



The *Pulpit Exchange*

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21)
So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. (Nehemiah 8:8) Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. (Proverbs 27:17)

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The Garden City Confession Article II OF THE EXISTENCE AND NATURE OF GOD

I would like to look at the second article in our articles of faith. In a previous message, I gave a little introduction to the 1921 Garden City Confession of Faith and we spoke on Article I — Of the Word of God. Article II is entitled “Of the Existence and Nature of God.” Again I would like to simply use the phrases in this article as an outline for our

discussion. It is a subject that is so broad that one wonders how to confine it sufficiently to be productive. Yet whenever we attempt to meditate on the thought of God, it is with a true heart to know and understand Him. It is a tremendous inspiration for us.

It is true that so frequently when we then attempt to put that

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inspiration and confine it to words it becomes so difficult and so almost what we might think so lacking in comparison to the inspiration that comes in the meditation of our God. I guess that is simply how it is. We will need to accept it that way. Therefore, I trust that the Spirit of God will help us to understand God with the inspiration that the words will need to be less than sufficient to convey.

Someone has said it, and I

think I have shared it before that the most important thing about us is what we think of when God is mentioned. An individual, or a group of individuals' whole life and being is directly related to their understanding of God. Think about that statement a little. We could think of the book of Romans where it speaks of, "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge" (Romans 1:28), and reduced him "in their imaginations." They supposed that He

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was “like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things” (verse 23). If in our minds we serve a god that is like unto corruptible man, and to birds and to four-footed beasts and creeping things, why we would have very little to reach toward. We would have very little to move us to holiness of life and to pristine character qualities, and so on.

The Scripture does tell us that when we think of the Lord coming that those who think on that purify themselves, “even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3). Our God is high, holy, great, and marvellous. Using the terms in this article, He is eternal, infinite, perfect, and unchangeable. All of those things lift us up. It is in contrast giving way to things like it says in Romans 1, where the people gave themselves to the lusts of their own hearts to dishonour their bodies between themselves and so on, and “changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator” (verse 25). That is the result of a god that is inferior.

We want to be faithful in contemplating a God who is not inferior in any way. In whatever manner, method, or area we might think of our God in, He is not inferior, but rather superior. He

is transcending all because he is the transcendent One. Therefore, we want to think of the existence and nature of God.

The first phrase of this article II says, “We believe that there is but one God.” I will turn to a few Scriptures which are listed here in the article as well as others throughout the message. In Deuteronomy 6:4, we have this statement as it relates to the fact of our one God. “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.” That is a very understandable statement and it also is very concise.

Isaiah 40:12–14 says (speaking of our God) “Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? (13) Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him? (14) With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?” Who did those things? Who counselled our God? Did He have someone that taught Him how to be God? These are the thoughts that are conveyed in these questions.

This statement, "We believe that there is but one God," is significant in several ways. Probably, I cannot mention all the ways that it is significant. One way which is significant is that He is one God in contrast to a multiplicity of gods. The enemies of Israel thought at one time in their warfare with Israel that the God of Israel was a god of the hills, or maybe a god of the valleys. Therefore, in an attempt to try and overthrow the people of this God, they decided that they would try other geographical terrain as a battlefield thereby hoping to win the victory [see 1 Kings 20:28]. What they failed to understand was that the God of Israel was The God, the One God over all the earth and the terrain of the battlefield had nothing to do with the victory of His people because He is one God and there are not a multiplicity of gods, but rather one.

The Athenians built an altar (in fact they built a multiplicity of altars hoping to appease all the gods, only to have it fail to comfort their own restlessness). Therefore, they built another altar. We say sometimes, another "catch-all" altar to the unknown God. Him Paul declared to them (Acts 17:23). He was the one God in contrast to the multiplicity of gods of the heathen.

Therefore, we believe in one God in contrast to a multiplicity of gods.

This statement is also significant in that God alone is sovereign. The following descriptive terms are used in this article where it says, "We believe that there is but one God eternal, infinite, perfect, and unchangeable." Those descriptive terms further verify the fact that there is but one God who is sovereign over all. There could not possibly be two completely free infinite beings in the universe, for inevitably at some point and place in time they would encounter each other. There would be a collision if there was more than one who claims to be eternal, infinite, unchangeable, and so on.

You know the hypothetical question, "What happens when an irresistible force comes up against an immovable object?" Well, that would be the scenario if there would be two equally free beings in the universe. At one point or another there would be an encounter, and then who would be the superior one? The fact is there is no other. There is one God and He is The God because He, the one God, "created all things" (Ephesians 3:9), "and by him all things consist" (Colossians 1:17). He is the one

sovereign being in existence. No angel or seraph, no devil or demon, no man or woman, no beast or creature can rise up and say "What doest thou" (Job 9:12), without some very serious consequential results, because, He is the one God who is the Sovereign over all.

I think I made a misstatement. I said because He created all things, He is the one Sovereign being in existence. He is not the sovereign one because He created, He is and was and always will be because He is God and He does not need anything else to make Him sovereign. However, as it relates to His creation, His creation accentuates the sovereignty aspect of God in contrast to creation. He is the One who is above all and over all and in you all and the Sovereign One who is in charge of all. Certainly His creation accentuates that fact. However, He was the only one before as well.

That brings us to the next word. We say, "We believe that there is but one God," and those are only a few thoughts relating to that statement. No doubt there could be many more. *In this one God, we believe that He is eternal.* Psalm 90:2 is a very familiar passage of Scripture, where it says, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou

hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." This is the eternal aspect of God. God is eternal. In our temporal outlook and our finite minds how do we begin to talk about an eternal God? This is because everything that we talk about, or nearly everything we talk about, in our discussion and discourse through the day frequently and continually alludes to the fact of time and temporal beings. We ask, "When are you going to town?" That is time related. We ask, "How old are you?" That is time related. "Do you understand, or what grade are you in?" And, "Do you understand this concept?" These allude to the fact that we develop in our development. There, I am already stumbling for words. That is time related. That all happens in sequence of events. We begin to understand and we grow in our development and understanding. That is all time related.

How do we talk about an eternal heavenly being where none of those things apply to? Well, we are handicapped. There is no doubt about it. This word, "eternal," again brings several things to mind that I will allude to, but they are again inconclusive. The one that we would need to conclude where he says, "Before the

mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.” We must accept the fact that God had no beginning. That is not a new thought to us. We have thought of that before.

The fact that God had no beginning is embodied in the term “eternal.” God did not start being sometime or somewhere. God’s self existence comes into focus. If God does not exist from everlasting, where and when did He begin? If He began sometime, who was responsible for it? If some being created God, He must be greater and higher than God. When we come to that place, then God is not God anymore, because we have already accepted the fact that God is sovereign. There is none above Him. Therefore, of necessity when we think of the eternal aspect of God, and of His self-existence, we need to conclude that God is indeed self-existent and had no beginning, or else God is not the God whom we know. Well, that is at least how it looks to me. I am not sure that is altogether right because it is quite finite and temporal the way I look at it.

Another thing that this “eternal,” brings into focus is His self-sustenance. If God was created,

who sustains Him? If God is depending on something or someone outside Himself to sustain Himself what if that source dries up? What if that source ceases to exist? Again, then God would be subject to something or someone outside Himself. Then, God would not be God as we know Him. Jesus said, “the Father hath life in himself” (John 5:26). He needs nothing apart from Himself to sustain life, because He is the eternal God. He has no beginning. He has no ending and He is not subject to time element factors as we are.

That brings another fact into focus when we think of the eternal God. Our God can simultaneously entertain all six billion of earth’s inhabitants prayers. He can entertain them simultaneously. Again, if all mankind would fall on their knees in genuine repentance before our eternal God at this very moment they would not need to wait in line for forgiveness and salvation for He is our eternal God. He is not subject to time elements as are you and I. Therefore, “we believe that there is but one God eternal.”

The next descriptive term in this article of faith is that He is “infinite.” Again, someone has said that the infinitude of God is the most difficult attribute of God to grasp intellectually. I believe

that He is nearly right, if not completely right. Certainly, when we think of infinite, why it is something again similar to eternal that we really cannot comprehend. Like I mentioned, our lives revolve around time and there are beginnings and endings. While we accept the fact that we have eternal souls yet we had a beginning. God is eternal. Therefore, that is very difficult as well.

The terms, “infinite” and “infinitude” are very difficult attributes to grasp intellectually. As with our God Himself, we cannot grasp Him intellectually. We accept Him by faith, and the Lord designed it to be that way. In Genesis 17:1 the Lord refers to His infinitude when He said, “And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.” Remember that God’s promise to Abram was that he would have a son. However, in Abram’s mind, that was beyond the realms of reality and possibility. Nevertheless God said, “Abram, remember I am the Almighty God. I am infinite,” and infinite has the thought of limitless. It has no boundaries or perimeters. Limitless is the thought of infinitude.

Psalm 147:5 is the verse that says, “Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.” Therefore, we would understand that His understanding is limitless. Psalm 139:7–12 says, “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? (8) If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. (9) If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; (10) Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. (11) If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. (12) Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.” God’s being is infinite. There are no boundaries beyond which one can flee to escape the presence of God, for His being is infinite.

Isaiah 40:28 says, “Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.” Well, the word, “infinite,” I said, is the thought of limitless, boundless, and no perimeters. God is infinitely powerful. The almighty

God — He said His name is to Abram. There are no limits. Would that be correct maybe — there are no limits to His power. We measure horsepower or we measure power in horsepower designated increments. We measure torque with foot-pounds [or newtons]. There are things that we use to measure power and so forth with. The nearer we arrive at the capability of a given unit that is being used the more difficult it is to accomplish the task. Maybe it is a loader, a hoist lifting a load, a tractor, or a truck pulling a load.

A simple illustration would be this question: Which is easier for you to do — to lift your Bible or to lift a church bench? We would say, “We know the answer to that?” It is much easier to lift my Bible than the church bench. Now, let us move that increment of power up a little and say we have a twenty ton crane. If we hook our Bible to that twenty ton crane it lifts it effortlessly. We hook a church bench to the twenty ton crane and it lifts it seemingly without effort. The same looks like it takes no more power to lift the church bench than to lift my Bible. However, if you hook an 80,000 pound semi to that twenty ton crane, what happens then? We have exceeded the limits of its capability. Those

units of power are finite, they have a limit. They simply cannot go beyond that limit. The different capabilities are determined, or rather the difference between the seeming weight of an object and another, yes, the weights are different, but it is the capabilities of the lifting mechanism that make the difference seem very apparent.

Our God is infinite. He is infinite in His power. We read that He is infinite in His understanding. He is infinite in His wisdom. He is infinitely merciful. He is also infinitely just. His being, I said, is infinite. The Scriptures refer to that. Some time ago I read, or heard, an article, or a statement made that scientists have viewed with telescopes 15 billion light years out into space. (That is such big numbers we can hardly fathom it). We could ask the question, “Is the universe infinite in its dimensions?” The Lord said, “I fill heaven and earth” (Jeremiah 23:24). Apparently the universe has perimeters because the Lord said, “I fill it.” Now, we do believe that universe does not contain God. Yes, God fills it but that is not all there is to God because God is infinite.

Consequently, we say our God is infinite in His being. As we understand it, that is what we

understand the Scriptures to speak. As we think of God being infinite, we would say, consequently it is no more difficult for God to move a mountain than it is for Him to relocate a thistle seed in the wind. It is no more difficult for our God to give grace to die than to endure the necessary grace to endure the “sniffles.” It is no more difficult for our God to understand the complexities of the human emotional makeup than the complexities of simple additions such as two plus two equals four, because our God is infinite. There are no limits to His being and His understanding.

Therefore, “We believe that there is but one God, eternal, infinite,” and the next descriptive word is “perfect.” This brings God’s character into focus, possibly more than some other aspects of God. In Isaiah 57:15 the Lord said, “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” God is holy in perfectness. God is complete or, maybe we could say perfect integrity. The thought of integrity is wholeness, completely unadulterated by any foreign material or by any degree of

unrighteousness. He is complete holiness. He is complete integrity. James 1:17 speaks of “the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” That also alludes to His unchangeableness. I also think that is telling us there that our God is perfectly trustworthy. There is no shadow of lack of integrity in His being. His character is completely and perfectly trustworthy.

He is perfect in holiness. James 1:13 says, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.” At one place the Scripture says, “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil” (Habakkuk 1:13). I understand that to simply mean as it says here in James 1 that He cannot be tempted with evil. God’s view of evil carries with it no appeal to be a part of it. That word where it says, “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil,” the word “behold,” carries with it the thought “with desire to partake of it.” Are you and I that perfect? That nearly holy? Does evil ever appeal to us? Again, in our minds, we can hardly conceive of an individual like this. Nevertheless God’s hatred for evil and God’s despising of sin is equally as great today as it

always was. God has no desire to have any part or parcel with sin and evil. It does not appeal to Him one bit because He is “of purer eyes than to behold evil.” He is perfect in holiness.

In 2 Corinthians 1:3 there is another illustration of our God's perfectness, where we would say He is the perfect comforter. “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation.” God is the perfect comforter. How many of us need comfort betimes? Why, all of us. God is the perfect Comforter. He understands fully the dilemma we are facing. While at times those whom we associate with do not, and they misread us and they misrepresent us and they fail to meet our needs, God is the perfect Comforter. We believe in a God who is perfect in this sense that He is a perfect comforter — He meets the needs of every heart.

He is the perfect communicator. 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10 says “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (10) But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep

things of God.” How is it that you understand spiritual realities? Is it because of your twelfth grade education? Is it because of your superior intellect? Why certainly not. We understand that. It is because God, through His Spirit (as we submit to that and confess our sin and open ourselves to His Spirit's indwelling) reveals to us things that are of such a deep nature that they could be known no other way. Words cannot do it. Studies cannot do it. The Spirit is the perfect communicator. Therefore, God is perfect in that way.

There are many times in our efforts to teach, preach and communicate that we simply fall down and ask the Lord, “Lord may your Spirit communicate where I have failed,” because He is a perfect communicator. May that ever be our consolation and our rest. In that very vein of thought those who may struggle with feelings of lack of assurance and feeling that maybe things are not right with the Lord, remember the Lord is not incapable of communicating to you what you need to know. If he has not shared with you anything of sin in your life, then rest that He is at rest. Of course, if He has communicated sin that needs to be addressed then take care of it. Our God is not incapable of com-

municating His desires to us. Rather, very capably He can do so.

God is not only perfect, He is unchangeable. These two are somewhat closely related. Malachi 3:6 says, “For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” This attribute which we call “immutability” brings several things again to mind. The first one, I have already alluded to briefly in this is that God is not a developing God. Sometimes we say that a certain brother or sister was not born a teacher, but they have developed into a very good teacher. We know that teachers, parents, preachers, and a host of other areas of development are experienced many times by growth and development and increased understanding of the particulars and so on. We call that “experience.” Many times that experience is very costly and painful, but that is a part of developing.

Sometimes when children grow up they fall. I remember when one of our children (I do not remember which one it was, nor the injury) had an injury that needed to be stitched or something. We took him to the doctor and the doctor used this term, that it is a part of passage that goes along with developing. You

fall and skin your knee, cut your elbow, knock out your teeth, whatever it is, it is simply a part of growing up. It happens. That is what we refer to when we talk about developing.

Not so with our God. He is unchangeable. He did not need to be developed. He did not need to grow up for He is ageless. We talked about His eternity. He did not give direction and learn the lessons of life by trial and error method. He is infinitely wise and perfect. He is unchangeable. Therefore, in that sense our God is unchangeable in that He is not a developing God. Right with that is the thought that our God is unchangeable in that His focus and decrees are unchangeable. Our God’s relating to mankind is not totally unlike the method of relating to children as they adjust in life. You know, our method as parents relating to our two-year-old is different than relating to our sixteen-year-old. Now, we have changed. Well, probably from the time that he was two, till he became sixteen, yes we did change (at least hopefully we developed a bit more). However, at the same time I have a two-year-old, I may have a sixteen-year-old and I relate to them differently, but I am still the same person and I am even an unchanged person in some

respects. The fact is that my focus is the same even though my method of relating is different. My desire as a parent is that my child, whether he is two or sixteen, will develop into a servant of the Lord who is useful in the Lord's kingdom.

I think that is a little bit the way it is with the Lord. It is true that God's method from the Old Testament to the New Testament has changed somewhat, yet, His focus is unchanged — that of drawing men and women into a relationship with Him of communion, fellowship and worship. His way of accomplishing that is fixed. Jesus made an all-encompassing statement when He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). That was as true for Abraham as it is for you and me today. Abraham's salvation hinged on Christ's offering as surely as yours and mine did. It is true that the lambs that were offered in the Old Testament were different from Jesus, but they were foreshadowing Jesus. They were looking forward to Jesus. Therefore, we would say God was working with Israel in the childhood of His people's sojourn by offering lambs, but His focus remained unchanged and the time came when Jesus

came to earth and gave Himself and that is the way we come to the Father. That is an illustration of God's unchangeableness, notwithstanding the fact that His methods have changed. Again my understanding is finite, so that probably is not the whole picture but at least it is a part of it.

We need not fear that when we stand before the judge of all the earth, He will surprise us with, "Oh, the laws, the rules have changed. I am sorry, but I cannot do anything about it now." And there we stand naked and bereft because we were counting on Jesus Christ being our salvation and now it has changed. No, God said, "ye sons of Jacob . . . you congregation wherever you are I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye are not consumed. You need not fear that you will be consumed because my requirements, my stipulations have suddenly changed, because I change not." Is that not restful? That is a tremendous blessing. That is the fourth descriptive term of this one God. He is "eternal, infinite, perfect, and unchangeable."

The final statement on the existence and nature of God is, "who exists and reveals Himself in three persons — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." I will read a few verses that discuss and speak of

the Trinity. Again this, in itself, would be a full subject and I will of necessity refrain from going deeply into it, partly because of time but mostly because I simply cannot. I do not understand it well enough.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,” says the first words of Scripture. “And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” (Genesis 1:1, 2) There we have God the Father and God the Holy Spirit together at Creation. In John 1 to take that thought of the Trinity at Creation a bit further, we have these words, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) The same was in the beginning with God. (3) All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. (4) In him was life; and the life was the light of men. . . (14) And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth.” (John 1:1–4, 14)

There we have the Son, “by whom also he made the worlds.” (Hebrews 1:2) In fact, “without him was not any thing made that was made.” God the Father created the world. The Holy Spirit

was at Creation, and Jesus Christ created all things. In Genesis 1:2, the Spirit of God “moved,” or brooded as a hen over her eggs upon the face of the waters. What hatched out of that brooding experience? Well, we have the magnificent world that we have before us. It was a part of the Trinity at work in the Creation. “By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens” (Job 26:13). Jesus said, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). We are not discussing three gods here. Remember this is one God, but existing and expressing Himself in three persons. “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” The Scriptures clearly establish the fact of one God, not three. They equally and clearly support the fact that this one God is three persons. Can we explain it? My answer is, “No” immediately. However, there are a few things maybe that we could discuss about it, but we cannot explain it.

Someone has said, “All that God does, all of God does.” The Trinity, the Godhead, is not divided. The Bible says “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” (Ephesians 3:17). Is Christ dwelling in your hearts today? Jesus said, “If a man love

me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:23). Is God the Father and God the Son abiding in your heart presently? “When he, the Spirit of truth, is come . . . [He shall] abide with you for ever” (John 16:13; 14:16). Who is dwelling in your heart? Why, God is, in the form of His Spirit. Nevertheless in the Scriptures it alludes to the fact that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are dwelling in our hearts. Therefore, again I back up to this statement that what God does, all of God does. I cannot explain it, but the Scriptures would surely seem to support it.

It is said of Christ’s work in redemption, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself” (2 Corinthians 5:9). In Hebrews 9:14, again referring to God’s work of redemption, Jesus “through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God.” There we have all of God performing in the work of man’s redemption. All that God does, all of God does. Yet, did God the Father die? No, Jesus died. He was given a body so that He could offer it in death. God did not die, Christ died for us. I believe that if God would have died the world would have col-

lapsed but God did not die. Jesus’ body that He was given died. Yet, God was in Christ. So, how do we explain that? I refrain from attempting very hard to explain it. We pray through the Spirit to the Father in Jesus’ name. Again, it is the work of God. Our efforts in prayer is the work of the triune God working together to convey that to the Father through Jesus’ name.

1 Corinthians 11 refers to what has been called a functional order of headship. It says, “the head of Christ is God” (1 Corinthians 11:3). Ultimately the Bible says that the Son will deliver all unto the Father, “that God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28). Yet, we understand that the Father, in the sense of fatherhood is not a father because He has developed further than the Son. We believe that they are co-equal and co-eternal. The Son did not come into existence at the Incarnation, even though at that point in time He was given a physical body. The Bible says He, “he took on him the seed of Abraham (Hebrews 2:16). He did not begin His existence then. He rather took upon Him the form of man.

We worship the Father, but we also worship the Son, but not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit aids in our worship of God the Father,

as it speaks in Revelation 4:10 of “him that sat on the throne. . . [they] cast their crowns before [him].” In Revelation 5:6 it spoke of him that was, “in the midst of the throne . . . [standing there as] a Lamb as it had been slain.” They worshipped Him and said, “Thou art worthy [to receive honour],” and so on” (Revelation 5:11). Therefore, God the Father and God the Son, are worshipped equally. This is a deep subject.

Sometimes we strive to explain something that we cannot, and here is one of them. I hope that we do not distract from our thinking by talking. We speak of an egg sometimes. There is a shell, a white and a yoke but it is only one egg, yet there are three parts to the egg. We speak of mankind that he has body, soul and spirit, but it is one man. Maybe we could break that down a little further, I am a son of my father, and a husband of my wife. I am also the father of my son, but I am one person. It is true that I relate differently as a son to my father than I do as a father to my son, even though I am still the same person. I relate differently yet to my wife as a husband. Could it be that this aspect of the Trinity is primarily focussing on God’s effort in relating to His Creation, particu-

larly mankind. Is that why the Lord has given us the thought of the Trinity and explained it to us enough that we are baffled and yet groping for understanding it? It is true that “the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities,” (Romans 8:26) to utter prayers that we cannot put into words.

Jesus Christ, the Son, died on the cross for our redemption. God the Father is the sovereign one over all. There is a sense as we contemplate the thought of God expressed in three persons, that we can sort of relate because there are different aspects of God’s work that each one fulfills. Yet, we believe they are not divided in fulfilling that. Maybe this aspect of the Trinity is primarily focussing on God’s effort in relating to mankind. I will stop there. It is good that we do not try too hard to reduce the lofty concept of the Trinity to understandable terms because our God is transcendent. He is above all and if we attempt too hard to reduce Him to reason, we may fall prey to a misrepresentation in our minds as well as how we talk, like the people in Romans 1 did. “He that cometh to God must believe that he is” (Hebrews 11:6). We believe what the Bible says and accept it there even though we cannot understand it fully. “O LORD

our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!” It should ever be our prayer and our worship to our God in spite of the fact, or even because of the fact, that He is so far above us as far as

the heavens are above the earth. “We believe that there is but one God eternal, infinite, perfect, and unchangeable, who exists and reveals Himself in three persons — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

Scripture References

Genesis		Malachi		2 Corinthians	
1:1, 2	185	3:6	183	1:3	182
17:1	179			5:9	186
Deuteronomy		John		Ephesians	
6:4	175	1:1–4	185	3:9	176
1 Kings		1:14	185	3:17	185
20:28	176	5:26	185	Colossians	
Job		10:30	184	1:17	176
9:12	177	14:6	186	Hebrews	
26:13	185	14:16	186	1:2	185
Psalms		14:23	186	2:16	186
90:2	177	16:13	186	9:14	186
139:7–12	179	Acts		11:6	187
147:5	179	17:23	176	James	
Isaiah		Romans		1:13	181
40:12–14	175	1:23	175	1:17	181
40:28	179	1:25	175	1 John	
57:15	181	1:28	174	3:3	175
Jeremiah		8:26	187	Revelation	
23:24	180	1 Corinthians		4:10	187
Habakkuk		2:9, 10	182	5:11	187
1:13	181	11:3	186	5:6	187
		15:28	186		

From the Previous Issue:

The Blessings of an Eternal Perspective

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Sunday, June 06, 2004

Valley View Mennonite Church

Scriptural Attitudes in Times of National Election

From a message by James Danner

Saturday, September 14, 1996

Richland Mennonite Church

Book Reprint (Continued)
One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study

LESSON 30.

Plan of Salvation. — Justification.

I. Definition. — That condition in life in which God overlooks our shortcomings and claims us as His own.

II. Justification by faith.

1. Law justifies no man in the sight of God. — Galatians 2:16; 3:11.

2. Saved by grace through faith. — Ephesians 2:8; Acts 16:31; Romans 5:1.

3. All that believe are justified. — Acts 13:39.

NOTE. — With a living faith.

4. The conclusion. — Romans 3:28.

III. Justification by works.

1. Abraham justified. — James 2:21–23.

2. Rahab justified. — James 2:25; Hebrews 11:31.

3. Justified by words. — Matthew 12:37.

4. The publican justified. — Luke 18:14.

5. How God and man look at things. — 1 Samuel 16:7.

6. How faith is made manifest to man. — James 2:18.

7. The conclusion. — James 2:24.

IV. Faith and works.

1. Inquiry by our Saviour. — Luke 6:46.

2. Declaration by our Saviour. — John 15:15.

3. Relation between faith and works. — James 2:17, 20

4. Paul as an advocate of good works. — Titus 2:14; 3:8; 2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17; Romans 13:12.

V. Thoughts deduced from the foregoing references.

1. God, who sees the thoughts and intents of the heart, justifies an individual upon his faith.

2. Faith in God means an acceptance of His word.

3. Acceptance of God's Word means a righteous life.

4. Man sees the fruits of righteousness in works, and takes this as the basis for justification. Hence,
5. Faith justifies in the sight of God, while
6. Works justify in the sight of man.
7. The absence of good works is clear evidence of the absence of good faith.
8. While God justifies a man upon evidence of faith alone, He nevertheless rewards according to the deeds done in the body. (Matthew 16:27; Romans 2:5–11; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

VI. The human and divine sides in justification.

1. Human.
 - a. Faith.
 - b. Works.
2. Divine.
 - a. By His grace. — Romans 3:24; Titus 3:7.
 - b. By the blood of Jesus. — Romans 5:9.

1. Contrast the relative value of justification in the sight of God and justification in the sight of man.
2. Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple of Jesus, “but secretly for fear of the Jews.” Was he justified in the sight of God?
3. Is there consistency in claiming justification when we knowingly do things that are wrong?
4. If man is justified by faith, why is he rewarded according to his works?
5. Contrast justification by faith with justification by works.

LESSON 31.

Plan of Salvation. — Conversion.

I. Definition. — “Turning,” or “changing.” An evangelical conversion consists in a change from a sinful to a righteous state.

II. No change, no conversion.

NOTE. — The truth of this proposition may be made clear by natural illustrations. For instance. a swampy forest may be converted into a fertile farming country, crude iron ore into a mighty ship, siliceous sand into glass, water into steam, etc. In each of these illustrations, the change is clearly manifest. It would be idle to say that one had been converted

into the other, unless the change was made. Likewise, in the conversion of sinners, we look for a change. We expect that sinful ways shall be left, and the fruits of righteousness shine out in daily life. When there are no evidences of change; when the former sins are indulged in, and the only change manifest is church membership, we conclude at once that since there is no change, there is no conversion.

III. No conversion, no salvation. — Matthew 18:3.

IV. Examples of conversion.

1. Paul. — Acts 9:4–18.
2. Lydia. — Acts 16:14, 15.
3. The jailor. — Acts 16:27–34.
4. Woman at Simon's house. — Luke 7:36–50.

V. Lessons to be learned from these and other conversions.

1. Conversion consists of a change of life rather than of individual traits of character.
2. Conversion is accomplished by the grace of God being applied to the heart of man (John 6:44; Acts 3:26; 11:21.)
3. The more sinful the penitent believer, the more striking the conversion, and the deeper the gratitude of the convert.
4. The vilest of sinners some times become the brightest of converts; but their path is more or less darkened by marks of former sins.
5. As a rule, persons who give their hearts to God in their tender years, lead the purest Christian lives afterwards.

VI. Results of conversion.

1. Newness of life. — 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:3, 4.
 2. Adoption. — Romans 8:11, 14, 15; John 1:12.
-
1. Distinguish between repentance and conversion.
 2. Distinguish between a “change of heart” and a “change of mind.”
 3. How is a man's live stock affected by his conversion?
 4. Compare conversion and regeneration.
 5. Does a converted person knowingly sin?

Children's Book Reprint *continued*

The Little Woodchopper

One day, when the sun was shining brightly, the sick man ventured once more to leave his bed, and father and son sat at the door of the cabin. At their feet was lying the faithful dog, Caesar. The older sons had gone into the forest to shoot game. Before the father's accident, they had done so secretly; but since he was obliged to stay in the house, they went poaching whenever they chose, keeping a good lookout, of course, for the game-keeper. The father noticed it with sorrow, but his admonitions and warnings were not heeded. As the two were comfortably seated together, the father began:

"O, my child, my dear boy! how wrongly I have acted towards you and your brothers when they were young. I have never spoken to them about the Lord Jesus. I never drew their attention to their responsibility towards a holy God", and now I am reaping the fruits of my unfaithfulness. My sons do wickedly, without fear; and my word has no power. They mock me and turn their backs on me, and walk in the paths of sin, but I have deserved all this."

These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach

them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Deuteronomy 6:6, 7.

A sob arose from the heart of the old man, and the tears were running down his pale cheeks. William noticed it, and asked with deep emotion,

"Why have you deserved this, Father?"

Alas, my dear boy," said the sick man, while fondly putting his thin hand on his son's head, "for several reasons. I was a naughty and disobedient boy, and for this alone I deserve to have disobedient children. My mother was a widow who loved the Lord Jesus and feared God. Her little house was on the other side of this forest, several days' journey from here. I was her only child; she brought me up with great love and tenderness, and early instructed me in the Word of God, but I would not mind her. When I grew older I spent most of my time loitering through the field or forest; at last I drifted into bad company, and committed all kinds of roguish tricks, and to escape the reproof of my mother, I ran away. Since that

time I have not seen her, nor heard of her. If I only had the strength to go to her, and ask her forgiveness; but it is too late, forever too late!"

"Is she still alive?" asked William, greatly interested.

"I do not know, my boy," responded the woodchopper; and again came a heavy sigh over his quivering lips. "I hardly think so; she would be very old now. But even if she still lives, I shall never see her in this world again. My days are numbered. I desire only one thing: if she is still on the earth, that she might know how deeply I have repented of my sins, and that I have found refuge in Jesus, who is now my hope, and who has washed me from all my sins in His own precious blood."

"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John 1:7.

The old man was silent, but after a little while he said,

"Alas, my sons, my sons! It is my fault they are so wicked and hardhearted. I have not been a faithful father to them. I have neglected their training' and allowed them to grow up like trees of the forest. I did not instruct them in the Word of God, nor bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Now they despise and mock me,

and are deaf to my pleadings, and harden their hearts against God. O God! Thou art just, but terrible are Thy judgments!"

The feeble body of the sick man trembled because of his great emotion. He wept no more, but stared at the ground in agony. William did not know what to say to his sorrowing father. At last he whispered, "Father, could not the Lord Jesus change their hearts? Would He not do so if we asked Him?"

"My dear child, you are right; the Lord can change their hearts. I have often asked Him for this, and I have confidence that He will answer my prayers in His own time. But let us now together ask the Lord for this again."

Both knelt at the door of the cabin, and in touching words the sorrowing father prayed for his lost children. Although William did not understand all the father said, this hour never left his memory all through his life.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Acts 16:31.

After this talk with his little son, the father did not live many days. William was more attentive than ever in serving his beloved father. He would leave him for only a moment at a time to get water or anything the sick

man needed. He was continually at his bedside, while Caesar was lying at his feet. It seemed as though the faithful animal knew what was going on.

Again and again the old wood-chopper would lift his eyes and voice heavenward, and then William would fold his hands too, and join in prayer.

When his father's last morning began to dawn, he said to William that the Lord had given him the full assurance that his prayers would be answered.

"My sins are forgiven," he whispered, and I am going to Jesus, my Lord. He will keep you, my dear boy, and also save your brothers, through His grace. O, forget not thy Creator in the days of thy youth, as I have done! Give Him your heart, my child; trust Him fully, and do not forget to pray for your brothers."

"To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His Name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." Acts 10:43.

Towards evening William's brothers came home, bringing a deer with them which they had shot; they also had a jug of brandy. After making a hot fire, they roasted some of the venison which they ate and drank freely of the brandy. They did not look at their dying father, but asked

William to eat with them. Nothing could induce the boy to leave his father, and he remained at his bedside till he could keep his eyes open no longer, then fell asleep.

When he awoke early in the morning, his first look was towards his father at his side. He was lying so quietly that William dared not stir for a long time. At last he whispered, "Father!"

There was no answer. While William slept, his father went to sleep, never to waken again on this earth. He had gone to be forever with his Lord.

When the truth of this came to the little fellow, he cast himself on the bed, crying most bitterly. William's crying awakened his brothers who were sleeping in the next room. They came and looked at their father without one expression of sorrow, and no tears came from their eyes; their hearts were untouched. They conferred together about what to do with the corpse whether to let it lie a day, or bury it right away. They concluded to bury it the same day, and with the most heartless indifference they made preparations to commit the mortal remains of their father to the grave. After filling it, they put a few grass sods on the top, and went back to the cabin as if nothing had happened.

William remained at the grave, crying and lamenting. He felt so forsaken and lonely. What would become of him now? He could expect nothing good from his brothers, but rather feared the worst. His only friend on earth that never left him, and even now was at his feet, was his faithful dog. Overcome with grief, he threw his arms around Caesar's neck who, as though he understood the difficulties of his young master, began to whine and lick his face.

But was William really altogether forsaken? Did he not know a truer and mightier Friend than even his father had been to him? The thought of this Friend in heaven suddenly brought him to himself again, and kneeling down he asked the Lord Jesus in simple childlike manner to help him, and show him what he should do now.

“Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass” Psalm 37:5.

FIFTY FUNDAMENTAL FACTS

43. Christ is coming again at the end of the present age.

In support of this hope we have a number of reliable witnesses. Christ said He is coming again (Matthew 25:31; John 14:3), the two men in white apparel (Acts 1:9–11) said He is coming, the apostles said He is coming (1 Thessalonians 4:13–17; 1 John 3:2, 3), so that there is absolutely no doubt about His second coming in the minds of anyone who believes

that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. We might add that the references cited are all given in plain didactic language, not in figurative language, so there need be no hesitation in accepting these and many other similar references at their face value and take comfort in the fact that our blessed Lord will come again to receive us unto Himself. “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3).

“I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me.” Isaiah 45:5

“And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” John 6:35



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