persevere no matter what our situation.

There's a famous preacher, English preacher in the 1800s called Charles Spurgeon. And this is what he wrote.

You see what he's saying?

Think about God and it will refresh your soul anyway. And so that's my prayer for us as we do this very short series, thinking about some of the lesser known doctrines of God.

I was hoping to start last week with God's simplicity, but I had to go to St. John's. So special thanks to Andrew Moody for stepping in and having a look at the Trinity. And so this week, I'm going to try and squeeze two doctrines in.

[2 : 5 1] So let's pray for God's help. Let's pray. My gracious father, we do thank you again for who you are. And at one level, our finite minds cannot fully grasp just how great you are.

But nonetheless, we can investigate it, dig into it and be invigorated by it. So help us this morning. We pray to do that in Jesus name.

Amen. All right. Point one, God is simple. There's a old reformed creed called the Belgic Confession of 1561, which says we all believe in our hearts and confess with our minds that there is a single and simple.

Spiritual being whom we call God. Now, single and spiritual, that makes sense to us, doesn't it? But simple. What's going on here? Well, let me say it does not mean that God is slow or dimwitted, dimwitted, you know, simple in that way.

Nor that it doesn't mean that God is always simple, easy to understand. Rather, it means that God is not made up of many parts, but is one simple or unified being.

- [4 : 10] Moses said to Israel, here, O Israel, the Lord, our God, the Lord is one. Yeah. In other words, simple is the opposite of a compound or composite thing that's got lots of parts. And now most of us would kind of know this already without actually knowing the fancy name for it. But let us think a bit more deeply about it. And to help us, let me see if I can illustrate it.
- This one is for all the gardeners out there. And so here we have a simple leaf on your left and a compound leaf on your right. They're both complete leaves.
- They both start from the stem and the bud. They both have a full blade or leaf. But you'll notice that the simple is just one. Whereas the compound is made up of many parts or leaflets, isn't it?
- And so it can be divided into those parts and actually depends on those parts to be a whole leaf. We'll pick that up next week. But the simple leaf, like this maple leaf, cannot be divided into smaller parts.
- [5 : 21] It may have distinct points, like God may have distinct persons of the Trinity, but it is all one leaf. It cannot be divided or ripped apart.
- So too with God. God is one simple being, not a compound or composite made up of many parts being. And so he cannot be divided into parts.
- This means, among other things, that God's attributes, like his wisdom, his love, his justice and so on, are not parts that make up God's character. God is not like a cocktail drink that is one part justice and one part love and one part wisdom and so on.
- No, no, God is all justice, all wisdom, all love at the same time. And which is why John can write, as we saw in our series in John, God is light.
- That's who he is, completely light. And then at the same time, God is love. And at the same time, God is a consuming fire from Hebrews 12. He's not part light and part love and part consuming fire.
- [6 : 35] He is 100% light, 100% love, 100% fire, all at the same time. As I've said before, it's bad maths, good theology. And to represent this visually, God is not like a circle divided up into sectors.
- And we always like to have, you know, the love part is the biggest part of God. And along with faithful and the other ones can be a bit smaller. He's not like that. No, no, God is holy.
- And at the same time, all faithful and all love and all light. Is that light? Light, goodness, wisdom and so on.
- And this is already encouraging if you think about it because it doesn't mean God has just some love. No, no, God is love.
- How encouraging is that? God doesn't just have some wisdom. No, no, no. God is wisdom. And because God has these things all the time, when the Bible writers mention one, they often can't help mentioning another.
- [7 : 44] So when David praises God in Psalm 145, he says, You see, God is fully all these things all the time.
- So when David speaks of one, he can't help but speak of another. Of course, God may choose to show one attribute more than another at a particular moment in history.
- Like a movie director who shows one camera angle of a room at a particular moment in a movie. And the whole room is still there.
- It's just one thing is being focused on. So God may show one angle of his character, like his mercy or his justice at a particular moment in history, even though he's fully all these other things as well.

We see this doctrine, I think, most clearly at the cross. For there we see God who is fully justice, fully holiness, and so must punish sin.

[8 : 46] Yet at the same time, God is fully love, fully grace, fully mercy. And so he takes that judgment in himself as God the Son, the second person.

See, God is simple. He cannot be divided into parts. But he is fully all these things at the same time. So what? What's it in it for us?

Well, we'll see more next week, but this week it assures us of a few things. It assures us that God is fully for us, if you like.

And so Romans 8, that famous verse, if God is for us, who can be against us? And the implied answer is no one. But God's simplicity means all of God is for us.

It's not as though God's justice part is against us and God's love part is for us and he's having this battle within himself. Forgive them. No, don't forgive them. It's not like that.

[9 : 50] No, no. God is fully just and fully love. And they both work fully for us. God's justice justifies us because God's love sent God's Son to die for us.

You see, since God is one, when God is for us, he is completely for us. Does that not make that statement even more incredible, even more reassuring?

Or when we read the promise just before this verse that God works for the good of all those who love him. And that good is explained in verse 29, being conformed to the image of his son day by day here and fully in glory later.

Then we can have even more assurance that God will keep those promises because of his simplicity. You see, if God was made up of parts like a compound leaf or being, then we might wonder, is his power part powerful enough to work in all things?

Is his goodness part good enough to work for our good in all things? Is his faithfulness part faithful enough to keep this promise in the first place?

[11 : 08] But because God is simple, he's not partly powerful, partly good, partly faithful. No, he's fully all those things at the same time. And so we can have even more certainty that he will and can keep those promises.

Do you see how knowing God's character more deeply kind of elevates these things, gives us even more assurance? And so when we suffer or see Christians forced to resign as a CEO of a football club, cop intolerant comments from our leaders, we can still know without a shadow of a doubt that God is still working in all things for good.

For God's simplicity means all of God is working. For our good. He's not made up of parts. He's 100% all these things at the same time.

But thirdly, it also assures us that God is bearing all those qualities that he wants us to reflect in us too. And let me explain.

In Galatians 5, there's this well-known verse, but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. There are some characteristics of God which belong to God alone, but there are some that we are to reflect like these ones.

[12 : 25] But notice here in the yellow that it's not fruits, plural, even though it goes on to list lots of things. It's fruit singular because the Spirit is one.

It cannot be divided into parts. It's not fruit salad made up of different parts, if you like, where, you know, you can pick out the kiwi fruit because it's bland and tasteless, or whatever fruit you don't like.

I'm sorry if I've offended you. No, no, this is Spirit fruit. It's multifaceted and contains all these things in the one fruit. And this means that the Spirit bears all these graces or aspects in our lives.

As one writer put it, all the graces of Christianity go together, so that where there is one, there are all. And it kind of makes sense when you think about it, because if you are trying to love someone, then you also have to try and be gentle with them, patient towards them, self-controlled, and all those other things as well.

And vice versa, if you're trying to be gentle with someone, it's also loving, and you have to practice self-control and patience. They all work together anyway, when you think about it. And so we who have the Spirit can thank God for His fruit in our lives, that He is helping us to bear all these graces or aspects.

[13 : 47] Sure, we may struggle with one aspect more than another, and we may choose to work on one aspect in particular, but keeping in set with the Spirit means we cannot ignore the others.

And in fact, as we work on one, the good news is the Spirit will help us to work on them all, because He's not divided. God is simple.

He's not made up of parts, where He has some power, some wisdom, some goodness, some love. No, He is all these things. That's how great our God is. Well, secondly, we come to God's infinity, which will be a little bit shorter.

I always think of Toy Story, when we come to God's infinity, because you know Buzz Lightyear, his slogan, to infinity and beyond, which I realized just last week was a Disney joke, because there is no beyond infinity, right?

Did you get that already? Oh, how do you get it? What? Maybe we're not adults, Jess, but anyway. But what do we mean by God's infinity?

[14 : 56] After all, He is no cartoon character, is He? Well, God's infinity means He has no limits to His character. In Job 11, our first reading, that's the point being made.

Can you fathom the mysteries of God? No, you can't, because they're limitless. And can you probe the limits of the Almighty? No, you can't, because they're limitless.

God has no limits. He is infinite. And the Bible shows us God's infinity in three ways. Firstly, when it comes to time, which is the one we're used to, God is eternal.

So, the characters of the Bible call Him the eternal God, like Abraham in Genesis. Or Moses says in Psalm 90, before the mountains were born, or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

And so also Paul in 1 Timothy. This is the little kid's question. Who made God? No one. He was always there. God is from everlasting to everlasting.

[16 : 07] He is infinite when it comes to time. And in Christ, we get to share in that eternity going forward, don't we? But secondly, God's infinity means when it comes to space, He's not limited by it either.

God's infinity. Which theologians call God's immensity. He's too immense to fit into any space. So, when Solomon dedicates the temple in 1 Kings, he says, But will God really dwell on earth?

The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built. Paul says something similar in Acts 17, where he says that God, the Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples built by human hands.

It's not because He doesn't like the decor of the temple or something silly like that. Because He's too immense to fit in it. And since God is without limit, when it comes to space, it means He is everywhere.

He is present everywhere. People call this God's omnipresence. Omni-presence. You may have heard of that word before. Omni meaning all. All present.

[17 : 20] And this is encouraging as well, because it means there's no place we can go where God does not watch over us. And that's what the psalm, that well-known Psalm 139, talks about. He says, Where can I go from your spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there. If I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there, your hand will guide me.

Your right hand will hold me fast. To which we could add, even when we go for surgery, even when we feel lonely, even when we struggle financially, and even when we're tempted to act sinfully, God is there.

And for us as Christians in particular, this is especially true, because God's spirit is in us, with us, wherever we go. So Jesus said, Truly I am with you, to the very end of the age.

And so God's infinity, when it comes to time, is seen in his eternity. When it comes to space, it's seen in his immensity. And when it comes to his character, it's seen in his perfection.

[18 : 40] You see, God is love, and infinitely so. God is grace, and infinitely so. All those attributes we saw before, he is infinitely so.

Infinitely knowing, infinitely powerful. Power, powerful. And again, we see this in the Bible writers. Great is our Lord, and mighty in power. His understanding has no limit.

There's no limit to his understanding. It's infinite, in other words. Or, from Jeremiah, I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?

The implied answer is, no. And if nothing is too hard, it means God has all power, doesn't it? Infinitely powerful enough to do anything.

And again, this is encouraging, because it means that he's always able to answer our prayers. His infinite power. But, he's always able to answer for our good, even if we can't see it at the time.

[19 : 47] Because he is infinitely wise, and good. All this makes God of infinite worth. As David says in Psalm 145, Great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise.

His greatness is unsearchable. God is most worthy of praise, because there is no limit to his greatness. I wonder, do you have that big a picture of God, and his greatness?

In the old language, are you in awe of God? Or do we get so carried away by our daily duties that we forget the magnity of God?

Magnity? Is that a word? I don't know. In the modern day language, does God's character blow your mind? God's character and even more so when we remember the cross.

For at the cross, God the Son, who is of infinite greatness and worth, gave his life for us. Just ponder that afresh for a moment.

[20 : 55] The one of infinite greatness and worth came to earth to die for you and me. Isn't that extraordinary?

Is that not an encouragement to keep trusting and following him? It also helps us to understand why, as we heard in our second reading, his once-for-all sacrifice can pay for all our sins and the sins of the whole world if only they believed.

I mean, have you ever wondered how his once-off death 2,000 years ago can still pay for our sins today and tomorrow and next year? Part of the answer is that Christ is of infinite worth, greatness.

You see, our sin is serious for they are many and they are against an infinitely holy God but we can be certain Christ's sacrifice is effective for all our sins because it's a sacrifice of an infinitely glorious Son of God.

His infinite worth means his once-for-all sacrifice is more than enough to pay for all our sins.

[22 : 11] Is that not reassuring? Is that not encouraging? Well, there's more to say but I think I've pushed you far enough today so let me close.

Again, I just want to ask do you see how great our God is? Does not his character alone encourage us to keep trusting in him?

I mean, honestly, what other God is as great as ours? Truly. Charles Spurgeon said, plunge yourself in the God head's deepest sea be lost in his immensity and you shall come forth like from a couch of rest refreshed and invigorated.

Let's pray. Our gracious Father, we thank you so much for your character which our limited minds can only grasp but a part of and yet even then we are in awe and wonder at how great you are.

Our Father, we pray that you would help us to continue to be in awe of you and of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Son given for us.

[23 : 38] Help us to remember your character that we might be encouraged to follow and trust you no matter what our situation in life is. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.