

“The Only God”
1 Timothy 1:17
(Preached at Trinity, December 13, 2020)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **In Verse 17** Paul records one of his many doxologies. Doxology comes from the two Greek words, δόξα, and λόγος
δόξα means “praise, honor, or glory” and λόγος is the Greek word for “word”
Literally a doxology is a word of praise.
 - A. After expressing great marvel and thanksgiving regarding God's grace upon his life Paul declares:
1 Timothy 1:17 NAU - "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, *be* honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."
Paul will repeat a similar doxology in Chapter 6
1 Timothy 6:15-16 NAU - "He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him *be* honor and eternal dominion! Amen."
 - B. It is similar to Jude's doxology.
Jude 1:25 NAU - "to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, *be* glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen."
2. How does one preach this passage? How does one begin to describe God? How do you express the infinite and unfathomable?
 - A. Most of the books in my office deal with a single subject – knowing God.
They are books on theology: θεός, λόγος
All of the sermons I have ever preached deal in one way or another with seeking to know God better.
C. H. Spurgeon aptly said, “The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity.”¹
 - B. The best course is to break it up into smaller bites.
Last week we considered the majesty and dominion of God the Eternal King.
This morning I want to examine three attributes of God that Paul sets before us.

¹ C. H. Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit Sermons, vol 1*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2007), Page 1.

3. As we consider the attributes of God, Paul could have made a great list. God is immense, boundless. But here, Paul limits his focus to a very small group of attributes. These are among what we call God's incommunicable attributes—those attributes that belong to God alone.
 - A. There are some of God's attributes that are communicable. They are attributes that we are to reflect, to strive to imitate – attributes like holiness, mercy, patience, justice, goodness, love, etc.
 - B. There are other attributes that belong to God alone – attributes like self-existence, sovereignty, omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, etc.
4. Paul sets before us here three of God's unique attributes –
 God's immortality, God's invisibility, and God's solitariness
 This morning I want to set before you these three unique attributes of God
 - I. God's Immortality – As we consider this attribute several others are also made manifest. His eternity, His self-existence or aseity, His immutability, etc
 - A. God has no beginning nor end
 1. Before anything was, there was God – He is the existing One
He is self-existing.
 2. God exists independently of all outside influences
God is sovereign in His actions – He receives counsel from none
 3. God is Preexisting – everlasting, no beginning
He is the great I AM
 4. Our Confession describes Him in **Paragraph 2:1** (Trinity Hymnal, 671).
 “The Lord our God is but one only living and true God;¹ whose subsistence is in and of himself,² infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but himself;³ a most pure spirit,⁴ invisible, without body, parts, or passions, who only hath immortality,
 - B. The word literally means imperishable or undecaying
 1. This paints a vivid contrast with this fallen world
 2. Everything in this world is decaying. Everything is perishing. All that we have is easily lost. Jesus preached this
Matthew 6:19-20 NAU - "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;"
 3. Everything is in a state of degradation. The paint on our homes peels. Our cars break down, clothes wear out.
 Our bodies are aging and growing weaker.
 - a. We've seen this vividly during the pandemic as we've continually heard the phrase, “high risk.”
 - b. We will eventually die. All life on this earth will come to an end.
 4. Nothing defines creaturely existence more than the phenomenon of change. It is one of the defining attributes of all created objects. Everything around us is in a state of change and we are affected profoundly.

- C. God is unchanging
1. While everything else decays God remains the same. He doesn't grow old, doesn't become weary. He doesn't become less—less powerful, less loving, less wise, less holy. God is unaffected by anything external to Himself.
 2. When it seems everything in our life is unraveling, when adversity becomes overwhelming, it is a great comfort to look to God who forever remains the same – a solid rock.
Psalm 18:2 NAU - "The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."

II. God's Invisibility

- A. God is a Spirit
1. God does not contain physical substance. He is a pure spirit. He is infinite in His being. Infinite in presence. He fills the universe and beyond.
Psalm 139:7-10 NAU - "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? ⁸ If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. ⁹ If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, ¹⁰ Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me."
 2. Our Confession describes Him as being "without body, parts, or passions." He cannot be contained, partitioned, or divided.
 - a. A body has limitations of space – God is omnipresent
He doesn't have locality
Angels are spirits but have locality. They are created beings.
 - b. God is a self-existent spiritual being and is not bound by space. A body contains parts – God is without parts. We refer to this as the simplicity of God.
 - c. God's attributes are not parts of God's divine essence. God is not compound but undivided.
The three persons of the Trinity are not parts that make up the totality of God. God is not one third, Father, one third Son, and one third Holy Spirit. God's triunity is one of His attributes which together make up the Divine being. God is one in essence.
 3. In the Second Commandment God forbids the use of images in His worship. It is impossible to fashion an image of God. Any effort to fashion God into a visible form is to misrepresent Him. To worship God in visible form is idolatry.
 4. God has never been seen
 - a. God is infinite in His being
 - b. He does not exist in physical form except through the incarnation of Christ

5. Moses asked God to show His glory. God's answered it was impossible
Exodus. 33:19-20 NAU - "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." ²⁰ But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!"
- B. The incarnation is a wonderful display of God's mercy and condescension
1. Jesus is called, Emmanuel – "God with us."
 2. Jesus is the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form
 3. When fleshly eyes looked upon Christ they saw God
John 1:14 NAU - "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."
- III. God's Solitariness - "the only God"
- A. This refers to God's uniqueness - μόνῳ θεῶ
1. God declares His solitariness
Isaiah 44:6 NAU - "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me.'
Isaiah 45:22 NAU - "Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other."
Isaiah 46:9 NAU - "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me,"
 2. God declares Himself to be the only God and then commands obedience and worship alone – "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me"
 3. Human beings have always had their gods, but they are gods of their own creation.
Romans 1:21-23 NAU - "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures."
- B. The Bible reveals God as being unique – He alone is eternally self-existent.
1. We refer to this as aseity
Everything that is, is because of God. Everything finds its existence in God. God finds existence in Himself.
John 1:3 NAU - "All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being."
 2. The first verse of the Bible declares, "In the beginning God"
While everything else had a beginning God is eternal and self-existent. Paul refers to God as the "King eternal"
 3. This is beyond the ability of our finite mind and creaturely existence to comprehend. Everything we know had a beginning. There was a time when everything we know did not exist.

4. Everything that exists had a beginning – except God
 - a. One of the arguments for creationism is that existence demands a cause. If there was ever a time when there was nothing there would still be nothing. This is because a state of nothingness cannot suddenly produce a state of something. There has to be a cause.
 - b. God is the cause of all things. All things find their existence in Him.
Acts 17:28 NAU - "for in Him we live and move and exist"
John 1:3 NAU - "All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being."
 - c. In order for something to exist there must be a cause – we call this the “Law of Causality.” God is the cause of all things. In order for anything to exist something has to have aseity.
 - d. God is uncaused. He finds His existence within His being. God finds the power of being within Himself.
Self-existence is not the same thing as self-creation. God didn’t create Himself. Nor is God the result of spontaneous generation. For something to create itself demands pre-existence. It is illogical. God is. God is the uncaused cause of all things.
 - e. God had no beginning. He finds His being in Himself
LBC 2:2 (Of God and the Holy Trinity) – “God, having all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of Himself, is alone in and unto Himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creature which He hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifests His own glory in, by, unto, and upon them; He is the alone fountain of all being . . .”
5. God is solitary, unique. He alone is God.

Conclusion:

1. Modern evangelicalism needs to hear this loud and clear.
The modern church has forgotten that God is God alone, and He must be served and worshipped alone.
Deuteronomy 6:4-5 NAU - "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! ⁵ "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."
2. God is unique, alone, transcendent, other than, worthy of all worship, praise, honor and glory.
Paul says to this God is due honor and glory forever and ever.
 - a. Honor refers to the highest respect and reverence due to God alone.
 - b. God’s glory refers to His excellence, brightness, splendor – the fullness of all that God is, the fulness of His Divine being.
3. Along with the Apostle Paul, may every consideration of God’s great work in our lives fill our hearts with thoughts of the praise, honor, and glory of God.
Revelation 4:10-11 KJV - "The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹ Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power"