

CONCERNING THE TRUE GOD

I. God exists.

For those of you who have known God for 30, 40 or 50 years or more, it seems unnecessary to speak of the existence of God. You have talked to Him. You have seen Him work in your life. He has taken care of you. You have personal experience with Him.

But, many today presuppose that God does not exist. And they order their lives around that supposition. And they live riotously and selfishly and without accountability because they suppose they are not ultimately accountable. They curse God and use the name of Jesus flippantly and even as a curse word. They order their life around some philosophy or some social guideline, but they suppose they are not ultimately accountable to God since in their minds he does not exist.

As Christians, we believe that God exists. And furthermore, we believe that He is more than some ideal or some driving force in the universe. He is not merely the force of nature. He is not to be equated with mere fate or the natural order of things. He is not merely a life principle or a prevailing scientific law.

But He is a personal Being. He is self-conscious. He is not to be thought of as merely some powerful force in the universe, but rather, He is a thinking, acting, personal Being. Our God sees, hears and speaks. Our God thinks. He is not a hunk of concrete. He is not a piece of carved wood. He has emotions. He feels. He feels compassion. He feels resentment. He feels love and he feels anger and hate.

And we can understand him to some extent because he made us in his image. In order for us to relate to him, we had to be made like him. And God made us to see and hear and speak. And he made us with the capacity to think and to feel. And we believe that God does all of these things and he exists.

Let me say that when we have faith that God exists, it is not a blind faith, but a faith that is based on very solid evidence. And I would say that a thinking man, absent a moral bias otherwise, must come to the irrefutable conclusion that God exists.

But the Bible itself doesn't even try to offer proofs of the existence of God. The Bible merely says,

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

And there you have it. You may believe it or you may deny it. But the Scriptures assume it.

Now the Bible says,

The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.

Psalm 14:1

Now this verse suggests to me that a denial of the existence of God is not so much an intellectual deficiency as a moral deficiency.

It says,

The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.

It is interesting that the fool denies the existence of God “in his heart.” He doesn’t deny God’s existence after a thorough intellectual pursuit. But his affections are alienated against God to begin with and he denies God.

Notice it says,

They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.

This is the reason why men deny the existence of God – they are corrupt.

And let me say, to deny the existence of God has very serious consequences. Hebrews 11:6 says,

. . . for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him.

Heb. 11:6

Now I believe that all men have an intuitive sense of God because we were made in his image. And the Bible says that the Gentiles had his law written in their hearts and in their consciences, their minds also bearing witness (Romans 2:14, 15) so that they had a sense of moral right and wrong and a sense of accountability and a strong sense of the existence of God. How much more do those of us who are truly enlightened know to our very core that God exists.

Furthermore, we believe,

II. There is only one God.

Now we have already seen that, “*The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.*” And we believe a man is equally foolish who would claim that there are many gods.

This was the chief characteristic of paganism. In pagan religions there was a war god and a fertility god and a god of healing, a god of wisdom, a god of grain, a god of chaos, a god of wealth, a god of beauty, a sun god and on and on they would go.

But, let’s be clear, if anyone believes in more than one god, then he doesn’t believe in the true God at all. Jesus considered this doctrine – the doctrine of one God -- to be chief of all doctrines.

And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord.

Mark 12:28, 29

This is a doctrine that is foundational. All our religion, doctrine and faith hinges on this truth. There is one God and one only. If there are two gods then neither of them are God. If there are 100 gods then the power and strength of each is diminished even more. If you are the god of the moon then you have no control over the sun. And if you are the god of the sun then you have no control over the moon.

But our God is one God. And he is over all. If you have a request about the moon, then you may come to our God. If you have a complaint about the sun, then you may petition our God for he is God over all. If you need rain for your crops, then you may ask of our God. If you need comfort for your soul, then you may ask of our God for he is God over all. There is only one God and we must ask of Him.

This doctrine of one God was the overriding doctrine to the nation of Israel. *The Lord our God is one Lord.* Though the nations around them had many gods, the nation of Israel had one God and one only.

The Bible says,

Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.
Isa. 43:10

You see, our God is **the first cause** of all things and there was none before him and there are none after him. And I would say that if you have needs, whether they are temporal needs or eternal needs, whether they are physical needs or spiritual needs there is only one God to whom you must come. If your soul has dried up and has died within you, then there is only one God who can restore your soul.

This one God, the only true God, has all the attributes of perfection within himself and there is none like Him. He and he alone is **eternal**. This one God is an eternal Being. He was before all things. The Bible says he was from everlasting to everlasting. That is not conceivable to the finite mind, and yet, we know that God cannot be contained and that He is eternal and beyond total comprehension. He is the only Being who is without a first cause and He is the first cause of all things. He alone is **independent** and all others owe their existence and preservation to Him. All others live and move and have their being in Him. But He is dependent on no one.

The Bible says that the power of Christ himself sustains the universe. *By him all things consist*, the Bible says. But who sustains God? And the answer is that God is self sustaining. He is **independent** of all other forces. He needs nothing but the power of his own essence and He sustains himself and all other things in the universe.

This one and only God is omnipotent. He does whatsoever he desires to do. No one can stay his hand. If he desires to consume us with fire, then our flesh will melt away and our bones will disintegrate. If he desires to fill our barns with plenty then our crops will super-abound. Whatever God desires to do, he does it and he does it effectively because he is all powerful.

But, remember, God does not share his glory with any other being. Only he is perfect. Only he is all sufficient. Only he is God. But let me hurry on. We must also establish that,

III. God is alive.

To say that God is alive would be the greatest understatement in the world. For the Scriptures say that He **is** life. And yet, in universities and in the halls of Congress and in coffee shops men have debates as to whether or not God is alive. How silly is it that men would stand around and argue whether or not God is alive.

Example: Imagine that we had a bowl of water. And in this water there was swimming around some microscopic organisms, the lowest of life forms. And let's say these organisms got together one day and had a discussion. And some thought that human beings really didn't exist and some thought they did exist. And those that thought that human beings did exist had a discussion. And some thought human beings were alive and some thought human beings were just a principle or a life force. Now wouldn't that be silly for a low life form like that to question the life of man.

And it is even more futile for man to question whether or not God is alive. Just as our life is quantitatively more complex than the life of a mere organism, God's life is immeasurably more complex than our life.

But there is another essential difference between God's life any other life in the universe. And that is that God is the source of all life. The life of a microscopic organism springs from God. The life of man springs from God. But the life of God springs from within himself.

The Bible says,

With thee is the fountain of life.
Psalm 36:9

And that means that He is the wellspring from which every living thing derives its life .

Vegetable life is from God. The plants and the trees and the flowers and the grasses owe their life to God.

And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.

Genesis 1:11

Conversely, it is God that takes vegetable life away.

The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it.
Isaiah 40:7

Animal life is from God. God creates the fishes and the birds and the beasts of the field. God created my little puppy dog, Kelsey, and gave her life. And when he takes it away, Kelsey will die and return to the dust.

And the **life of man** is from God. God breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life and God takes that breath away at his pleasure.

Now every living thing has its life from God and that is because God is alive. There is vital, independent, efficient and eternal life in God.

And let me say also that **the spiritual life of man** is from God. In a state of unregeneracy, man is dead. His spirit is dead and man cannot give himself life. That is because all life is in God. Try as he might, man cannot make his spirit alive. But it is God that quickens. It is God who is rich in mercy and makes a man alive. It is God who by his grace breaths into dry bones the breath of life. It is God that justifies. It is God that creates the new man.

All of this would suggest that our God is alive.

And furthermore,

IV. God is a Spirit.

God is a Spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.
John 4:24

Now when it says God is a Spirit, this would seem to suggest first and foremost that God is not a material body. God is not composed of matter because God is a Spirit. God created matter, but God is a Spirit and however we conceive of God, it is clear that we are not to conceive of him as a material substance.

Now we live in a finite world and we conceive of things in a material and finite way. But,

God is an infinite Being. He encompasses all and nothing encompasses Him.

Listen to the words of Solomon who had prepared an earthly temple for God.

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?

Solomon recognized that God cannot be contained. The entire universe cannot contain God for God created the universe. And we are not to think of God as a substance within the universe. God is an all prevailing Spirit that is greater than any substance and greater than the universe itself.

V. God exists in three persons.

This is another concept that cannot be proved scientifically and cannot be discovered by human investigation outside the Scriptures. This can only be known by revelation. And God has revealed that he exists in three persons. There is the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

A. Each person is equal in divine perfection.

Each one is God and each one is the very essence of God. This means that every attribute of God is found in each person of the Godhead. The Father is omnipotent and the Son is omnipotent and the Spirit is omnipotent. The fullness of grace and truth and goodness and kindness and patience and wisdom and knowledge is found in each holy person of God. And so, it is foundational to say that God is One. He is one essence.

But it also appropriate to acknowledge, according to the Scriptures, that he manifests himself in three persons. And,

B. Each person has work to do in the eternal plans of God.

Each person has a function to perform. Though Jesus said, "I and my Father are one," yet the work of the Father was distinct from the work of Jesus. And this is seen most dramatically in the work of salvation.

It was the work of the Father to elect a people for his name. And the Father made an election in eternity past and he set them apart for redemption.

And it was the work of the Son to offer himself a sacrifice and to pay a ransom for the sins of the elect.

And it was and is the work of the Holy Spirit to apply the benefits of redemption to the hearts of the elect.

And so you can see that there is a very well defined division of labor among the Godhead with respect to the work of redemption. And though there is unity of essence among the three and therefore unity of purpose, there is nevertheless an appropriate division of labor.

And now, in order to further ascertain the nature of the true God, we consider a few of the mighty things which he has done.

VI. God made heaven and earth.

Example: I think it would be good if we would often go outside on clear nights and look up into the heavens and ponder the greatness and the immenseness of God. And when we do so, we will find ourselves worshipping Him for we will surely catch a glimpse of the absolute majesty of the One who created all things.

And when we say that God created the heaven and the earth we mean that he created them out of nothing. God started with nothing except his own essence and created something.

Example: Now if you have ever been to a magic show, you know that one of the staples of magic is to make something appear from nothing. The magician pulls a rabbit out of a hat. Or he pulls a quarter out of your ear. Sometimes he gets very elaborate and amazes us by making a bus appear after a curtain is drawn for a moment. And we all know that these are tricks but we can't figure out how he did it.

But God was no trickster. He didn't hide behind a curtain or create an optical illusion. He made the worlds appear by the force of his Word. And he made them out of nothing.

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Hebrews 11:3

Be it known also that God has created every living being whether they are angels or men or animals or vegetation. It is God that has created them

Not only did God **create** the heavens and the earth, but also,

VII. God rules heaven and earth.

A. God rules his creation first of all by his sovereign decree. By the most holy counsel of his own will, God has determined all things which shall come to pass and his decretive will is effectively brought to pass. The Bible says, "His counsel stands and the thoughts of his heart are to all generations." Now his decretive will is sometimes carried out by those who have no regard to his will. But his will is carried out nonetheless. The amazing thing is that the will of a most holy God is sometimes born along by the hands of most wicked men. This is the greatness of our God. And his decree marches on from beginning to end unrestrained. Day to day his will marches on. And no one can stay his hand. The forces of nature and the thoughts and intents of wicked men and angels cannot stop this march.

Satan would love to cause one flip of a coin to fall heads when God intended tails. But Satan cannot at all impose on God's decree.

When God created the worlds he determined the number of their days and he shall bring them to an appropriate end at the appropriate time.

When God created men he appointed the time of their birth and the time of their death and he brings it about in its season. God has decreed all that is good in this universe and all that is good and right and comfortable and beautiful is by the hand of God. And God has decreed that evil and afflictions shall befall this world for a time and for his sovereign purposes and He and He alone determines the times and seasons and the extent of evil to be allowed.

God has decreed the rise and fall of nations. And a nation comes to prominence by the will of God and it comes to nothing by the hand of God.

And time fails to tell of all the things that are under God's rule and control. Let's just summarize it and say that God is in perfect control of all things in his universe.

Now we might think that God merely spun the universe into existence and now He sits back and watches while the universe is controlled by the power of decree alone. But this would be a misconception. For,

B. God rules heaven and earth moment by moment by His mighty power.

What would a decree be without the power to bring it to pass?

Yes, God has decreed all things. But, he brings them to pass by His great power. And though he made the heavens and the earth in six days and rested on the seventh day, this in no way implies that he stopped working on the seventh day. He ceased his creative work on the seventh day, but his work of bringing about his will continues on. And when he desires to change the face of the earth he issues the command and sends an earthquake or a flood or a tsunami and his will is performed. And when he desires to overthrow a city with fire and brimstone he does so. And when he desires to bring ruin on a nation he does so. And when he desires a good king he brings it to pass. And our God is a God who works and acts and effectively brings his decree to pass.

But let me say that God's utter and complete control of his universe is not limited to the mountains and the plains and the oceans and the seas, but

C. God rules in the hearts of men.

Listen to what the Bible says,

The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

Proverbs 21:1

Now this verse is very clear. God turns the waters of a river whichever way he wants. He can make a river flow backwards if he so desires. And he can make the king's heart flow backwards as well. He can make a man think, feel and act in a way that is contrary to his natural inclination. And so, when God so desired, he hardened Pharaoh's heart so that Pharaoh would not let the people go before the appointed time.

Now if the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, then so is the heart of the peasant. The fact of the matter is that God knows the hearts of all men and he turns them whithersoever he will.

And you say, but what about the free will of man? And what about the sovereignty of man's free will.

And I say, “There can be only one sovereign in this universe and that position is already taken.” There is one God and one only and his name is Jehovah. And the will of man is not free and neither is it sovereign. Man’s will is in bondage to his own perverse nature and it is not free at all. And it is not sovereign because God can change a man’s heart whenever he so desires.

You see, God rules the hearts of men and he can look down out of heaven and take a perverse heart and turn it inside out. And he does so quite often.

Though there is none that doeth good and none that understandeth, God can make a man good and can make him understand.

Though the Bible says “The heart of man is desperately wicked,” God can make it holy.

And we should know and always remember and never deny that God rules even the hearts of men.

A man may deny the very existence of God, and in the next moment God can make his heart sing with adoration.

One day a man may believe that there are many gods, and the next day God shows him that there is one true God.

God can take a man’s heart that is hard and haughty and one that is convinced of the sovereignty of man and God can break that heart into a thousand pieces any time he wants to and he can bring that man to his knees in an instant and that man will then acknowledge the one true Sovereign of this universe.

Such is the greatness of God.

Is the sovereignty of God a non-negotiable tenet of Grace Baptist Church? I think so. Do we believe that God is sovereign over all things? I think so. Do we believe that God is even sovereign over the hearts of men? I think so.

I think that is who we are. I came to Raleigh Springs Baptist Church first and foremost because you advertised yourself as a “Sovereign Grace Church.” And when I drove up to Raleigh Springs Baptist Church I wasn’t that impressed with the neighborhood or the building or the great numbers of people that were flocking to the church. But your sign said, “Sovereign Grace.” And that was enough to encourage me to go inside because I know that a church that honors God and that gives him the glory in all things, even in the saving of souls, is a church that I can worship in.

There are plenty of pulpits out there for those preachers who believe that salvation is by the will of man. Let them fill those pulpits. But this pulpit - let it be reserved for men who acknowledge the great and awesome sovereignty of God. Men who will preach,

It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

There are many out there who say that it is not all of God. They say, “God has done his part, but man must do his part.” And I know there are many Arminians here on earth and many Arminian preachers, but I am convinced when they cross over to heaven, they will gladly throw down their crowns at His feet and finally acknowledge that it was all of Him.

But as for us, we gladly acknowledge it now. And this is what we believe – that salvation is of the Lord. And if we are saved, it was none of us but all of Him.