

GOD IS SELF-EXISTENT

Exodus 3:14a

Good morning! We're starting a new series today. It's longer than we just recently finished. But it's more exciting, I think. Because in this series, we're going to study the characteristics of God. We call them the attributes of God. An attribute is a quality or feature regarded as a characteristic or inherent part of someone or something. Like when I say, RJ is generous. That's an inherent part of him. You cannot change that. But don't take advantage of him, ok? He might not resist you. Or Charlie is thoughtful and kind. Like last night, he was here helping to set up the chairs although it wasn't his turn. And he bought that long cable that runs from the speaker to the computer although I was expecting it last week. But those are his attributes. Thoughtful and kind.

We have good attributes because God has given us all those good attributes. All those good attributes come from him. We are generous because God is generous. We are thoughtful because God is thoughtful. We are kind because God is kind. We call those attributes the communicable attributes of God because God is able to share those attributes with us. This is what the Bible means when it says in Genesis 1:26 that God made us in his own image. He gave us all those characteristics that he himself has.

We must admit though that God's attributes are perfect while ours are not perfect. Meaning, is RJ always generous? Is Charlie always thoughtful and kind? I don't know. Only Ate Norma and May can answer that.

So, the communicable attributes of God are attributes that he shares with us. Then, there are also the incommunicable attributes of God. Like his eternality, his never-changing nature, and being all-powerful and all-knowing and all-present.

In this series, which is entitled, “God is”, we’re going to look at some of the communicable and incommunicable attributes of God. There are so many, but we’ll tackle only 10. We’ll start with the six incommunicable attributes of God and then the last four will be the communicable attributes of God.

Today, I’m going to talk about the first communicable attribute of God. I’ve entitled this message, “God is Self-Existent”. I’m basing this from Exodus 3:14a where it says, “God said to Moses, ‘I am who I am.’”.

I read a science fiction short story years ago. It was actually very short. In the story, inventors and scientists were cheering and very proud because they just invented a computer which they thought was better than Siri. This computer is super-super intelligent that it is supposed to give an answer to even the most complicated and difficult question you’ll ever ask it. And so, the day came when they were going to test it before it would make its public appearance. The scientists gathered together in one room and discussed among themselves what is the very first difficult question they would ask their most-prized invention. After a while, they decided on one question. So, they went to the computer and asked the question, “Is there a God?” The computer’s lights flashed, it made a whirring sound and then with a decisive voice said, “Now, there is.”

Well, that short story just reveals how much so many scientists, but not all of them, deny the idea of the existence of God. But not only scientists. A lot of non-scientists don’t believe in the existence of God. Many don’t believe in God because probably of a tragic experience in life and they think that there’s no God who cares. But that’s an emotional reason. The intellectual reason that some people cite is that if God really exists, how did he come into being? Who created God? Is there a god higher than God? Who created the god that created God? It is an age-old conundrum or mystery.

One thing the Bible tells us is that God did not create himself. That's absurd and illogical. Even scientists recognize the absurdity of that. What the Bible tells us is that God existed for all eternity. He just is. He has no beginning and no end. That is what is called the idea of Self-Existence. And that is how God revealed himself to Moses. "I Am who I Am".

Now, what does "I Am" mean? "I Am" in Hebrew is "hayah" and related to the Hebrew verb "to be" which implies the absolute existence of God. It also gives the meaning of "Self-existent One", someone who was never created and will continue to exist. So, that's a pretty powerful name.

This Hebrew name "hayah" is the basis of the name of God which we have come to know as "Yahweh" or "Jehovah". So, God claimed that name for himself. But no one knows for sure how it is truly pronounced. The ancient Jews did not dare pronounce it for fear that they would take it in vain which, of course, is a wrong interpretation of God's commandment. Well, we don't have the correct pronunciation today. It doesn't matter. What is important is what the name really means.

Again, it means that God claims to be self-existent, that he was created by nothing and has always existed forever. It is perhaps one of the hardest attributes of God for any person, even the believer, to understand. Our limited minds cannot grasp the nature of our limitless God. Trying to do so is like holding onto water as it rages down a river. A.W. Tozer writes this about the confusing, head-spinning attribute of God's self-existence:

"To admit that there is One who lies beyond us, who exists outside of all our categories, who will not be dismissed with a name, who will not appear before the bar of our reason, nor submit to our curious inquiries: this requires a great deal of humility, more than most of us possess, so we save face by thinking God down to our level, or at least down to where we can manage Him."

Let me share with you, too, how R.C. Sproul explained the idea of God’s self-existence. This is what he says in an article he wrote on his web site. This is quite lengthy but quite good:

“Some people stumble over the idea of God’s self-existence—even someone like the brilliant twentieth-century philosopher Bertrand Russell. In his book “Why I Am Not a Christian”, Russell said that when he was eighteen years old, he read an essay by the philosopher John Stuart Mill. Up to that point, he had affirmed the existence of God. But, Russell said, “At the age of eighteen, I read John Stuart Mill’s Autobiography, and I there found this sentence: ‘My father taught me that the question “Who made me?” cannot be answered, since it immediately suggests the further question “Who made god?”’ That very simple sentence showed me, as I still think, the fallacy in the argument of the First Cause. If everything must have a cause, then God must have a cause.” Russell had made an elementary error. The law of causality does not say that everything has to have a cause; rather, it says that every effect must have an antecedent cause. An effect is something that is caused by something else. A cause can only be a cause if it produces an effect. But God is not an effect, caused by something before Him. He is self-existent. He owes His being to nothing outside of Himself. He has the power of being within Himself.”

I know it’s still hard to comprehend but I hope you get the idea. As I said, we have limited minds. If we can understand God, then we are gods. If you’re a parent, can your children understand you? God’s self-existence, nevertheless, is never in doubt in the Bible. Over and over, it affirms the eternity of God.

Isaiah 40:28 (ESV), “Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.”

Psalms 90:2, “Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.”

1 Tim. 1:17, “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

Now, what does all this mean to me? So, God is self-existent, he had no beginning or end, what are its implications to my life? Plenty. And I’d like to share with you just three of them this morning. I’d like to share with you three things that have eternal significance in my life.

1. I am nothing without God.

You know why I am nothing? It is because in a literal sense, I owe my existence to God. You see, earlier, I mentioned the law of cause and effect as explained by R.C. Sproul. Again, the law of cause and effect says that for every effect there’s a cause. In my case, God is the cause, I am the effect. In other words, being the Self-Existent One, the First Cause, God has the power to cause an effect, meaning, he has the exclusive power to create. And that is what he did according to the Bible in the very first book, Genesis. So, God is the Creator, and he created everything in the universe, including me. He is the Creator, I am his creation. Everyone of us is a creation of God. Of course, our parents brought us into this world. And their parents brought them into this world. And so on and so forth since the beginning of mankind. The Bible says that we all came from Adam and Eve. Who created Adam and Eve. God! Who created God? No one! Because God is the uncaused cause. He is not an effect. He is the First Cause.

Let me say this again. God did not create himself. It is God’s nature to exist. That is his attribute. He has always existed, because that it is the essential nature of His being. So, what I’m saying here is that, apart from God I cannot exist. Apart from me, God does exist. No human being has the power of being within himself. But God does have the power of being within Himself.

That's the literal sense of what this first point is all about. The figurative sense is this and many of you, I know, this is the first thing that came to your mind. I am nothing without God means my life has no meaning without God.

We hear some romantics say, "I am nothing without you", "How could I live without you", "You're all I need in my life". There's a song that goes, "I'm lost without you". No, you're not. You're just being emotional. You're just hurt. In a week or two, you'll get over it. I've said those words many times before I met my wife.

Anyway, the Bible says that we are lost because we don't know where we are going. We don't have direction. We think this or that is the best way but it's actually the wrong way. Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way to death." How many of us have done something that we thought was right, but it turned out to be disastrous? It turned out to be harmful to us? At our TNF last Thursday, I asked the question, "Who among you smoke"? Two guys admitted they did. I won't tell you who they were. Just initials. D.M. and K.S. But they clarified their answer. They used to smoke but realized it was harmful and stopped. I myself smoked, once, when I was in elementary. My cousin taught me how to smoke but I never really liked it and that was my first and last.

So, what I'm saying is that we do things that are not good for us or for other people because we don't know any better. When we do those things, what do we do? We commit sin. Sin is what our first parents, Adam and Eve, committed in the garden of Eden. When they disobeyed God, they sinned. They passed that sin to us.

I'm a computer programmer. I write programs. I wish all the programs I write are perfect. But there's no perfect program. In the computer world, there's a saying that goes, "There's always one more bug". A bug is an imperfection in the program. The bug causes the program to behave in erratic or destructive ways. It could mean the shutdown of the whole system.

Sin is like a bug in our personal lives. If we don't catch it or fix it, then it could spell a lot of trouble for us. Because of sin, we behave in ways that are harmful to us and others. And life then loses its meaning. We don't even know whether there's meaning in life when we continue in our sin.

The Bible says that sin can easily entangle us. We are not able to take our sin away because we don't have the power to do it. Only God does. He knows how to fix us. Why? Because he is our Creator. He knows us inside out. He knows what you need. He knows the solution to your problem. Remember cause and effect? Sin is the cause of many of our problems. And the effect on us is terrible. But God can cause that sin to go away and the effect will be a tremendous improvement in our lives. Why would God do that? Because he loves you and me terribly. He loves you and me to death.

In fact, that's what he did. He sent his only Son Jesus to earth to die for us. The Bible says, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) Christ died on the cross to forgive your sins. What you need to do now is to ask forgiveness for your sins and receive Jesus into your heart as your Lord and Savior. And you repent and let God know that you will leave your life of sin.

What happens next is that you become a new creation. You are re-created. The Bible says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Cor. 5:17) God is able to do that because he is the Creator who can create and re-create. He can always cause an effect.

Which brings us to our next point.

2. I am special in God's eyes.

To be created and saved by an eternal God is a great privilege. Before I knew Jesus, my life was mired in sin. I was hopeless and helpless. I didn't know where to go. But now, my life has new meaning. I'm no longer lost. God found me.

In fact, he has always been looking for me. When Jesus was on earth, that is what he did. In **Luke 19:10, Jesus said, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”** You see, Jesus is God himself who came to earth to seek us. The immortal became mortal in order to save his creation. In fact, Jesus introduced himself to his enemies as “Yahweh”. The Bible tells us that on the night he was betrayed, Judas led a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. When Jesus asked them who they were looking for, they said, “Jesus of Nazareth”. Then, Jesus replied, **“I am he”** in John 18:5. Now, in almost all Bible versions, it says “I am he”. A few versions omit the “he”. They’re correct. There’s no “he” in the original Greek. It’s only “I Am”. “He” is added in most versions to complete the thought in English. But the soldiers and the officials understood what Jesus meant. He was claiming to be God. And probably that’s why as we read in **John 18:6, “When Jesus said, ‘I am he,’ they drew back and fell to the ground.”** Probably Jesus also said it with such force and authority that they trembled in fear and fell to the ground. That’s cause and effect for you.

So, we are special in the eyes of God. Because in the first place he brought us into existence for a purpose. We weren’t put here on earth to just fill space. He wants you to know that you have a purpose on earth.

Many people today, especially during this pandemic, has struggled with anxiety and depression. The suicide rate among young people has skyrocketed. We know that it’s because many young people are looking for significance. You cannot find it in being just by yourself, by withdrawing to yourself. We need to be out there. We need relationships. And the relationship that we need the most is with God. Many people just don’t realize this.

When God started to create, he also poured out his love to his creation. Love is one of his attributes and we’re going to talk more about it in the future. He shared this love with his creation and that’s why we can love.

However, because our love is no longer perfect because of sin, we are not able to return this love to the source, our Creator. Instead, we return this love to and seek love from the wrong places.

Nevertheless, God continues to love us. Remember, we are his creation, and he loves us so dearly. Psalm 145 says, “The Lord is loving toward all He has made.” “All” includes you and me.

The neat thing is that when we accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior, that perfect love between us and God has been reconnected and reestablished. It is now so firmly entrenched that as the Bible says in Romans 8:38-39, “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

That’s how special you are to God. He will keep you in his love. Finally,
3. I will be with God eternally.

God created us not only to love us and for us to love him but for us to be with him eternally. That was his original intent when he created the first human beings. He wanted them and their children and those after them to enjoy him forever because God is forever. They sinned, however, and death and separation from God was the result.

The Bible promises, nevertheless, that those who are in Jesus have conquered sin and death forever. Now that we believe in God through his Son Jesus, we have the extra privilege of existing for eternity like God. We won’t be like God, but we will live forever and ever in heaven with God. God now shares with us a part of his incommunicable attribute of Self-Existence. We have a beginning, but we have no end.

The apostle John wrote to the early Christians which, of course, applies to us today, “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” (1 John 5:13)

This morning, I hope you just realized this implication of God’s attribute of Self-Existence in your life. If you are not a follower of Jesus, I hope you realize that he is your Creator and as such, he can re-create your life whatever your situation is. He loves you so much and wants you to be with him forever in heaven. All you need to do is to ask for forgiveness for your sins and receive him as your Lord and Savior.