

- Instead of continuing with the Trinity right now, I think after last week we've got a clear foundation for seeing that when we think of God, we must think of him as a Trinity. We can't even answer the basic questions of Christianity -Is God Really Love? How Can We Be Saved? And How Do We Live As Christians?- without the Trinity. So, we're not moving on from the Trinity, it's just that as we look at the other doctrines, we'll continue coming back to the doctrine of the Trinity at various times. I was reading through our SOF again this week, and noticed that so much of our understanding of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit come in relation to "the great work of redemption." So, when we look at the doctrines surrounding the Gospel- Election, Justification, Sanctification, etc- we'll have to look at how those things are taught in Scripture in relation to the different persons of the Trinity.
- So, today we're going to move into thinking about the attributes of God.
  - Remember: *In the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; equal in every divine perfection, and executing distinct and harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.*
    - So, we're talking about the Father, Son, and Spirit here as we talking about the things we can know for sure about God.
- "Our Aim in Studying the Godhead must be to know God himself better. Our concern must be to enlarge our acquaintance, not simply with the doctrine of God's attributes, but with the living God whose attributes they are." J.I. Packer Knowing God pg 23
  - I can remember that I used to think my dad was invincible, and could do anything in the world. Then I hit that stage where I realized he wasn't and I began to think that I was the one who was invincible and could do anything, not him. But now, as I have experienced some of those major life events- getting married, having children, providing for my family, the way I see my dad has changed. As I understand more about life, and realize more about what my dad went through when he was raising me and my brothers and sisters, I respect him more. I love him and appreciate him more than I could have before. Here's what I don't do: I don't just fit this information into some systematic view of my dad, and then sit back comforted by how I've amassed a little more knowledge about this person. Because I view my dad as an individual, as someone intimately connected to me and my life, and I have a real relationship with him, I respond to these new insights about my dad in my relationship with him. It changes how I talk to him, how I treat him. So, as we look at our God, who saved His people, who tells us that because we've been adopted as sons in

Christ Jesus, and we can call him Abba, Father- that's a relationship. That's not just knowledge, or information. This is the God we pray to. We depend on. We trust in. We turn to all during the day for hope and comfort. As we gain new insights and understanding, it should change the way we relate to him. We should love him more, come to him more, trust him more.

- How would you answer this question-How much can we know of God?
  - What he reveals to us.
    - Matthew 11.27 “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him
    - We can't know this by human wisdom or effort. (1 Corinthians 1.21) “In the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom.
  - *“Such a God cannot be found out by searching. He can be known only as He is revealed to the heart by the Holy Spirit through the Word. It is true that creation demonstrates a Creator so plainly that men are “without excuse”; yet, we still have to say with Job, “Lo, these are parts of His ways: but how little a portion is heard of Him? but the thunder of His 4 power who can understand?” (26:14).” -AW Pink*
  - We can't know about God in totality. We can't know him exhaustively, but we can know him **truly**.
    - Wayne Grudem rightly points out that we can know true things about our GOd, even if we are unable to understand them completely
      - We can know that God is love (1 John 4.8)
      - That God is light (1 Jn 1.5)
      - That God is spirit (John 4.24)
      - God is just and righteous (Rom 3.26)
      - But, as Grudem points out, we don't know everything about God's love. We can't know it completely as it relates to every other attribute of God. We can't understand it fully as it relates to every created thing. It's too deep! Our minds can't hold it all, can't comprehend it all! But God has revealed enough that we can know Him truly.
- So, now we turn to the Word and we begin to look at and see a taste of what our God is like. Before we do that, let's make our own list to start. What are some attributes of God that you can think of from Scripture?

- These attributes are descriptions of what our God is like. He is a spirit (Jn. 4.24), He is eternal, with no beginning or end (Ps. 90.2), He is unchangeable (Ps. 102.25-27).
- God's names are also often descriptions of his character, aren't they? He's a lion, a lamb, the morning star, the shepherd, the bridegroom, a rock, a strong tower, a potter, a king, a judge, a mother hen, a shield, and on and on. The names of God tell us who our God is, and what He is like. We don't have time for it in this class, but a study of the names of God would be so uplifting. Get yourself a list of God's names and Scripture texts, and begin to work through it. Find out why God is a lamb, a lion, or an eagle. What makes him called a potter? A king? How does that effect your life? Or instead of getting a list, start keeping an eye out for these names of God as you're reading. Note them down in a notebook. One thing you find is the more your mind and eyes are focused on God, the easier it is to bear what is going on in your life. Because you see your life in the light of your glorious God.
- So, as we discover what God is like, when talking theology, we call those things the attributes of God.
  - So, People will often break down these attributes into two groups- the first are called "incommunicable attributes." What does that mean? Well, think diseases here. A communicable disease is a disease that can be passed from one person to another.
    - So an incommunicable disease cannot be passed from one to another, and these attributes are ones that belong to God alone. Eternal, unchangeable, entirely self-existent and sufficient (he needs nothing else in order to be, and to continue on being). These are attributes that only belong to God.
    - Communicable ones are attributes that we can emulate, and can express in a finite, limited form. Love, wisdom, truthfulness. We can express these attributes as well, although not as perfectly as God. But still, we are able to love, right? We love because in fact, he loved us first. But let's start with a couple of attributes that belong wholly to God.
  - The Independence of God (also called his self-existence or solitariness)
    - "The noun **aseity** (Latin derivation - **a** = from + **se** = oneself) literally means from oneself and so being from oneself and in philosophy describes that which has its existence derived from itself, having no other source."

- We should rightly point this one out first. The first characteristic of God we should notice is simple- He does not need anything else at all in order to be. He is entirely unique. Do you see why this attribute belongs only to him? He is the only entity in the entire everything that exists on his own, without anything else.
  - He did not need a universe to exist- Job 41.11, *Who has first given to me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine.* (Job 41:11 ESV)
  - He does not need humans, or our offerings to exist-
    - *“Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, I will testify against you. I am God, your God. Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you; your burnt offerings are continually before me. I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. “If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine.”* (Psalm 50:7-12 ESV)
    - *23 For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. 24 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.* Acts 17:23–25.
  - He does not need any other guidance or counsel than His own perfect will
    - *In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,* (Ephesians 1:11 ESV)
  - God existed in perfect glory and community before anything came into existence
    - *And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.* (John 17:5 ESV) *•The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that*

*the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.(John 17:22-24 ESV)*

- *The foundation of all true knowledge of God must be a clear mental apprehension of His perfections as revealed in Holy Scripture. An unknown God can neither be trusted, served, nor worshipped. - AW Pink*
- Homework this week- read through Isaiah 40 once a day.