

Fil-Am Community Church

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## “God”

Good Morning Fil-Am it is so good to see so many of you here this morning, let's get into the Word of God and more importantly let's get the word of God into you!

We have come to the second sermon in our series on the foundations of our faith. Last week we began by examining the Scripture, the single source from which we get all of our doctrine. This week we move into theology proper as we attempt to say a word about God.

If I were to ask you this morning if you believed in God, I am confident that almost all of you would respond in very easily with a (YES). But if I were to follow that question up by asking 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, the answers would not be as easily answered.

You see, while most people claim to believe in God, they are not really sure Who He is, What He is like and How we can know these things about Him with certainty. The purpose of this morning's message is to take a closer look at the **Person** and **Nature** of God.

This message is not going to be easy; I mean how do you say all you need to say about God in 30-45 minutes?

I cannot take my time and develop it the way we do in **IMPACT** class, but our purpose here is not to teach you all there is to know about any of these doctrines, that would be impossible.

This series of messages is designed simply to familiarize you with the very basics of doctrines which we as Christians confess to be true.

My hope is to stir your hearts and to whet your appetite for more so that you will continue to study and learn more of these truths on your own.

Remember the saying give a man a fish, feed him for a day, teach him to fish and feed him for a lifetime... **(When was the last time you went fishing?)**

We will break our discussion this morning into three sections. First we will look at who God is not. Secondly 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.

## **I. 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 believe in God.

According to a Fox News poll conducted (Back in June of 2004) fully 92 % of Americans say they believe in God, 85 % in heaven and 82 % in miracles. Though belief in God has remained at about the same level, belief in the devil has increased slightly over the last few years - from 63 % in 1997 to 71 % today.

But before you get overly encouraged, the same national poll showed that about a third of Americans believe in ghosts (34 %) and an equal number in UFOs (34 %), and about a quarter accept things like astrology (29 %), reincarnation (25 %) and witches (24 %).

Overall, most Americans think religion plays too small a role in people's lives today (69 %), with only 15 % saying it plays too large a role and 7 % saying "about right."

And yet, while most Americans think religion plays far too small a role in people's lives, they are most certainly talking about other people because the same poll found that only a little more than a third of those surveyed (37 %) say they attend church, synagogue or other place of worship at least once a week, 13 % almost every week, 12 % about once a month and 19 % seldom attend. 3% attend on holidays and 15 % never attend. That's about 40% that rarely or never attend any kind of church.

So you see, not everything is as it seems or appears to be. While most people in our country claim to believe in God, it is the concept of God or what they believe God is rather than 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.

Many well intentioned Christians are simply ignorant of this truth. For example, when the topic of Islam is raised you will hear people say something like, "Well, we all worship the same God, don't we?"

The answer is unequivocally **NO**.

The God of scripture is not Allah, worshiped by the Muslims. Ergun and Emir Caner, in their book, *Unveiling Islam*, put it this way.

*"Christians and Muslims do not worship the same God, unless Muslims wish to agree that Jesus is God and Lord. The popular notion that Jews, Christians and Muslims all worship the same God is blasphemous to all three religions and founded only in modern pluralism. Jews do not worship Jesus, nor do the Muslims. For the Christian, not to adhere to the **Trinity** is not to be Christian at all. Yes, there is one God and He is in control of everything and everyone. Yes, according to the teachings of all three faiths, everyone will stand before Him in judgment. But to say that all worship the same God because we use the same generic (name for Him) is like saying that all references to the name "Mike" must refer to the same person."*

The same is true of the 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 blob of spiritual energy.

The sad truth is that many Americans have only a superficial idea of God. The God they imagine is not the living God of the Bible but more the product of Hollywood or the culture we live in.

And the list could go on and on and on, for you see, while many people believe in a god, they do not all believe in ...

- ✓ The God of Abraham
- ✓ Isaac
- ✓ Jacob,
- ✓ God revealed in scripture.

So if we look just a little below the surface we can see that who God is depends on who you ask. How then do we know who our God is and on what authority can we claim to found our beliefs?

I don't like to use the same examples over and over but this is one we cannot avoid, there are many people that say I know the way or can point to the way or even I can show you the way, Saints Jesus stood flat footed and said. "I am the way, the truth and the life, No man commeth to the father except through me!" (John 14:6)

This brings us to our second consideration this morning.

## **II. 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**." So in a very literal sense theology is simply **a word about God**. It has come to describe the entire body of thought and study about God.

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 clear about where we get our knowledge of God, then whatever knowledge we have of Him will be suspect.

The saying goes, if you are not sure where you are going, then any road will get you there.

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. But instead of understanding God within the confines of human personhood, we need to recognize that we are a finite and fallen replica of His infinite divine and perfect person. We are created in His 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.

Knowing God is like looking in the mirror after you get out of a long hot shower, when you first look at the mirror you get a very fuzzy picture of what you are looking at; the longer you stand there the clearer the image becomes. Saints you need to understand we will not have a complete crystal clear picture of what all God is until we actually make it to the other side and can walk the streets of Gold. Then all the mysteries of the kingdom will be revealed to us.

What then does God reveal to us about Himself in Scripture? Obviously, as we have stated, time will not permit us to cover this topic exhaustively so, for the sake of our study, allow me to say several things that God tells 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, there is no other;** there is no God but Me."

- ✓ As Christians we are **Monotheistic**, that is, we believe there is only one God.
- ✓ **Polytheism** believes in many God's.
- ✓ **Pantheism** believes that god is in everything and that everything is God.
- ✓ **Atheism** says there is no God,
- ✓ **Biblical Theism** says there is only one God and there is no other god beside Him.

He is unique. The Bible tells us that He is a person; and says that he is intelligent, knowable and has a personal will.

Now before we go any further we need to stop for a moment and consider that while there is only one God, 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. Although the term Trinity is not used in scripture, neither is the term **Rapture** or the **Bible**.

These are simply terms the Church has assigned to speak about things the Bible asserts as being true. The Doctrine of the **Trinity** asserts that God is one in being or essence who exists eternally in three distinct coequal persons.

We find scriptural references to the triune nature of God both in the Old and the New Testaments.

- ✓ In Genesis 3:22 God says, "Since man has become like one of **Us**..."
- ✓ Isaiah 6:8 says, "Who should I send? Who will go for **Us**?"
- ✓ And in the New Testament Jesus commands us to baptize in the name of the **Father**, the **Son** and the **Holy Ghost**.

The scripture is filled with this type of teaching and since our theology is a Biblical theology, that is we interpret each verse in light of every verse, we see this element of God's self revelation throughout the bible.

So important to God's self revelation and our understanding of God is this doctrine that throughout history Christians have staked their very lives upon this truth. Those who deny this truth 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.

And yet it is one of the most perplexing doctrines in all of scripture. Admittedly, it is difficult for us to comprehend. And even though theologians have offered numerous analogies to try and help us understand it, they all ultimately break down.

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....the briefer the

definition of the Trinity the better for practical purposes. God is revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These have personal qualities. Yet God is one. This is the New Testament teaching. Beyond this we tend towards speculation." ( Mohler, Land and Kelley on the BF&M, pg 27)

I might add that we are most likely to err when we try to fill in the spaces scripture has left blank. We would do well to accept it at face value, even though we cannot fully explain it.

I have come to a place in my spiritual growth, where I do not have to know everything, in order to believe it, (Example light switch) I don't have to know all the mechanics that happens behind the scene, but I do know that when I touch the light switch the lights come on.

## **B. God is Sovereign**

That is, He is omnipotent, or 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 or reign over all things. It would not be fair 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 God is able to bring His will to pass whatsoever He wills.

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. Psalm 115:3 tells us that God does whatever He pleases.

## **C. God is Holy**

Isaiah 6:3 d. God is Infinite

The word "Holy," is often used in scripture to speak about the Christian being separated from sin and separated unto God. But when the scripture uses the word Holy to describe God, it is speaking not only of His righteousness and perfection, but of the **reality** that He is separate and different from us. This word speaks to His transcendence, or the fact that He is infinitely exalted above all of creation.

### **D. God is Infinite**

That is, He is eternal. He has neither beginning nor end; He has always been and will always be.

Time and space do not limit God as they limit us. God is not subject to the special laws of time and space which confine us. He is timeless. In language which our finite minds find hard to grasp.

He tells us in 2 Peter 3:8 that "With the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day." He can act within time or outside of its limitations.

Truly it is incomprehensible to us. 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.

The Bible does not try to explain or define God's beginning or existence, it just assumes it.

### **E. God is Omnipresent**

A sailor in a shipwreck was thrown upon a rock where he clung in great danger until the tide went down.

Later a friend asked him, didn't you shake with fear when you were hanging on the rock?

He replied, yes but the rock didn't! Christ is the Rock of Ages..

What are you holding on to today?

That is, there is no place He is not. He is everywhere at all times. Psalm 139 tells us that there is no place where we can escape the presence of God. Furthermore, He is in no way diminished by His being in all places at all times. He is present everywhere in all His fullness. This too is difficult for us to understand, so we must say with the Psalmist, "This extraordinary knowledge is beyond me. It is lofty; I am unable to reach it." Suffice it to say that God is all places at all times and there is never a place where He is not.

### **F. God is Omniscient**

When Henry Russell, a Princeton Astronomer had concluded a lecture on the Milky Way, a woman came to him and asked if our world was so little and the universe so great, can we believe that God pays any attention to us at all?

Dr. Russell responded, that depends madam, entirely on how big a God you believe in!

He knows all things, past, present and future, the possible as well as the actual. There is nothing which escapes His knowledge or understanding. Again, Psalm 139:4 says, "*Before a word is on my tongue, You know all about it, Lord.*" Even the thoughts of our hearts are known to Him. 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. God is Unchanging**

The technical term is Immutable. When we speak of the Immutability of God we are talking about the fact that God is not capable or susceptible of

change, either by increase or by decrease, by development or by self-evolution.

He is unchangeable, invariable, and permanent. God does not change. Malachi 3:6 says, "Because I, Yahweh, have not changed...."

Hebrews 1:12 says, "...*You are the same, and your years will never end.*"

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

## **H. God is Righteous**

God is both righteous and just. He is the author of Justice. He is the standard by which fairness and justice are measured. One theologian puts it this way, (Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, pg. 203) "God's righteousness means that God always acts in accordance with what is right and is Himself the final standard of what is right."

Deuteronomy 32:4 says of God, "A faithful God, without prejudice, He is righteous and true." What a wonderful thing to know that God is righteous and just. We know that someday, every wrong will be made right and every one of us will stand before Him and give account. 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. God is Merciful**

An old Jewish legend, says, when God was about to create man he took into his counsel the angels that stood about the throne.

Create him not, said the Angel of **Justice**. For if you do he will commit all kinds of wickedness against his fellow man and will be cruel & dishonest and unrighteous.

Create him not, said the Angel of **Truth**. For he will be false and deceitful to his brothers and even to you!

Create him not, said the Angel of **Holiness**. For he will follow that which is impure in your sight and dishonor you to your face!

Then stepped forward the Angel of **Mercy** and said Create him our heavenly father, for when he sins and turns from the path of righteousness and holiness I will take him tenderly by the hand and speak loving words to him, and then lead him back to you... -J.A. Clarks

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 and full of faithful love.*" Mercy speaks to God withholding punishment that we do deserve while grace speaks to His giving us good things we do not deserve. God is merciful and

## **J. God 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. Jesus tells us in Matthew that that God's love is for all of His creation, as He causes His sun to shine and rain to fall on the just and the unjust. God loves all of His creation and does so with a selfless and sacrificial kind of love.

Volumes have been written on the love of God. While many try to explain it, God 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.

We talked about it in the Woodbridge home group a few sessions ago, but the statement was made, what kept Jesus on the cross, it definitely was not the nails, What was it that kept him there? **It was Love!**

Perhaps as you've been listening this morning you've thought about other things you would like to learn about God. Things like;

- ✓ His wisdom,
- ✓ His goodness,
- ✓ His self-sufficiency,
- ✓ His glory.
- ✓ His beauty,
- ✓ His peace
- ✓ His faithfulness.

All of these things are topics about which books have been written. We've only scratched the surface, and yet what we have discussed has direct application in our lives.

### **III. 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 in the **world to come**.

Unlike the pagans of old, we are not left to our own imagination as to 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.

## **Knowing God gives us purpose. It adds reason and rational to 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 created us for a **purpose**.

Think of how hopeless the man or woman is who has no God in whom to trust. Consider the **emptiness** and **vanity** of life lived without knowledge of the God of Israel.

Knowing God assures us that to everything there is a season and a time, to every purpose under heaven. **Life is no accident.**

We didn't merely evolve wind up here because of a collision of planets. God made us, wondrously and gloriously have we been made. Not in the image of an ape, but in the image of **God Himself**.

And while there remains a certain mystery to God, that is, there is much about Him we do not understand; there is much about Him we can and do know. We know that we can know Him for Who He is. He is a person and we can know Him personally. We may not be able to know Him fully, but we can know Him truly.

Remember, we were created to be in fellowship with God and being created in His image, we were made to have fellowship with Him.

His sovereignty assures us that there is nothing too hard for Him. He is always in control. Nothing is too hard for Him. He can do anything He desires, and scripture tells us that when we pray, He hears and answers our prayers. That ought to **charge your batteries this morning**.

The God of all the universe, the one for Whom nothing is impossible, has given you permission to come and make your requests before His throne and not only does He hear but He has promised to answer your prayers.

- ✓ His **Holiness** assures us that He is not malicious but that He is **pure and good**. He cannot be corrupted, He cannot be bribed nor can He be persuaded to go against His nature. His holiness not only tells us that He is not like us, but that as His Spirit works in our lives, that we can become more and more like Him.
  
- ✓ His **Eternal Nature** assures us that He is infinitely different than us. Unlike the gods of the pagans who had to be **fed, awakened and cared for**, our God is self-sustaining and needs nothing from us.

It is we who are needy and because He is without beginning or end, because He is everlasting, the Alpha and the Omega, He can meet our every need. The fact that He is infinite assures us that there is life beyond this earth. When Jesus promised that He would go and prepare a place for us, we can take Him at His word. Knowing that our God is without beginning or end, that He knows all things, can do all things and is always everywhere at all times should bring great comfort to our souls.

- ✓ His **Omnipresence** assures us that He can keep His word to never leave us nor forsake us. Our God is not limited to time and space. He cannot be confined to some image or statue. He is not a prisoner to some temple we build for Him. He is everywhere, at all times forever. There is no place we can escape Him and there is no place where He is not already there before we arrive.
  
- ✓ His **Omniscience** assures us that He has everything under control. Nothing will ever take Him by surprise, nothing will ever catch Him off guard, no circumstance you encounter in life, regardless of how difficult or sudden it may be, will ever find our Lord unaware or unprepared. He who created all things knows all things and has made provision for you before you ever need them. This is what Jesus tells us of His Father in the Sermon on the Mount. He knows what we need before we even ask!

- ✓ His **Righteousness** gives us certain knowledge that someday all wrongs will be made right, that while injustice may reign on this earth, God will be the final judge. All things will be set right and everyman will give an account. We can live with this world, knowing that it is but for a while. His righteousness tells us that He will punish sin.
- ✓ His **Mercy** gives us insight into His patience and willingness to wait for us. While He has every right to punish us, instead He chooses to pursue us, to call us to Himself. Withholding His wrath, in His Mercy He extends His goodness and grace to us.
- ✓ And His **Love** for us assures us that He is always looking out for our best. Nowhere was this more clearly seen than on Calvary's cross.

We could look at the three dimensions of his Love found in John 3:16..

The **Breadth**.... For God so Loved the World.

The **Length**... That he gave his only Begotten Son.

The **Depth**... That whosoever believeth on his shall not perish

The **Height**.... But shall have Everlasting Life!

You see, while God is just, He is also loving; so much so that He gave of Himself to pay the just penalty for our sin. He extended His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners in rebellion against Him, He sent Jesus to die for us.

**This is the Ultimate Fulfillment of God's Love.**

Pity the soul who has no God like ours in whom to trust. Pity the self-sufficient man who scoffs at our religion, calling it a crutch for simple

minded weaklings. There will come a day when those who refused to submit to Him will wish they had. There will come a day when their strength fails them and their flesh gives way to the ravages of time. That is why we who know Him must tell all who will hear of the One true and living God Who offers forgiveness of sins and eternal life to all who will receive.

Saints my Bible says in Matthew 12:36-37, *“But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the Day of Judgment. <sup>37</sup> For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”*

So as you contemplate the majesty and wonder of our God this morning the obvious 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?

And if not, here is the real question....

**What** would keep you from doing so this morning?

You will all have to answer that question within yourself, but if you want to make you're calling and election sure, you need to come forward and accept the gift of eternal life.

If there are things you would like to leave behind, get rid of the baggage you have been carrying with you for too many years, get rid of it here today.

As the choir sings the song I would ask you to listen to the calling of the **Holy Spirit** and make today the day you stepped out on faith.

Let us pray.

