

2019 The Doctrine of God
Handout #4
“*The Doctrine of Simplicity*”

Intro:

“What we think about, when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

A.W. Tozer

“God is the One of whom none greater can be conceived.” - Anselm

We are considering the doctrine of God. We are doing theology and it is vital that we do so. The better we know God, the greater our worship.

How we talk about God matters. This is why precision is important. Often false notions of God are perpetuated because we use imprecise language in defining or describing him.

So far we’ve considered the doctrines of God’s:

- Incomprehensibility
- Being without limit
- Aseity

Tonight we consider the doctrine of God’s *simplicity*.

At the heart of the biblical definition of God is the statement given to ancient Israel in Deuteronomy 6:4 - *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.*

When we speak of the “simplicity” of God this is what we mean. God is one. He is not made up of parts.

Our God is a simple being. That does not mean easy to understand. It does not mean that God is not a complicated being. It means he is not a *compound* being.

Augustine the 4th century bishop of North Africa said, “The nature of the Trinity is called *simple* because it cannot lose any attribute it possesses...there is no difference between what it *is* and what it *has*.”

God’s attributes are not external to his essence.

God is his attributes. There is complete and absolute unity in God.

Why is this a big deal?

Would it be so bad if God was a compound being? Well, it would be a problem and here are a couple of issues.

- *For God to be a compound being - there would need to be a composer.*
- *Aseity and Simplicity go together.*
- *A God who is without simplicity would self-destruct.*

This doctrine and age-old puzzles.

Here is a question for you - Is something good because God declares it good or does God declare it good because it is good?

A similar questions - Is something true because God declares it true or does God declare it true because it is true?

Careful -

- if it is good or true because God declare it - God is arbitrary.
- if God declares it good or true because it is good or true - God is subservient.

The Elephant in the room.

With all this talk about simplicity I guess we need to address the obvious question. How can God be simple, without parts, without composition is he is triune? Of course we must say we do not believe in three Gods but one God in three persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We do distinguish between the persons - God is Father, Son and Spirit - we reject modalism that God assumes the different persons at different times. No, we say God is eternally Father, Son and Spirit.

Three persons *one essence*.

Divinity is not divided between the three but all are God.

Each person equally and fully shares the one, undivided essence and the one divine essence wholly subsets in each of the 3 persons.

Each person shares every attribute.

So what if I just can't accept simplicity?

Up until the 19th century most Christians would have said to deny simplicity is tantamount to atheism because to deny simplicity is to deny the God of the Bible.

All that is in God is God...He is the lone worthy object of all our worship and gratitude. All things look ultimately to Him for their being, but He looks to none.