

The Doctrine of God

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[0 : 00] My family and I have been in the area for about six months now. We came from a youth ministry in central Georgia. And it was actually a really hard decision to leave those youth in that church in general decision.

My wife and I were talking together and we were asking ourselves whether or not we had done the right thing in coming here. And it was only a week later that we read of a local atheist group at the University of North Georgia that thought that it would be a great way to protest the pro-life movement by baking cookies shaped like children and ripping their heads off.

So at that point we were convinced that what we had thought was the right thing for us to do was actually the right thing for us to do.

So we're very grateful to be here today. If you are, if the kinds of things that we're going to be speaking about today interest you, if they pique your interest, I know that not everyone has the same types of interests, then I would encourage you to sign up at the back.

But also, even if this isn't your thing, the kind of thing that we're going to be thinking about and speaking about, then I would encourage you to support the ministry in any other way that you can, whether it be administrative or anything like that.

[1 : 43] So now with those things, those preliminaries out of the way, we are going to be reading from Exodus chapter 3, verse 14. That's Exodus chapter 3, verse 14.

And the word of God says, God said to Moses, I am who I am. And he said, say this to the people of Israel, I am has sent me to you.

I know we've we've prayed, but I'd like to offer another prayer this morning. So let's please go to God in prayer. Father, I thank you for this another day of life and breath that you've granted us, that we may come before you in awe and humility on this Lord's day to worship and to magnify your name.

For as you revealed to Moses, you are pure. I am this you are pure being itself. You want nothing you want for nothing, but you created us for no other purpose than you might be glorified.

And father, today I confess to you that I am but a man. And apart from your grace working in me, I am nothing. I pray that you will guide my thoughts while we seek to plumb the depths of your being.

[3 : 10] I pray that you will both bless this, your word, as I proclaim it, as it is proclaimed and that you help us all to reason well through these issues. I pray that we do not engage in this study for its own sake, but that we may be transformed by this knowledge that we might glorify you and all that we think and all that we say and all that we do.

In Christ's names we pray. Amen. All right. So before we get started to inform you of one more thing, and that is that some of the issues that we're going to be talking about today are deep.

I actually, in speaking to people before I came out here, I was told that, well, Dan, that sounds more like a seminary lecture than it does a sermon. And I can understand that sentiment a little bit.

Many modern Christians aren't accustomed to hearing the kind of message that you're going to hear today. And I think that's for a couple of reasons. One is because we often make a sharp divide between preaching and teaching.

You'll note in Nathan's introduction, I'm trained as a teacher, not a preacher. And often the things that I say in that, I do come across more as teaching than they do preaching. But in all actuality, preaching and teaching are pretty much the same thing on a spectrum.

[4 : 32] You cannot teach without some exhortation and you cannot preach without some teaching. So preaching exhorts here to do something with the knowledge that they have.

But you really, you have to do some teaching in all of preaching. And that's what we'll be focusing on heavily today. Second, I think that there's a strong streak of anti-intellectualism in the church.

Many would look at today's topic and say that this kind of study is unnecessary or even unspiritual. They're content with a felt faith rather than one that's grounded in truth and reason rightly applied. This attitude needs to be remedied. And unexamined faith is one that is afraid of serious study. And if you are afraid of serious study, then you have a faith that poses no real threat to the unbelieving culture of our day.

And I'm convinced that it also greatly hinders the process of sanctification. Now, why do I say that? Well, I say that because we, the church, haven't always done a good job in explaining to fellow believers or to our congregations on what exactly the work of the Spirit is.

[5 : 51] And the Reformed Confessions are unanimous on this. Today, for those who are born again, regenerated by the power of the Spirit, the Spirit does not create content in the minds of believers.

I'll say that again. The Spirit does not create content in the mind of believers. The 1689 London Baptist Confession puts it this way. It says, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word. The Spirit allows us to reason through Scripture, to see objective truth for what it really is. And as B.B. Warfield would say, that that objective truth that we see is glorious.

And it is. R.C. Sproul and John Gerstner put it this way. They say, the internal testimony of the Spirit is divine light thrown on ordinary, natural human knowledge.

They go on to say, the noetic effect of sin is not direct through a totally depraved mind, but indirect through a totally depraved heart.

[7 : 04] So regeneration renews our will so that we can make the right use of our God-given reason. And we must do a better job at exercising our intellect.

That's why Paul says in Romans 12, 2, that we are to be transformed by the renewal of our minds. In Colossians 10, he says we are to be sanctified, that we are being sanctified, that we've put on the new self, and that we're being renewed in knowledge after the image of our Creator.

Transformation comes by making use of God's ordinary means of grace, which includes reading, proclaiming, and reasoning through His revelation to us.

And by His grace, by the illumination of the Spirit of God in us, by those means, that's what we're going to do. We're going to delve deeply into Scripture today.

We're going to reason through it, and we're going to learn what the classical doctrine of God is, and why it's still... And we'll do it because, sadly, there are many evangelicals that are, if they do not reject the doctrine outright, they are trying to tweak it along the edges.

[8 : 17] And as we'll see, you cannot do that. The classical doctrine of God stands or falls as a unit. You cannot pull a thread without unraveling the whole sweater.

But I also want us to see today how this doctrine leads us to doxology, how a proper understanding of it drives us to worship when we meditate on what God is, and as we behold any part of His creation, no matter how large or how small.

And I say all that is... The reason why I'm going through all these things when we talk about the intellect and the illumination of all the Spirit is because the doctrine of God is not a doctrine that we arrive at easily.

It's often been said that the Bible is not a textbook on systematic theology, and that's true. We don't have neat headings where it says that this section is about God, and this section gives us the doctrine of humanity and sin and redemption.

No, we have to mine the text for information because we don't have that information, and we have to reason through exactly what it is that God is telling us, what it is that He's revealed to us.

[9 : 33] And the doctrine of God is an area that requires some heavy intellectual lifting if we are to remain within the bounds of orthodoxy. It's an area where believers can easily be led astray if they aren't familiar with the classical terminology, the words that we use to describe God's whatness, what He is.

And part of the reason why this can be such a challenge is because of the way the Bible itself speaks about God. Some passages speak of God as having very human-like experiences. Genesis chapter 6, verse 6 through 7 says, And the Lord regretted that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him to His heart. So the Lord said, I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.

Deuteronomy chapter 9, verses 7 through 8 say, Remember and do not forget how you provoked the Lord your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you've been rebellious against the Lord.

Even at Horeb you provoke the Lord to wrath, and the Lord was so angry at you that He was ready to destroy you.

[10:58] Now a normal and plain reading of these passages seems to indicate that God can be provoked, that He gets angry, and that He grieves, that He has regrets, and all of these things, all of these emotions in response to His creatures.

It would appear from these passages that God is called, caused to be something that He was not previously in response to something outside of Himself.

He becomes angry, or He regrets in response to His creation. In short, it would seem that there is what some would call a reciprocal relationship between God and creation.

He causes us to be, and we cause Him to feel and act in certain ways based upon our actions in time and space. And there are some who would actually take these passages very literally, but there are also passages that seem to deny that these very changes happen in God.

For example, in Numbers 23, 19, it says, God is not a man that He should lie. He is not a son of man that He should change His mind.

[12:14] So if we read this plainly, again, it sounds like, well, God cannot change His mind or does not change His mind. 1 Samuel 15, 29 says, And also the glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for He is not a man that He should have regret.

So again, this passage seems to stand in tension with the passages we've already read that say that God does change. Last one, James 1, 17, says, Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation and there is no shadow due to change.

That God does not vary and He does not change. Now again, when we read these texts plainly, they seem to stand in tension with the others we read. Which is it?

Does God change or does He not? Now typically, when I read these passages to believers and I ask them these questions, I get the response that these verses that speak of God's changing His mind and regretting and repenting and those kinds of things, the response that I usually get from Christians is, well, that's anthropomorphic language.

And that's absolutely right. It is. It's language that's applied to God that gives Him human-like traits so that we can understand what it is that He's communicating better.

[13:46] His condescension, His stooping down to speak to us in ways that we can understand. But in my opinion, even though that answer is right, if you cannot explain why it is right, then you're only writing, we're only writing on momentum that has been built up for 2,000 years of Christianity.

Because if I come to the text, how do I know what is figurative language and what is not figurative language? How do we know that God is literally unchanging and figuratively changing?

Why can't it be the other way around? Why can't He be figuratively unchanging and literally changing? And as some would claim, they would say, these ideas of God being unchanging, they don't believe them because it means that we can't have meaningful interaction between ourselves and God.

God can't have meaningful interaction between Himself and creation. And it's this kind of approach that some have actually taken.

They've rejected the classical doctrine of God and they've begun to recast God in the form of a man. For example, I'll give you this one example.

[15:11] One of my professors actually let me know. I'd heard of this Bible before, but he pointed out this passage that's actually really troubling. The guy's name is Finnis Jennings Dake.

And if you've heard of the Dake Annotated Study Bible, then you've probably heard that name before. You can actually find that study Bible in many Christian stores. And, again, I hadn't heard of this particular passage before, but one of my professors showed it to me.

And it's on page 97 of the Dake Annotated Study Bible. It says, God has a spirit, or, excuse me, God has a personal spirit body.

He has a shape. He has form. He has image and likeness of man. He has bodily parts, such as back parts, a heart, hands, and fingers.

He has a mouth, lips, and a tongue. He has feet. He has eyes. He has ears. He has hair. He has a head, face, and arms, and other bodily parts.

[16:19] Now, if I were to actually project this quote onto the screen, that the thing that you would notice, I think, immediately, that I find troubling, is that every single thing that Dake says about God, he gets from Scripture.

Every single thing that he says here about God's form, about his image and likeness of man, the fact that he has parts, such as back parts, a heart, hands, and fingers, all of those things have Scripture references.

Every single one. Parts, such as back parts, Exodus 33, 23, a heart, Genesis 6, 6, 8, 21. Lips and a tongue, Isaiah 30, 27 feet, Ezekiel 1, 27.

Eyes, Psalm 11, 4, 18, 24, 33, 18. Ears, Psalm 18, 6. And Dake would likely argue that all he is doing is he's taking Scripture at face value.

That he is the one that's reading Scripture literally, and we are not. He would say that those who adhere to the classical doctrine of God are rejecting a plain and clear reading of Scripture.

[17:36] Now, obviously, we've got a problem here because we do hold that we believe in a literal or a plain reading of Scripture, but we also admit to the fact that there is non-literal language in Scripture.

And the challenge before us when it comes to the classical doctrine of God is identifying figurative language when we see it. And that is my aim here today because there are many.

Again, you can go to Christian bookstores and find this book, the Dake Annotated Study Bible, but in my opinion, it is heretical. So what we want to do today is clear the waters so that we can see more clearly what the classical doctrine of God is and how we arrived at it.

Now, I'm not going to spend a lot of time going through the historical development of the doctrine. If you'd like to do that, you can. And we're not going to have time to go through every single attribute of God that the classical doctrine defines.

I'll leave those things to your own study, but what I want to do here is simply to reason through Scripture with you so that the doctrine becomes more clear. Now, in that regard, there's really no better place to start than Genesis 1-1, which is where Scripture starts itself.

[18:57] Genesis 1-1, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. A complimentary passage, Psalm 33-6, By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their hosts.

Now, obviously, in the history of the church, we've held that these verses and others like them depict the difference between the Creator and the creature.

That there is some kind of relationship between creature and Creator. and that God existed prior to the creation of the world and that He will continue to exist after this world passes away.

God is not dependent upon anything for His existence. Rather, He is the only sufficient explanation for His own existence.

Paul puts it this way. He says, God is not served by human hands as though He needed anything since He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

[20:07] God doesn't need creation for anything. He doesn't need me for anything. While creation depends upon God for its existence, God, the Creator, doesn't depend on anything for His existence.

And the Chronicler puts it this way in chapter 1 Chronicles 29, 14. It says, But who am I and what is my people that we should be able thus to offer willingly?

For all things come from you and of your own we have given to you. What is it that we who receive our very being, our existence from God can give back to God?

Nothing. Absolutely nothing. There is nothing that we can give or offer to God that He has not first given to us.

Whatever it is that God is, His existence is independent of His creation. There is nothing to offer Him that again hasn't first been given to us.

[21:14] And the word that we use for that in the history of the church is that God is entirely all say. One of His attributes is divine aseity. That is that God is of Himself.

He is not caused to be anything by anything less than God. Now that doesn't mean that God is self-caused because self-causation is a contradiction.

Something must be in order for it to cause itself to be. God would need to exist before He existed in order to cause Himself to exist.

So it's a contradiction. No, what we mean when we speak of divine aseity that God is a say is that nothing other than God explains God.

God is the sufficient explanation for Himself. Now the church has made use of philosophical language in the past in order to tease out the implications of divine aseity.

[22 : 15] And they've done so by pondering what a self-existing being must be. They've started ontologically and that's a philosophical term that just means it's the study of being as being.

So they want to study what God is. So whenever we're talking about the classical doctrine of God, we're talking about God's whatness, what He is. We're not talking about who He is. We're talking about Him in His being ontologically.

Now you'll see that as theologians in the history of the church started adopting some of this philosophical language, it began to take shape as some of the classical arguments of God.

For example, one form of the argument from change involves a couple of terms that I first need to explain. And those terms are actuality and potentiality or act and potency.

actuality or act is simply existence. While potentiality, potency or potential is the potential for existing.

[23 : 22] And all created things are this mix of potentiality and actuality, act and potency. For example, at the most basic level, God has actualized me.

However, not everything that could be true of me is actual. While I have the potential to speak Italian, I can't speak Italian. You might think it because my name is Italian, my last name is Italian, but I don't have the ability to speak Italian.

The ability to speak Italian does not exist in me. It's not actual, but the potential does. That potency within me to speak Italian must be actualized by something that is outside of me.

like I would need a book on Italian or I would need to go hire an Italian tutor. Somebody to bring that potential in me to act so that it was actual, so that it was existing in me.

I can't actualize the ability to speak Italian myself. And this is true of all created things. All created things are a mix of act and potency. Every created thing is this composition of what is actual and potential and every created thing requires something to cause it to move from potency to act.

[24 : 41] Anything that merely has the potential to exist, the potential to exist is still not existing. So anything that has the potential to exist must be caused to exist by something that's already in act.

And here's the application in that regard that we make to God. If God is all say, then there is no explanation for his being outside of his being. And if any potentiality must be actualized by something that's already in act, something that's already actual, then it must be the case that in God there is no potentiality.

There is no potency. That God is pure act. Pure actuality. Since pure act is the lack of potential, then there is no potential for God not to exist.

And that's why in the history of the church they said that God is a necessary being. He necessarily exists because there is no potential for him not to exist. He is pure act.

He is, in other words, as some have said, he is ipsum s subsistence, the pure act of subsistence being. Paul says in him we live and move and have our being.

[26 : 08] We have our being. But only God is being itself. He is the pure act of subsistence being.

He is pure act because in him there is no potential. And he is subsistence being because he is existence itself from which all existing things derive their being.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Through him all things were made. For by him all things were created. All things were created by him and through him.

From him and through him and to him are all things. God is the fount of all being because he is being itself. There is nothing more basic than we can say of God that he is his own existence.

God is existence itself who gives existence to everything else that exists. That's why I began our scripture reading with Exodus 3.14. God said to Moses I am who I am.

[27 : 13] And he said say this to the people of Israel I am has sent me to you. Or it may also be translated I am what I am or I will be be what I will be.

Now there's certainly a great deal more we can derive from this passage but fundamentally God is telling Moses and us today that he is pure I am ness.

He is the pure act of being itself. And here's the important part. God's aseity demands that he is pure actuality.

And his pure action actuality demands that God is ase. That he is self existing. They're mutually reinforcing. If you have one then you have the other.

From this understanding of God as some being that is purely actual. That he is ase. We can derive all of the other classical metaphysical attributes of God.

[28 : 18] First of all there can only be one such being. There can only be one God that is ase. One God that is pure actuality.

And the reason for that is because the only opposition to being is non-being. And nothing in this sense can stand in opposition to God.

Nothing cannot stand in opposition to God. Nothing cannot be another God. God. Likewise you can't propose to such being because there is nothing that would differentiate one from the other.

In creation we can look at a forest and we can see that there are individual trees and trees are composition. We look at the forest and we see that all of the trees share the same essence.

They all participate in this idea of treeness. But what differentiates one tree from another is that this tree is made of this stuff and this tree is made of this stuff.

[29 : 24] If you get rid of all the stuff all of the matter then all you're left with is the idea of treeness. And in God there is no matter. There's nothing to differentiate his being so that God just is one with his being.

You cannot say that there are two such beings because there's nothing that would be able to differentiate one from the other. God is pure being itself. He just is.

He is the first. He is the last. Besides him there is no God. There can only be one God who is being itself. Moving on since God is pure actuality then it also follows that God is simple.

That is God is not composed of parts. He is indivisible but whatever is not simple if you have something that is not simple if you have something that is composed of parts then that thing has the potential to be divided but God has no potential and God so God must it must be true that God is not composed of parts whatever is composed of parts has the potential to be decomposed but in God there is no potential he is pure act.

He has no potential to change or to be divided. We could also say that whatever is composed depends on its parts to be what it is and those parts are less than the whole but if God himself had parts then he would depend on those parts to be what he is but if God is I'll say then he cannot depend on anything less than himself to be what he is if he were composed of parts we'd have to ask!

[31 : 07] well what principle is it that hold these parts together what is the thing that holds God together and whatever that thing is that's God not the thing that's composed of parts because it's a more fundamental or transcendent principle than God himself but we don't accept that there is any principle that stands above God that causes him to be what he is pure being itself doesn't require anything to make it be it just is God can't be composed he's infinitely simple or one in his being the Puritan Stephen Charnock in his work the existence and attributes of God says God is the most simple being for that which is first in nature having nothing beyond it cannot by any means be thought of as compounded for whatsoever is so depends upon the part whereof it is compounded so it is not the first being so this is not new teaching these are things that were accepted by early

Christians and the Reformation just carried those ideas through and this is how we know that the God of Phenix Dake is wrong his fault God doesn't have the parts that Dake ascribes to him and we know this because we have some idea of what God is like in his very being he cannot be composed and pure act he cannot be composed and be a say and that's how we know that the language all of those verses all of those things that whenever I read what Dake had initially written all of those verses that seem to confirm what it is that he is saying about God now we can understand to be figurative because we have an understanding of God as all say and an understanding of God as pure act and we know that it's figurative language that way it's anthropomorphic God's way of condescending to us so that we can speak of him in ways that we can understand but we can take this further we can say that okay in addition to his simplicity that this idea of

God is all say that he is pure act that immutability also flows from this doctrine God cannot change change entails passing from potential potentiality to actuality what is potential to what is actual but God does not contain in himself any potential he cannot become what he is not he doesn't become at all he is today what he was yesterday and he will be tomorrow what he is today and this is how

we know that all of those verses in the Bible again that depict God as changing his mind or as repenting we know those verses as well to be anthropomorphism God's condescension speaking to us in ways that we can understand so when God says in Malachi 3:6 that I the Lord do not change then he does not change and he's not saying that that in my character

I do not change he's not saying that well my will does not change no he's saying that he does not change in his very being God is immutable and from this we also get from his immutability we could carry it on further to his eternality Isaiah 57:15 says that God inhabits eternity now time involves change but what is change but a movement from what is potential to what is actual but again God does not have potential in him so God does not change and therefore stands above and outside of time God is the unchanged being cause of being that allows change to happen in time and in creation but he himself is unchanged by that causation by his causing things to exist now we could also say that immutability also entails the idea of impassibility and this is one of those that people really have a hard time with because impassibility means that

God is not subject to passions it's really misunderstood by many people it doesn't mean that God doesn't have emotions rather it means that he cannot be caused to experience emotions as people do there's no change in his state of being he does not move from being happy to being sad from being loving to being wrathful God nothing outside of God can cause God to be what he is not God when we say that God is love does God love absolutely yes God loves but what we're saying is that there's nothing outside of God that causes him to love what we're saying is that there is an in God there is an eternal disposition that is loving that is love but that is not caused to be by anything outside of himself this can be said about any of his other emotions as well when we speak about his anger or his wrath we mean his eternal and immutable disposition towards evil all of the emotions described of

[36:54] God and scripture are just descriptions of his immutable disposition now finally and I mentioned this earlier I'll mention it again! God's necessity!

flows from his being pure act from his pure actuality because he does not have any potential to not exist his infinity follows also because potential is the very thing that limits being I'm limited in my being by my potential I have the potential to learn Italian and that potential is what limits me but because God does not have any potency in him then that means that he is not limited by anything there's no potential for him to be limited in any way now all of God's basic metaphysical attributes flow from his pure actuality his pure isness St.

St. Augustine says it is absolute is that true is and the true sense of the word that I long for that is which is in that Jerusalem which is the bride of my Lord where there will not be death and there will not be failing elsewhere he says for God is absolute being and therefore all other being is relative! that is relative was made by him Thomas Aquinas says there is some first being whom we call God and that this first being must be pure act without any admixture of any potentiality God is I am this itself and it's this classical doctrine of God that the church has confessed!

throughout its history the reformation did not alter this doctrine in the least but there are some prominent reformers today that said one of the things that was left undone by the church is to revise this doctrine of God and it's some prominent names we don't have time to go into the who the what or the why that are attempting to revise this classical doctrine of God but the reformers themselves didn't do that they just carried it over into their own confessions the Westminster confession of faith the Savoy declaration and the 1689 London Baptist confession of faith are all in agreement specifically in chapter 2 section 1 of the London Baptist confession said the Lord our God is but one only living and true God whose subsistence is in and of himself now notice that language the language that I'm still using is the language of the confession that God is subsistent being he is infinite in being and perfection whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but himself he is a most pure!

[39:47] spirit he is invisible without body without body or parts or passions there's the doctrine of simplicity there's the doctrine of impassibility right there in the confession who only has immortality dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto who is immutable immense eternal incomprehensible!

Almighty every way infinite most holy most wise most free most absolute working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will for his own glory and again three of the most fundamental reformed confessions confess the same thing they're in agreement we could also go to the belgic the belgic confession says we all believe in our hearts and confess

with our mouths that there is a single and simple spiritual being the doctrine of divine simplicity they put it right at the front of their confession simple spiritual being whom we call God he is eternal incomprehensible invisible unchangeable infinite almighty completely wise just and good and the overflowing source of all that is good the reformers confessed the classical doctrine of God and this doctrine has historically been articulated in terms foundationally of God's aseity and his being pure act but sadly there's some in the evangelical community who have set themselves up as opponents to this doctrine again

I mentioned even in the reform community we are not immune to it but I want to point out one thing about the way that we've constructed this doctrine today and why I said at the very beginning that you cannot pull on a thread of the classical doctrine of God and not have the whole sweater unravel you can't pull the thread of impassibility without denying immutability denying immutability means that God is not being but he is becoming and that is exactly what we're denying in his aseity and his pure actuality so if you say that God is not being but he is becoming then we have to ask what is the cause of his becoming if we say that God brings this about then we've entered into the realm of self causation and we've already proven that to be an absurdity he is the cause of everything else his being is the only sufficient explanation for himself so that we could also say that there's no way that God could be caused to be anything that he is not from outside of himself if we say that creation causes

God to become today what he was not yesterday then we're put in the position of saying that God needs something to bring about some change in his being he needs creation in order to actualize some potency within himself and if God needs anything if there's any potency in God then God is not ase God is not self existing however if God is the subsistent act of pure being as the church has historically taught then we get aseity and we get all the other metaphysical attributes of God that go with it and you might think that this is all fine and good you might think that this is a bit high brow and it's not and it's not irrelevant to our situation today it has apologetic applications if we go out there are many atheists today who will say that the attributes of God are incompatible and contradictory whereas if you hold to the classical doctrine of God then you can see that they are not but in addition to that as I mentioned before there are those that are trying to undermine that doctrine and that position if you want to look into it a little more is known as theistic personalism theistic personalism is an attempt to make God into something that we can wrap our brains around and as proponents do this

God starts looking less and less and less like God and more and more and more like a man God may be an all powerful and all knowing man but he's much like a man nonetheless it's an implicit or if not outright rejection of another doctrine and that is the doctrine of God's incomprehensibility and that's the idea that no finite creature no creature can fully grasp the infinity of God's essence that doesn't mean we can know nothing about God we can it just means that as soon as we grasp some truth about God something about his goodness then it escapes us as it hurdles off into eternity into infinity so that we can know something of God's goodness but then magnified to infinity we lose our handle on it we lose our grasp of it and if you notice that a lot of the words that we use to describe God have built into them this idea that God is incomprehensible we say that God is infinite it's just a negation that God is not finite we say that God is immaterial a negation that God is not material he is immutable another negation that God is not mutable he is impassable and all of these things are just negations we're only saying what God is not like and they serve to establish the acceptable boundaries about how we speak about God about how we speak about what [46 : 09] God is but we know that ultimately he is incomprehensible in his being Job 11 7 says can you find out the deep things of God can you find out the limit of the almighty and the answer of course is no finite creatures we don't have that capability we don't have that capacity God is not like a man and we must not make him out to be like a man for our own self-serving purposes so that we can say perhaps that we understand more about God than we really do rather instead of doing that what do we do we sing praises to him great is the Lord and greatly to be praised and his greatness is unsearchable we cannot know him in his being and we shouldn't try so what do you do when you come face to face with the pure act of being itself with one who contains all perfections in and of himself what do you do you do what

Isaiah did you fall on your face and you say woe is me for I am lost for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of people with unclean lips for my eyes have seen the king the lord of hosts what do you do when one who was not a man becomes a man condescends to become a man to

add to himself a human nature what do you do when that man proclaims a message of reconciliation between God and man and goes on to both live and to die for us you stand in all you stand in all of his infinite love and you weep over your sin you repent and you turn to him forsaking all else to follow him no we we have to there's no option for us that we must resist any attempt to make

God look more like us because he doesn't need us yet he made us and he showed us and continues to show us today the extent of his love through his condescension his condescension and Christ taking on a human nature for us and his condescension and his abiding word which we still have access today that we can understand by the work of the spirit in us the classical doctrine of God is not inconsequential it's important and as Charles Spurgeon notes there's no higher or noble object on which we can set our minds than God himself and I'll leave you with this final thought from Spurgeon it's an extended quote but I think it gave me chills when I read it so I'm going to read it to you Spurgeon says nothing will so enlarge the intellect nothing so magnify the whole soul of man as a devout earnest continued investigation of the great subject of the deity the most excellent study for expanding the soul is the science of

Christ and him crucified and the knowledge of the God head in the glorious trinity the proper study of the Christian is the God head the highest science the loftiest speculation the mightiest philosophy which can engage the attention of a child of God is the name the nature the person the doings and the existence of the great God which he calls his father there is something exceedingly improving to the mind and a contemplation of the divinity it's a subject so vast that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity so deep that our pride is drowned in its infinity other subjects we can comprehend and grapple with in them we feel a kind of self content we go on our way with the thought behold I am wise but when we come to this master science finding that our plumb line cannot sound its depth and that our eagle eye cannot see its height we turn away with the thought

I am but of yesterday and know nothing let's pray go go to go to to the!

[51 : 00] go to