

God is Independent

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[0 : 0 0] Well, as Annette mentioned, we're doing something a little bit different, and normally we would just work through a book of the Bible, which is normally our custom here, but for this month we're looking at a topical series, different doctrines of God, and so we will be flipping around a little bit, but I'll put the verses on the screen.

Well, when my daughter was younger, she had trouble speaking, one of my daughters had trouble speaking to the point where we had to get speech pathology lessons, and now she hasn't stopped speaking, so it was worth the money.

Well, actually, I'm not sure if it was worth the money, but anyway. But one of the few things she could say was, by myself. She was very independent, and whenever we wanted to try and help her, she'd be by myself.

And at one level, kids are meant to grow up and do things by themselves, aren't they? And they're meant to grow up and be independent. So last week, my son finished school forever, and in 10 days' time, he starts his VCE.

I've said to a couple of people, I don't know who's more nervous, him or me. Actually, no, I do know. It's me. But I can't believe we're at this point already. And yet, again, this is part of growing up, isn't it?

[1 : 1 9] Part of becoming independent. And yet, none of us will ever be completely independent. For example, we all depend on oxygen to keep breathing and food and water to keep living.

And as we get hold of medical help for healing. But today, we'll see that God is truly independent. He alone is self-sufficient.

And so he alone can truly say, by myself. The fancy word for God's self-sufficiency is aseity, which comes from the Latin *assere*, meaning from or by himself.

It means that God is not dependent on anything or anyone outside of himself. He is self-sufficient. As Jesus says, the father has life in himself.

And we saw last week that this is because God is simple. Let me try and connect the two things we saw about God last week with this week. If you weren't here last week, it might go over your head.

[2 : 3 8] But see if you can follow along. And God is simple, not in that God is slow or dim-witted. But God is not a compound, but a simple unified one being.

And I showed you, you might remember, the compound leaf versus the simple leaf. The compound has parts to it, like the leaflets that make it up. But God is one unified being.

And so he doesn't have one leaflet of wisdom or one leaflet of love or one leaflet of goodness and faithfulness and so on and so on.

He's not like, you might remember this one as well, he's not like a pie that's divided into parts or slices. No, no, he is all these things completely. He is completely holy.

And at the same time, completely faithful and completely love, completely light and goodness and wisdom and so on. He doesn't just have some of these things.

[3 : 38] He is completely these things. Which means for us today, he has everything in himself to be self-sufficient, you see.

To have a zeity, the life from himself. And what's more, last week we also saw that God is infinite. And so he's infinitely self-sufficient.

He doesn't run out of anything. Do you remember those Duracell ads, like the Duracell bunny, and always compared to the other batteries and they run out of energy, but the Duracell keeps going and going and going?

Well, God is even better than a Duracell battery. Because he's not just 100% times better, he's infinitely so. He never runs out. He is perpetually self-sufficient.

He doesn't need anyone or anything, but has ongoing life in himself. And so he's the only one who's truly independent. The only one who can truly say, by myself.

[4 : 43] And one of the things about this is it makes our God the true God. In our first reading from Isaiah 40, Isaiah begins the chapter by announcing comfort for Israel, that salvation was coming from exile.

And they can trust God will deliver them, because God is like no other. And so in verse 18, Isaiah says, well, with whom then will you compare God?

That is, who is his equal? What image or idol or other God is like him? And the implied answer is no one. And one of the reasons for this is that God is not like idols who are dependent.

And so in the very next verse, Isaiah goes on to say, As for an idol, well, a metal worker casts it. A goldsmith overlays it with gold and fashions silver chains on it.

In other words, an idol needs a metal worker to create it. And then a goldsmith to put gold skin on it with some silver jewelry for it. And then in verse 20, Isaiah rather mockingly says, The idol also needs wood.

[5 : 53] You know, for those who are too poor to provide gold and silver, they can provide wood. But it needs to be wood that will not rot to make a stand for it, so it won't topple over.

In other words, the idol depends on people not just to be created, but to stand up straight. What kind of God is that?

It's laughable, isn't it? But our God does not depend on people. He is eternally self-sufficient and so completely independent.

We see this idea in the New Testament too. So in Acts 17, Paul is speaking to a crowd at Athens in Greece, and they're surrounded by idols.

Even if you go to Greece today, there's lots of idols around, but even more so in Paul's day. And then he says, let me tell you about the real God, the true God. He says, the God who made the world and everything in it is Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands.

[6 : 56] We saw that last week. God is too immense to fit in. But notice verse 25. And he's not served by human hands as if he needed anything.

See, God doesn't need us. As though he's an idol who depends on us. Rather, God is independent. And yet, he still created us, didn't he?

As I said last week, sometimes children will ask, well, who made God? And the answer is, well, God was always there, even though it's hard to wrap their heads around it. But another question sometimes children ask is, well, why did God create us?

And sometimes people say, well, God was a bit lonely. He wanted the company. But that's not quite right, is it? He doesn't need anyone. God in himself as father, son, and spirit was perfectly happy.

And he could have remained so for all of eternity. He's self-sufficient, independent. And so why did he create us? Well, because he freely chose to.

[8 : 06] He freely chose to share his love and life with us. Which is a huge act of grace when you think about it.

Because it meant not only creating us, but then sending his son to die for us. Because he knew even before the creation of the world, his humanity would reject him.

But he created us anyway. That all who believe in Jesus might be adopted into his family. To enjoy his love and life eternal with him.

Andrew Moody, who spoke a couple of weeks ago, has a helpful illustration about this. He says it's like a married couple who are perfectly happy by themselves. I remember those days.

No, I love my children. I love my children. But this couple freely chose to have kids. And I know, sadly, it's not always possible for people today. But this couple chose to have kids.

[9 : 06] Not because they were lonely or unhappy. Or trying to fix a problem in their marriage. Sadly, on TV, sometimes you see this couple, these characters decide, let's have kids, it might help our marriage.

Which is never a good idea. But this couple doesn't choose to have kids because they're unhappy or lonely. They were perfectly happy by themselves. But they freely choose to because they want to share the love they have for each other with another.

And invite them to share in their life together. And it's an act of grace because any parent knows that to have kids costs a lot.

Doesn't it? And one day, the kids might even thank and praise their parents for their grace. Maybe. But that's the idea we see in Ephesians 1.

Though it's specifically talking about choosing us for God's family. And so in Ephesians 1 on the screen, it says, In love, God predestined or chose us for adoption into his family.

[10 : 13] Through the cost of Jesus Christ. In accordance with his pleasure and will. To the praise of his glorious grace.

And so the first application from this doctrine really. Is to praise God for his grace. Remember, he's independent. He didn't need us.

Yet he graciously chose to create us. And even adopt us. Even though it cost him his only son.

That whoever believes in Jesus might share in his love. And enjoy his life eternal with him. And if you don't yet believe in Jesus, then you are missing out on God's purpose.

His desire for you. To know his love. And to enjoy his love. And to enjoy his life eternal with him. So do believe.

[11 : 13] And for us who do, I wonder then, when was the last time we praised God for his grace that gave us life? Not just physical life in this world, but spiritual life in his family.

I'm often so busy thinking about all the difficulties we face in life. Because of this fallen world, like floods, war, interest rates, social angst.

I was in the city yesterday and there was yet another protest. There was a lot of angst around. This fallen world doesn't make life easy, does it?

And yet we mustn't forget that our very life in this world. Not to mention in God's family. Is a gracious act of God.

He's independent. He doesn't need us. Yet he graciously chose to create us. And adopt us. And so the first application is to praise him. For his glorious grace.

[12 : 16] But he's given us a life where we're still to depend on him. For while God is independent, we are God dependent.

So point two on the outlines. And we'll come back to Acts 17 on the screen. And so Paul said he's not served by human hands as if he needed anything. We saw that just a moment ago.

And then he goes on to say, rather God himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man, God made all the nations that they should inhabit the whole earth.

And he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him.

Though he's not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being, says Paul. And as some of your own poets from Athens have said, we are his offspring.

[13 : 20] You see, God is the one who gives everyone life and breath and everything else. He created us from one man that we might reach out to him. That we might be adopted by him through Jesus Christ, as we saw a moment ago.

But notice it also says in yellow there, in him we live and move and have our being. In other words, we depend on him not just for initial life, but for ongoing life.

You see, God is not like a clockmaker who creates a clock, winds it up, then walks away. So that clock is left ticking by itself. Rather, God is still involved in his creation, sustaining our very lives through Christ.

A couple of weeks ago, you saw this from Hebrews chapter 1, where it says, The sun is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being.

And notice, sustaining all things by his powerful word. As Andrew Moody mentioned a couple of weeks ago, as well, we all depend on the sun outside, the S-U-N, for life.

[14 : 35] But the sun kind of gives its life through its rays, doesn't it? And so here is the sun and its rays. And so the sun is kind of like the center, but he's kind of like the father, who sustains life through the rays of his sun.

It's still one sun. You can't divide the center from the rays. It's one God. But the father works through the sun, sustaining us in life.

That's how dependent on God we are. And so the second application is to live like it. As Christians, we are to live God-dependent lives, because we are actually dependent on God for life.

In fact, the very air we breathe is dependent on him. And so that breath you just took is because of God. And that one.

And that one. God's sustained. We are dependent on him. And so we're to live like it. We're to not say by myself, but we're to say by God's help.

[15 : 48] Both when it comes to our physical life in this world and our spiritual life in God's family. Let me give you a couple of examples, general examples of this. And so when it comes to living rightly in life as Christians, we depend on God's guidance, for example.

And so in Proverbs, a well-known proverb is 3, 5 and 6. Trust, depend on the Lord with all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, submit to him, and he will make your path straight or right.

And so you want guidance to walk right in life? Then depend on, trust in God. Lean not on your own understanding or the world's understanding about what is the right way to live in life.

But submit to God's ways, and he will lead you down the right path. He will help you to live right in life. Or when it comes to finding contentment in life as Christians, we're to depend on God's strength.

Because finding contentment these days can be a struggle, can't it? In our second reading, Paul says that he knows what it is to be in need.

[17 : 01] He knows what it is to have plenty, but he has learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

Paul says he's learned the secret of being content in any situation, the secret to being able to cope without being consumed by fear or stress, so that he can enjoy peace and calm.

He's learned the secret of being content. In fact, the word content here literally means self-sufficient. He's learned the secret of being self-sufficient, which is a play on words, because the secret of being self-sufficient is actually being God-dependent.

Because in the very next verse, he says, here's the secret, I can do all this through him who gives me strength. He can do all this.

He can find contentment in all situations, whether in need or in plenty, by relying or depending on God's strength. The secret, as I said, to being self-sufficient is actually being God-dependent, depending on God to give us strength so that we're not consumed by our fears or stress, but can instead enjoy a sense of calm and peace, no matter the situation.

[18 : 26] A strength to say, it's okay, I can get through this, not by myself, but by God's help. So when you pray for things, issues in your life or in the lives of your loved ones, do you also pray for God's strength to help you?

Strength to basically trust him, because that's what it all comes down to, to be content, doesn't it? To hand the issue over to him and trust him enough to leave it with him, because that's the hard part, isn't it?

It's very hard to kind of just leave it with God and not be consumed by it in our lives. We need strength to do that.

Nor is it always easy to trust God's goodness when he doesn't give you the answer you want or when you want. Why isn't he doing this? Is God really good?

We need strength to remember that he is. He wouldn't have given his only son if he wasn't. We need God's strength to trust him, to be content, no matter the situation.

[19 : 41] In one of my Bible study groups this year, a person prayed for their health and then they added, and pray that I'll be content whatever the doctor finds.

Isn't that a great thing to add to the prayer? They prayed not just for healing, but for God's strength to cope whatever the outcome. And the outcome was, sadly, that they will have to live with their condition for the rest of their lives.

Not quite the outcome they were hoping for. And yet, God did give them strength to be content. It hasn't consumed them with stress.

Rather, they do know a sense of peace. They didn't rail against God. Why did you do this? They've continued to trust God and his goodness.

They were content. And so the second application is, we're not to do life by myself, but by God's help. Because we are God dependent.

[20 : 48] Both for life in this world and life in his family. And the great thing about this doctrine of God's independence, of God's aseity, his self-sufficiency, is that we can depend on him for help.

Because he has an infinite storehouse to give. He never runs out. Even like a Duracell battery, that does run out. It's like in verse 19 of our second reading there, Paul says to the Philippians who've given money to Paul, that they're not to worry in case they have a need for some money, because he says, my God will meet all your needs, not wants, needs, according to the riches.

His infinite storehouse of wealth wealth in Christ Jesus. You see, God is self-sufficient. And from his self-sufficiency, he has ample to give to help us in life.

Psalms 36, I think, puts it beautifully like this. He says, you, Lord, preserve, sustain both people and animals. How priceless is your unfailing love, O God.

People take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house. You give them drink from your river of delights, for with you is a fountain of life.

[22 : 17] In your light, we see light. Here is God's self-sufficiency. He has an abundant house of food. He has a river of water to drink from.

He's set for life. He's independent. And yet, from his abundance, we draw life. From his house of abundance, we feast.

From his river, we drink. From his fountain of life, we live. From his light, we see light. You see, we depend on his independence all through Christ.

From God's abundant self-sufficiency, he can always give us help and strengthen us in life. Which brings us, finally, to our reading that we started with.

At the end of Isaiah, he says, Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.

[23 : 25] Do you notice that? He never grows tired or weary, because he's self-sufficient. He always has strength, an abundance of it, infinitely so, to keep going.

And so we can depend on him, because he always has strength to give us, which is exactly what Isaiah goes on to say. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

Even ewes grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall, but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

You see, God is self-sufficient and independent, and from the riches of his self-sufficiency, from the riches of his strength, he can give us strength, that we can keep going in life, keep trusting him, keep being content, no matter the situation.

It kind of reminds me a bit of an old Australian children's book called The Magic Pudding. Have you familiar with this book? It's about a pudding called Albert, who is self-sufficient, who has life in himself, and no matter how much he is eaten by others, he always reforms to provide more pudding for them.

[24 : 44] Obviously, God is not a pudding, not any blasphemous, and God is not magic, but God is self-sufficient. He is independent. He doesn't reform, but he's always got plenty to give us, always got more pudding to provide, if you like, strength to give so that we can keep going in life.

We can depend on him. And so reflect again on his character, his independence, that you might remember the wealth of resources you can draw on to keep trusting him in life.

And so to close then, first, God is independent. He alone can say, by myself. And yet while he doesn't need us, he still graciously chose to create us and adopt us through Jesus Christ.

And so praise God for his glorious grace, which gave you life. Second, we are God dependent, not just for initial life in this world physically and into his family spiritually, but for ongoing life in both.

And so we must live not by myself, but by God's help. And thirdly, God's self-sufficiency, God's independence means he has an infinite supply to provide.

[26 : 13] And so you can keep depending on him in life. Like for guidance to live rightly or for strength to be content.

Reflect on who God is that you might be encouraged to keep following him. Let's pray. Our gracious Father, we do thank you so much for your character.

And today we thank you particularly for your independence, your self-sufficiency, which reminds us that our very creation and especially our adoption is an extraordinary act of grace.

Help us to praise you for it, we pray. I thank you though for the reminder that while you are independent, we are not. We are God dependent. And so help us, Father, to keep depending on you in life, like for guidance to live rightly and for strength to be content.

And Father, thank you so much for your character that because you are self-sufficient. You always have an abundance to give that we can always depend on you.

[27 : 26] And so help us to do that, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.