

WHAT COMES TO YOUR MIND WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT GOD?**Part one - The Attributes of God and their Application to Daily Living**Wednesday, May 5th, 2021 - 7 p.m.

Pastor Don Horban, Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON

THE SELF-SUFFICIENT GOD**Job 22:21 - "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee"(KJV).**

Though I don't use it much for detailed study, there is still something beautifully poetic about the way the old King James translates that profound verse from Job chapter 22. Years ago, **A.W.Tozer** said, ***"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."***

No religion or spiritual experience, no faith or practice can rise above its idea of God. This means it is possible to wade through huge slices of the Christian life almost by rote. I think we all know, at different seasons of our lives, what it's like to push along in what we have come to call our "walk with Jesus" more fueled by religious tradition than by the presence of Jesus. It's not that Jesus rejects us for our lack of vitality, but we all know the difference between living for Christ because we know we **must** and living for Christ because we are captivated by a sweeping sense of the **Divine**.

Listen to **Tozer** again - ***"It is impossible to keep our moral practices sound and our inward attitudes right while our idea of God is erroneous or inadequate. If we would bring back spiritual power to our lives, we must begin to think of God more nearly as He is."***

"...To think of God more nearly as He is." That's it exactly. Let me try to say the same thing more directly: my concept of God is what fuels everything spiritual about me. Think about **worship**. Knowledge of the Holy One is to worship what roots are to a plant. Without roots, you can't keep flower stems alive for long. Without the truth of God's beauty gripping the mind, worship becomes forced emotionally and strained. We begin to feel the weight of the emptiness of the whole venture which in turn begins to magnify the guilt because of our own awareness of our own hypocrisy.

Think about **faith**. How many people go through their whole Christian lives trying to muster up more faith in God. Listen, it can't be done. Faith is a by-product of knowing God. Faith is like the trust you have in a reliable babysitter - whom you know because you've put her to the test dozens of times. You know what she's like. You know how she acts. You've seen how loving and responsible she is. You've proven her in difficult situations. You don't **make** yourself trust her. You've **grown** to trust her by getting

to know her or him.

Think about the **prayer life**. Prayer is cold and formal and stuffed with dryness when it's performed as a religious duty or exercise. Prayer was never meant to be just something you do because you **must**. It was meant to be the **presence** of Someone you love.

The trouble is we get it all backwards. We work harder at **becoming good prayers** than we do at **understanding the nature and character of Father God**. Then, because our minds are starved for a true knowledge of the Holy One, our times of prayer become stuffed with the shopping lists of our troubles and needs. Everything turns inward and downward. This is all so different from the loving relationship Jesus intended. Just try to stop two people who are deeply in love with each other from communicating.

The Bible says there are tremendous blessings in knowing God:

Proverbs 9:10 - "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight."

Jeremiah 9:23-24 - "Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, [24] but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord."

I want to open this series by dusting off some gigantic pillars of truth about the living God of the Bible. We'll just start with one tonight:

1) **OUR GOD IS THE CREATOR AND SUSTAINER OF EVERYTHING THAT EXISTS**

The theologians use terms like **self-existence** and **self-sufficiency** to describe what I'm trying to say. We mean **God has no origin - no point of beginning**. Everything that **begins** has another **cause**. I said everything that **begins** has another cause. But God never **began**. You can't say that about anything or anyone else. **Everything** but God came from **somewhere** or

something.

So already we've nailed down something very important in **identifying** the God of the Bible. You can always **distinguish** that which is God from that which is not God. Everything but God has a beginning. When you think of anything that has a beginning, you are not thinking about God. You may be thinking about something very great, and very powerful, and very awe-inspiring. But it's not **God**.

This is one of those truths that seems to make the mind grow fuzzy the more you try to focus on it. We simply aren't equipped to comprehend that which is **timeless** and **eternal**. But we still need to do the best we can because this is of more than just intellectual importance.

The self-existence of God is one of the reasons mankind is uneasy about Him. **Tozer** writes: ***"Philosophy and science have not always been friendly toward the idea of God, the reason being that they are dedicated to the task of accounting for things and are impatient with anything that refuses to give an account of itself. The philosopher and the scientist will admit that there is much that they do not know; but that is quite another thing from admitting that there is something which they can never know, which indeed they have no technique for discovering. To admit that there is One who lies beyond us, who exists outside of all our categories, who will not be dismissed with a name, who will not appear before the bar of our reason, nor submit to our curious inquiries: this requires a great deal of humility, more than most of us possess, so we save face by thinking God down to our level, or at least down to where we can manage Him."***

Proud man doesn't respond well to One before whom we can only **bow**. God is the Creator and Source of all life. Jesus said **"the Father has life in himself"** (John 5:26). That's different from the way anything else has life. Our life comes from Him. Apart from God, everything else runs on batteries. We derive all of our life from Him.

The Bible beats this drum with relentless clarity and repetition:

John 1:1-3 - **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2] He was in the beginning with God. [3] All things were made through him,**

and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

Colossians 1:16-17 - “For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. [17] And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

Hebrews 1:3 - “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high....”

Now, this understanding about God's ***self-existence*** and ***self-sufficiency*** is very important because it's ***precisely here that the background is formed for both man's uniqueness and his sin.***

Mankind is a ***creation*** by God. In other words, mankind ***had a beginning***. Because man is created by such a God, ***man is not his own***. In spite of what he may think, man was never designed to be either ***sovereign or independent***. He has the image of God in his being. He exists for God. He is God's own.

This truth is so important that when we are ***mindless*** of it, we are not only ***forgetful*** (like failing to remember where we put our car keys) but ***delusionally sinful and self-confused***. In fact, the Bible says that forgetting the ***self-existence*** of our Creator and our ***dependency*** on Him is the root infection of the universe, leading to every other sin that is.

In fact, perhaps no better definition of sin has ever been given than **Isaiah 53:6** - “**All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.**”

Interesting words, these. We've all, we're told “***gone astray***.” Astray from what? These words imply there was an absolutely right path - a ***way*** we were ***designed*** for. In other words, we were never meant to ***make our own way***. We were never meant to consider all options ***equally valid***. The little word says it all. We've gone “***astray***.”

Well, where did we go so wrong? The prophet says we have ***“turned every one to his own way....”*** This is not the issue I would have guessed. I would have imagined some horrible crime of moral wickedness to be listed here. Perhaps the statement that we are all thugs or thieves or lazy or mean.

But those aren't listed here because those aren't the real problem. Those are just the ***fruit*** of the real problem. What we've done is an evil more closely tied to the subject study of this teaching - the ***self-existence*** of our great Creator.

Sin isn't first of all being ***wicked***. Sin is first of all pretending to be ***sovereign***. Or, in the words of our text, sin isn't turning to a ***violent*** or ***sexually perverse*** way. It's turning to ***“our own way.”*** Man makes himself a ***self-determiner***. He puts his ***trust*** in himself. Man, who only has breath as God lends it - ***who grows like the grass in the morning, only to be cut down at night - who disappears like a mist by the highway*** - thinks he is the end for his own existence!

Listen to ***Tozer*** again: ***“From all this we may begin to understand why the Holy Scriptures have so much to say about the vital place of faith and why they brand unbelief as a deadly sin. Among all created beings, not one dare trust in itself. God alone trusts in Himself; all other beings must trust in Him. Unbelief is actually perverted faith, for it puts its trust not in the living God but in dying men. The unbeliever denies the self-sufficiency of God and usurps attributes that are not his. This dual sin dishonors God and ultimately destroys the soul of the man.”***