

**The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 2 – “Of God and the Holy Trinity”,
Message # 10 – “The Eternity of God”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School Class
by Pastor Paul Rendall on October 16th, 2016.**

Chapter 2 – Of God and the Holy Trinity, Paragraph 1 -

The Lord our God is but (a)one only living and true God; whose (b)subsistence is in and of Himself, (c)infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but Himself; (d)a most pure spirit, (e) invisible, without body, parts, or passions, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; who is (f)immutable, (g)immense, (h)eternal, incomprehensible, (i)almighty, every way infinite, (k)most holy, most wise, most free, most absolute; (l)working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, (m)for his own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; (n)the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and withal most just (o)and terrible in his judgments, (p)hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the (q)guilty.

a 1st Corinthians 8: 4 and 6; Deuteronomy 6: 4; b Jeremiah 10: 10; Isa 48: 12; c Exodus 3: 14; d John 4: 24; e 1st Timothy 1: 17; Deut. 4: 15-16; f Malachi 3:6; g 1st Kings 8: 27; Jeremiah 23: 23; h Psalm 90: 2; j Genesis 17: 1; k Isa 6: 3; l Psalm 115: 3; Isa 46: 10; m Pro 16: 4; Rom 11: 36; n Exodus 34: 6-7; Hebrews 11:6; o Nehemiah 9: 32-33; p Psalm 5: 5-6; q Exodus 34:7; Nahum 1: 2-3

The Westminster Shorter Catechism states in Question 4 – “What is God?” “God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.”

Psalm 90: 1 and 2 – “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.” “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.”

Today we want to think together about the eternity of God. There is not a better definition of God’s being Eternal than the one which is found in our text – “From everlasting to everlasting, You are God.” From the everlasting of what we consider the past, to the everlasting which we consider future, God is. He is the ever-present now; the great “I Am”. There are many good things for us to consider under this subject and so in order that we might make the most of our time, I have decided to draw from the outline of the great puritan divine – Stephen Charnock as we go through this material. I will be quoting from him at points, and make comments in relation to the points that he makes so that it can be better understood by us. If you have not read his book – “*The Existence and Attributes of God*”, I would advise you to get a copy of it and read it for yourself.

1st – We are told in this Psalm that God is a perpetual refuge and security to his people. Charnock says: “His providence is not confined to one generation ; it is not one age only that tastes of his bounty and compassion. His eye never yet slept, nor hath he suffered the little ship of his church to be swallowed up, though it hath been tossed upon the waves. He hath always been an haven to preserve us, a house to secure us. He hath always had compassions to pity us, and power to protect us. He hath had a face to shine, when the world hath had an angry countenance to frown.” (End of quote)

It is good for us to consider the fact that God always has been and always will be, and to remind ourselves that no one caused Him to come into existence; that He was there before the creation of our world, and He was there before the stars were put into their place and other planets, galaxies, and the whole solar system was put into place. Indeed He was the One who put it in place. Therefore, we ought to see Him as the Eternal One, the Unchangeable One, the Almighty, who is our refuge, and for whom, nothing is too difficult, in terms of His care for His people.

2nd – The Eternity of God is here described. From everlasting to everlasting thou art God.' He was before the world, yet he neither began nor ends. He is not a temporary, but an eternal God. It takes in both parts of eternity, what was before the creation of the world, and what is after. Though the eternity of God be one permanent state without succession, yet the Spirit of God, suiting himself to the weakness of our conception, divides it into two parts, one past before the foundation of the world, another to come after the destruction of the world ; as he did exist before all ages, and as he will exist after all ages.” (End of Quote)

A doctrine can be drawn from this: God is of an eternal duration. Charnock says: “The eternity of God is the foundation of the stability of the covenant, (That is – The everlasting covenant, the covenant of redemption worked out in the covenant of Grace, through Christ) the great comfort of a Christian. The design of God in Scripture is to set forth his dealing with men in the way of a covenant. The priority of God, before all things, begins the Bible: 'In the beginning God created,' Gen. i. I. His covenant can have no foundation but in His duration (His continuous existence) before and after the world. And Moses here mentions his eternity, not only with respect to the essence of God, but to his federal providence; (that is Christ's headship over all things to the Church) as He is the dwelling-place of his people in all generations.” (End of Quote)

Psalm 93: 1 and 2 – “The Lord reigns, He is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed, He has girded Himself with strength.” “Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved.” “Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting.”

This ought to draw forth from our hearts, both admiration and worship of our great God. It says in Psalm 41: 13 – “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting!”

Charnock says: Many truths lie couched in the verse.

1. The world had a beginning of being. It was not from eternity; it was once nothing. Had it been of a very long duration, some records would have remained of some memorable actions done of a longer date than any extant.
2. The world owes its being to the creating power of God. 'Thou hadst formed it' out of nothing into being. Thou, that is, God. It could not spring into being of itself : it was nothing ; it must have a former.
3. God was in being before the world. The cause must be before the effect ; that Word which gives being must be before that which receives being.
4. This Being was from eternity : 'from everlasting.'
5. This Being shall endure to eternity : to everlasting.”

Job 38: 4 – “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?” “Tell Me, if you have understanding.” “Who determined its measurements?” “Surely you know!”

3. Eternity is a perpetual duration, which hath neither beginning nor end. Time hath both. Those things we say are in time, that have beginning, grow up by degrees, have succession of parts. Eternity is contrary to time, and is therefore a permanent and immutable state, a perfect possession of life without any variation. It comprehends in itself all years, all ages, all periods of ages. It never begins! It endures after every duration of time, and never ceaseth. It doth as much outrun time as it went before the beginning of it. Time supposeth something before it, but there can be nothing before eternity ; it were not then eternity. Time hath a continual succession ; the former time passeth away, and another succeeds ; the last year is not this year, nor this year the next. We must conceive of eternity contrary to the notion of time. As the nature of time consists in the succession of parts, so the nature of eternity in an infinite immutable duration. Eternity and time differ as the sea and rivers ; the sea never changes place, and is always one water, but the rivers glide along, and are swallowed up in the sea; so is time by eternity.” “That properly is eternal that hath neither beginning nor end; and thus eternity is a property of God.”

Isaiah 57: 15 – “For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

Isaiah 41: 4 – “Who has performed and done it, calling the generations from the beginning?” “I the Lord, am the first; and with the last I am He.”

How God is eternal, or in what respects he is so. Charnock says: “Eternity is a negative attribute, and is a denying of God any measures of time, as immensity is a denying of him any bounds of place; as immensity is the diffusion of his essence, so eternity is the duration of his essence; and when we say God is eternal, we exclude from him all possibility of beginning and ending, all flux and change. As the essence of God cannot be bounded by any place, so it is not to be limited by any time; as it is his immensity to be everywhere, so it is his eternity to be always. As created things are said to be somewhere in regard of place, and to be present, past, or future in regard of time, so the Creator in regard of place is everywhere, in regard of time is semper (always). His duration is as endless as his essence is boundless ; he always was and always will be, and will no more have an end than he had a beginning; and this is an excellency belonging to the Supreme Being. As his essence comprehends all beings and exceeds them, and his immensity surmounts all places, so his eternity comprehends all times, all durations, and infinitely excels them.”

4. God is without Beginning or End.

Revelation 1: 8 – ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, says the Lord, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.’”

It is impossible for any to give a beginning and being to itself; if it acts, it must exist, and so exist before it existed. A thing would exist as a cause before it existed as an effect. He that is not, cannot be the cause that he is. If therefore God doth exist, and hath not his being from another, he must exist from eternity. Therefore when we say God is of and from himself, we mean not that God gave being to himself; but it is negatively to be understood, that he hath no cause of existence without himself. Whatsoever number of millions of millions of years we can imagine before the creation of the world, yet God was infinitely before those; he is therefore called “the Ancient of days”, Daniel 7, verse 9, as being before all days and time, and eminently containing

in himself all times and ages. Though indeed God cannot properly be called ancient, that will testify that he is decaying, and shortly will not be; no more than he can be called young, which would signify that he was not long before. All created things are new and fresh, but no creature can find out any beginning of God. It is impossible there should be any beginning of him. indeed God cannot properly be called ancient, that will testify that he is decaying, and shortly will not be ; no more than he can be called young, which would signify that he was not long before. All created things are new and fresh, but no creature can find out any beginning of God. It is impossible there should be any beginning of him.” (End of Quote)

God is without End.

Psalm 9: 7 – “But the Lord shall endure forever; He has prepared His throne for judgment.” “He shall judge the world in righteousness, and He shall administer judgment for the peoples in uprightness.”

Psalm 102: 25-27 – “Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands.” “They will perish, but You will endure; yes all of them will grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will change the, and they will be changed.” “But You are the same and Your years will have no end.”

Charnock says: “God is immovably fixed in his own being, that as none gave him his life, so none can deprive him of his life, or the least particle of it. Not a jot of the happiness and life which God infinitely possesses can be lost; it will be as durable to everlasting as it hath been possessed from everlasting.” (End of Quote)

5. There is no succession in the Knowledge of God.

Acts 15: 18 – “Known to God from eternity are all His works.”

Charnock says: “(1.) There is no succession in the knowledge of God. The variety of successions and changes in the world make no succession or new objects in the divine mind, for all things are present to him from eternity in regard of his knowledge, though they are not actually present in the world in regard of their existence. He doth not know one thing now and another anon, he sees all things at once : “Known unto God are all things from the beginning of the world,” Acts xv. 18, but in their true order of succession, as they lie in the eternal counsel of God, to be brought forth in time. Though there be a succession and order of things as they are wrought, yet there is no succession in God in regard of his knowledge of them. God knows the things that shall be wrought, and the order of them in their being brought upon the stage of the world ; yet both the things and the order he knows by one act. Though all things be present with God, yet they are present in him in the order of their appearance in the world, and not so present with him as if they should be wrought at once. The death of Christ was to precede his resurrection in order of time ; there is a succession in this; both at once are known by God, yet the act of his knowledge is not exercised about Christ as dying and rising at the same time, so that there is succession in things when there is no succession in God's knowledge of them. Since God knows time, he knows all things as they are in time ; he doth not know all things to be at once, though he knows at once what is, has been, and will be. All things are past, present, and to come in regard of their existence ; but there is not past, present, and to come in regard of God's knowledge of them, because he sees and knows not by any other but by himself ; he is his own light by which he sees, his own glass wherein he sees ; beholding himself, he beholds all things.”

