

SHEPHERD'S COMMUNITY CHURCH

Sunday ABF – February 10 “The Knowledge of the Holy”

by A.W. Tozer

CHAPTER 5 The Self-existence Of God

In the beginning God created...(Genesis 1:1).

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:14 NASB).

"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am" (John 8:58)!

*Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to Him,
went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"
"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.*

*"I am He," Jesus said....When Jesus said,
"I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground (John 18:4-6).*

1) The attributes of God can be grouped in a couple of different ways:

Transcendent attributes vs. **Immanent** attributes

Incommunicable attributes vs. **Communicable** attributes

The Self-existence (aseity) of God is a transcendent, incommunicable attribute. Aseity (ah - SAY - ih - tee):
“existence originating from and having no source other than itself.” Dictionary.com Unabridged

The Sun is as close to “self-existence” as any object in the universe can come. But stars are nothing more than short-lived “sparks” floating up from the infinite Blaze which is God (Hebrews 12:29).

“God is the uncaused Cause of everything.” Tozer

But modern man thinks differently...

2) **Existentialism**: “the modern system of belief made famous by Jean Paul Sartre in the 1940s in which the world is meaningless and each person is alone and completely responsible for their own actions, by which they make their own character” Cambridge International Dictionary

This is the tragic consequence of fallen thinking! Essentially, existentialism says “I exist and there is no God,” or man speaking of himself, “I am; I’m the center of the Universe!” **Do you know anyone who thinks this way?**

If you don't have a copy of Tozer's book, you can read it online: www.heavendwellers.com/hdt_knowledge_of_the_holy.htm

It is not uncommon for adopted children, as they turn 18 to 20 years of age, to seek out the identity of their natural parents. **Why isn't the seeking after our Heavenly Father an innate drive in fallen man (read Romans 3:10-18)?**

“The natural man is a sinner because and only because he challenges God’s selfhood in relation to his own.”
A.W. Tozer

*You said in your heart,
"I will ascend to Heaven;
I will raise my throne above the stars of God;
I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain.
I will ascend above the tops of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:13-14).*

3) What is the essence of sin? How would you define sin?

*We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to his own way; (Isaiah 53:6 a).*

In our arrogance, we may believe that some of what we are is self-caused, but if we continue to think and live this way sooner or later we will crash headlong into the Reality of I AM!

4) Our natural “self” is like an untamed cat following the scent of its master (1 Peter 5:8). How do we learn to submit ourselves to the absolute authority of the Lion of Judah (Revelation 5:5)?

*Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone would come after Me,
he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24).*

5) Tozer asks, “**Have we been saying secretly in our hearts, ‘I AM THAT I AM?’**” Please put this lesson aside for now and prayerfully consider the following question:

Are there any ways in which you have made yourself “God” this past week? Please repent of these and humble yourself before the One who alone is Self Existent and worthy of all worship.

“And there is no God apart from Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but Me” (Isaiah 45:21 b).

6) A.W. Tozer quotes Alexander Pope:

“Know then thyself, presume not God to scan:
The proper study of mankind is man”

Now please read the excerpt from *The Reformed Pastor* by Richard Baxter on the last page. **Any thoughts?**

7) Pastor Tozer states, “In this utter dependence of all things upon the creative will of God lies the possibility for both holiness and sin. One of the marks of God’s image in man is his ability to exercise moral choice.” Please meditate on the following verses:

The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help. But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives (1 Timothy 5:5-6).

In what way does this apply to us all?

Our precious dependence on God is the fabric of our delight in God. As Believers, if we also come to sweetly depend on one another we will experience the joy of the Lord. This interdependence is not borne from neglect or laziness, but true humility before God as we love each other (Philippians 2:1-4).

Increasing dependence upon Christ as our Provider and Sustainer draws us that much closer to God in His immanence, as opposed to the existentialist who is secretly miserable in his separation from Joy.

8) I truly believe that the greatest joy we can experience in this life and for all Eternity is to grasp with the strongest embrace the reality of our absolute and total dependence on Christ Jesus, our All in all! **Please consider how you might live more dependent upon God every day, every hour, every moment of the day. Please consider sharing some of your thoughts with the class.**

"I am the Vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing (John 15:5).

9) God is absolutely, totally independent! He needs nothing. He does not (and this is a little difficult for some of us to swallow) need us! Some Christian authors and speakers are trying to convince us that God longs for us like a heartbroken Lover and will never be complete until we bless Him with our love. Though this notion puffs up our human ego, it is utterly false, and such thoughts are not worthy of our Great God, Jesus Christ.

Now consider this: By His incomparable grace, our Transcendent Trinity chooses to humble Himself* (Psalm 113:6 NASB), "bend down," scoop us up in His hands, and gently bring us close to His loving heart, so that we might experience the ineffable joy of a tender and sweet relationship with Him for all eternity. **Can you think of anything more precious?**

"The LORD your God is with you, He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17).

*What I mean by this "divine humility" is not an act of humility toward us, but the humility of the Three Persons of the Trinity toward Each Other in such a way that They always and forever show infinite love for One Another as One God in Three.

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"When man was made perfect, and placed in a perfect world, where all things were in perfect order, the whole creation was then man's book, in which he was to read the nature and will of his great Creator. Every creature had the name of God so legibly engraven on it, that man might run and read it. He could not open his eyes, but he might see some image of God; but no where so fully and lively as in himself. It was, therefore, his work to study the whole volume of nature, but first and most to study himself. And if man had held on in this course, he would have continued and increased in the knowledge of God and himself; but when he would needs know and love the creature and himself in a way of separation from God, he lost the knowledge both of the creature and of the Creator, so far as it could beatify and was worth the name of knowledge; and instead of it, he hath got the unhappy knowledge which he affected, even the empty notions and fantastic knowledge of the creature and himself, as thus separated. And thus, he that lived to the Creator, and upon him, doth now live to and upon the other creatures, and on himself; and thus, 'Every man at his best estate' (the learned as well as the illiterate) 'is altogether vanity. Surely every man walketh in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain.' And it must be well observed, that as God laid not aside the relation of a Creator by becoming our Redeemer, relation, but the work of redemption standeth, in some respect, in subordination to that of creation, and the law of the Redeemer to the law of the Creator; so also the duties which we owed to God as Creator have not ceased, but the duties that we owe to the Redeemer, as such, are subordinate thereto. It is the work of Christ to bring us back to God, and to restore us to the perfection of holiness and obedience; and as he is the way to the Father, so faith in him is the way to our former employment and enjoyment of God. I hope you perceive what I aim at in all this, namely, that to see God in his creatures, and to love him, and converse with him, was the employment of man in his upright state; that this is so far from ceasing to be our duty, that it is the work of Christ to bring us, by faith, back to it; and therefore the most holy men are the most excellent students of God's works, and none but the holy can rightly study them or know them. 'His works are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein,' but not for themselves, but for him that made them. Your study of physics and other sciences is not worth a rush, if it be not God that you seek after in them. To see and admire, to reverence and adore, to love and delight in God, as exhibited in his works – this is the true and only philosophy; the contrary is mere foolery, and is so called again and again by God himself. This is the sanctification of your studies, when they are devoted to God, and when he is the end, the object, and the life of them all.

“And, therefore, I shall presume to tell you, by the way, that it is a grand error, and of dangerous consequence in Christian academies, (pardon the censure from one so unfit to pass it, seeing the necessity of the case commandeth it,) that they study the creature before the Redeemer, and set themselves to physics, and metaphysics, and mathematics, before they set themselves to theology; whereas, no man that hath not the vitals of theology, is capable of going beyond a fool in philosophy. Theology must lay the foundation, and lead the way of all our studies. If God must be searched after, in our search of the creature, (and we must affect no separated knowledge of them) then tutors must read God to their pupils in all; and divinity must be the beginning, the middle, the end, the life, the all, of their studies. Our physics and metaphysics must be reduced to theology; and nature must be read as one of God's books, which is purposely written for the revelation of himself. The Holy Scripture is the easier book: when you have first learned from it God, and his will, as to the most necessary things, address yourselves to the study of his works, and read every creature as a Christian and a divine. If you see not yourselves, and all things, as living, and moving, and having being in God, you see nothing, whatever you think you see. If you perceive not, in your study of the creatures, that God is all, and in all, and that 'of him, and through him, and to him, are all things,' you may think, perhaps, that you 'know something; but you know nothing as you ought to know.' Think not so basely of your physics, and of the works of God, as that they are only preparatory studies for boys. It is a most high and noble part of holiness, to search after, behold admire, and love the great Creator in all his works. How much have the saints of God been employed in this high and holy exercise! The book of Job, and the Psalms, may show us that our physics are not so little kin to theology as some suppose.”