

Sermon Notes
“God the Father”

Material for this message was drawn from a series of sermons by Dr. Calvin Wittman (2009)

Focal Scripture Reference: Isaiah 45:5

Introduction

If I were to ask you if you believed in God, I am confident that each of you would respond that you do. But, if I were to ask you to describe God to me, to give me a list of His attributes or to speak to me of the essential qualities of His nature, would you be so sure of your answer? While many people claim to believe in God, most are not sure Who He is, what He is like and how we can know things about Him with absolute certainty.

The purpose of this message is to take a closer look at the person and nature of God. We will break up our study into three sections:

- First, we will look at who God is not.
- Then we will look to the scripture to see how God reveals Himself to us, and
- Finally, we will consider what impact these truths have on our lives.

1. Who God is Not

If you were to ask Americans if they believed in God, the majority of them would tell you yes, they do. According to a Fox News poll, more than 90% of Americans say they believe in God. But before you get overly encouraged, the same poll showed that about a third of Americans believe in ghosts, an equal number in UFOs, and about a 25% accept things like astrology and reincarnation.

In addition to these troubling results, only a little more than 30% of those surveyed say they attend church at least once a week and 40% responded that they rarely or never attend church of any kind at all. While most people in our country claim to believe in God, the results of this survey indicate that they do not believe in the God revealed in Scripture.

The question, then, should not be, “Do you believe in God?” The question should be, “In what God do you believe?” You see, when different people talk about God, they are not all speaking of the same person. For example, when the topic of Islam is raised you will hear many people say something like, “Well, we all worship the same God, don't we?”

The answer is an unequivocal no. The God of the Bible is not Allah, worshiped by hundreds of millions of Muslims. The same is true of “gods” worshiped by all other false religions. He is not the god of the Mormons - they believe that as we are, he

once was and as he is, we shall someday be. He is not the god of the Jehovah's Witnesses - they deny the divinity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit and teach that the doctrine of the trinity is heresy. He is not the god of the New Agers - they believe God to be a higher force or some sort of cosmic energy.

The God you and I believe in is not some nebulous, indeterminate spiritual energy. The list could go on and on, for you see, while many people believe in a god, they do not all believe in The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, God as He is revealed in scripture.

How then do we know who our God is and on what authority can we claim to found our beliefs?

2. Who is God and How Can We Know Him?

The word "Theology," is derived from two Greek words, "Theos," which means God, and "logos," which means "word." Simply put, theology is a word about God. As Southern Baptists, our theology about God is rooted and grounded solely in scripture and is articulated in The Baptist Faith and Message in this way:

"There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in Holiness and all other perfections.

God is all-powerful and all knowing: and his perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence or being."

Fundamental to our faith, then, is the understanding that God is a God of revelation and it is in scripture that He reveals Himself to humanity. As we studied last week there are two types of revelation, general revelation, where the evidence of God is clearly observed in nature; and special revelation, which is scripture, God's chosen method of self-disclosure to humanity. This is an important truth about which each Christian should be clear:

If we are not sure about where we get our knowledge of God, then whatever knowledge we have of Him is suspect.

The scripture is the only certain word we have about God and it tells us that we are made in His image. This is important because when many people think about God they try to think of Him in human terms. They try to think of Him in sentimental ways or understand Him through the lens of their personal experience, always trying

to envision Him within the confines of how they would understand another human being.

Instead, we need to recognize that we are a finite and fallen replica of His infinite, divine, and perfect person. Imagine a statue of stone trying to understand its sculptor, its creator if you will, through its own existence, experience, and characteristics:

- My creator must be made of stone for I am made of stone
- My creator must be silent for I am silent
- My creator must be unfeeling for I am unfeeling

How wrong would the statue be? Yet, we are guilty of doing the same thing if we try to understand God from our perspective as a created being. We are created in God's image, He is the creator, we are the creature and all we can ever know about God is what He has chosen to disclose to us in Scripture. What then does God reveal to us about Himself?

In order to respond to that question, let's look at several things that God reveals to us about Himself in scripture.

A. He is the Only True God

The scripture is clear; there is only one true and living God. **Isaiah 45:5** says, "**I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God.**"

As Christians we are monotheistic, that is, we believe there is only one God. Polytheism believes in many Gods. Pantheism believes that god is in everything and that everything is God. Atheism says there is no God, but Biblical Theism says there is only one God and there is no other god beside Him. He is unique. While there is only one God, the Bible also teaches us that He reveals Himself to us as a triune God, that is, one God in three persons. This doctrine of the Trinity is central to a biblical understanding of Who God is.

We find scriptural references to the triune nature of God in both the Old and the New Testaments. So important to God's self-revelation and our understanding of God is the doctrine of the Trinity that throughout history Christians have staked their very lives upon this truth. Those who deny the truth of the Trinity cannot truly be called Christians. It is the doctrine Jesus taught and believed and it is the doctrine set forth by a systematic study of scripture. It is how God reveals Himself to us, thus we must accept it, even if, admittedly, it is difficult for us to comprehend.

E.Y. Mullins, a great Southern Baptist theologian, put it this way, "The Bible does not explain the Trinity. It simply gives us the facts." (Mohler, Land and Kelley on the BF&M, pg 27)

By faith, we must simply accept God's revelation of His Triune nature.

B. He is Sovereign

God is Omnipotent, meaning He is all-powerful and able to do all His holy will. He tells us in **Jeremiah 32:27** that there is nothing too hard for Him. God's sovereignty speaks to His rule over all things. It would not be accurate to say that God can do anything because His sovereignty is consistent with His holiness and all His other attributes, thus God cannot lie, He cannot sin, He cannot deny Himself or be tempted with evil or cease to exist. Simply put God's sovereignty means that He is able to bring His will to pass.

While God's freedom speaks to the fact that there are no external constraints on His decisions, His sovereignty speaks to the fact that by His own power He can do whatever He pleases.

C. He is Holy

Isaiah 6:3 tells us of the angels around the throne, "**And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."**

When the scripture uses the word Holy to describe God, it is speaking not only of His righteousness and perfection, but also of the reality that He is separate and different from us. This word speaks to the fact that He is infinitely exalted above all of creation.

D. He is Infinite

God is eternal. He has neither beginning nor end; He has always been and will always be. In language that our finite minds find hard to grasp, the scripture tells us in **2 Peter 3:8** that "**With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.**" As limited, finite beings, who ourselves are confined by time and space, it is difficult for us to even conceive of this aspect of God but scripture tells us He is eternal.

E. He is Omnipresent

Psalms 139 tells us that there is no place where we can escape the presence of God. He is everywhere, equally, at all times. This too is difficult for us to understand. God is present in all places at all times and there is never a place where He is not.

F. He is Omniscient

God knows all things: past, present, and future – The possible as well as the actual. There is nothing that escapes His knowledge or understanding.

Psalm 139:4 says, "**Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely.**"

From the beginning, He knows the end and from the end, He knows the beginning. His knowledge is simultaneous as opposed to successive. That is, He knows all things at all times, He is never learning, or in process. God has always known all things and always will.

G. He is Unchanging

God is Immutable. God is not capable of or susceptible to change. He is unchangeable, invariable, and permanent.

Malachi 3:6 says this, "**I the LORD do not change.**"

Not only does God not change but His moral principles also do not change. He is who He has always been and will always be who He is.

H. He is Righteous

God is both righteous and just. He is the standard by which fairness and justice are measured.

Deuteronomy 32:4 says of God that, "**He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.**"

What a wonderful thing to know that God is righteous and just! We know that someday every wrong will be made right. Although we may be surrounded by injustice on this earth, in the end, justice will prevail because our God is the personification of what is just and right.

I. He is Merciful

While God is just, He is also gracious and merciful. This speaks to God's patience and His longsuffering with His fallen creations.

Psalm 103:8 says, "**The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.**"

Mercy speaks to God withholding punishment that we deserve while grace speaks to His giving us good things we do not deserve. God is merciful and ...

J. He is Love

This means that God is ever about the business of giving Himself to others. **1 John 4:8** tells us that God is love. God loves all of His creation and does so with a selfless and sacrificial kind of love. He is ever about the business of inviting us to experience it.

Throughout the scripture, we see the evidence of God's love, ultimately fulfilled in the giving of His Son Jesus to pay the penalty of our sins. In all of this, we've only managed to scratch the surface of who God is and how we can know Him, and yet what we have discussed has direct application in our lives.

3. What Difference Does It Make In Our Lives?

The answer is that it makes all the difference in the world – not only in this world, but also in the world to come. We are not left to our own imagination to determine what God is like, what He demands from us, and Who He is. Graciously and lovingly, in keeping with His character, God has revealed Himself to us. He wants us to know Him, to love Him, to be in fellowship with Him, to serve Him and to bring Him glory through our lives. It tells us that there is a God in heaven, that He is on His throne and not only does He care for us but that He also created us for a purpose.

We know that He is pure and good. We know that He is everlasting. We know that He is always in control. We know that God loves us.

John 3:16 describes that love telling us simply yet profoundly, "**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**"

God is loving – So much so that He extended His love towards us in that while we were still sinners in rebellion against Him, He sent Jesus to die for us. It is because of His love that we know we can know Him personally. If we accept His gift of salvation, we also know that He hears and answers our prayers; and we know that He will never leave us nor forsake us.

As you contemplate the majesty and wonder of our God the question is not what do you know about Him, but rather do you know Him? Have you ever come to a point in your life where you've placed your trust for forgiveness of sins and eternal life in God the Son, in Jesus Christ? If not, what could possibly keep you from doing so?