

The Aseity of God

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[0 : 0 0] Well, this morning we are going to continue in our series on the attributes of God. Really, what is it in God that makes God, God? And this morning we're going to be looking at the aseity of God. And if you don't know what that means, don't worry, I'm going to explain it as we go through it. But I'm primarily going to read that verse that we read earlier from John chapter 5. John chapter 5, Jesus is speaking to the religious leaders, and he's telling them about who he is and the authority he has and the fact that he comes from God, that God is Father and he is Son.

So, in John 5, 26, Jesus says this statement, and really when he says, whenever he talks about the Son, he's talking about himself. And what he says is, as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. So, what Jesus is saying is, like Father, like Son, you will see the same traits and qualities and characteristics in the Son that you will in the Father. You're just like your dad. And he's saying, well, the Father has life in himself, and so also the Son has life in himself. This makes Jesus completely unique from every other person because Jesus does not depend on anything outside of himself for life.

So, hands up if you have a garden. Does anyone have a garden here? Some of you who don't might be envious of that, but there are things that you should not be envious of, like having to cut the grass constantly. I remember when we were in my dad's house, we'd moved in, and I redid the whole back garden. It was a bit of a mess. And I got turf, real grass, laid it down. You know, I'm a complete rookie of this. I don't really know what I'm doing, but I did the best I could do. And then a few weeks later, this thing just looked pristine, amazing. And the sunlight in the summer, it was perfect.

And then a few weeks later, it was looking a bit of a mess. It just constantly needs attention, because grass is living and growing. So, if you think about grass and the constant need to tame it and cut it, what, if we were able, what would we have to take away for grass to cease living and growing? So, feel free to offer answers. What would you have to take away for grass to cease living and growing? Water. Anything else? Light. Soil. Yeah. So, that's the three things that I had written here was dirt, sunlight, and water. Yeah. There might be some other things, but yeah, primarily, if you take them away, the grass ain't living. What about if you think about stars, right? You might not think that stars are living things, right? But think about stars, right, that have lived since the dawn of time, right? They've been moving, emanating energy since the dawn of time.

Seemingly constant, so constant. What, if we were able, would we have to take away for that to cease doing that? What would you have to take away from a star? God, right? But before we, yep, before we go there more immediately, what things would you have to take away? What does a star need in order to do what it does?

[4 : 10] Sorry? Not necessarily. So, if you think about fire, fire needs three elements. It needs heat, it needs oxygen, and it needs fuel. And so, stars need gas. In order to be a star, it needs gas, it needs elements, it needs heat, it needs fuel, you know, and all these things we are going there. But that's where you, if you take away that, those things, then a star ceases to be a star, ceases to emanate light and energy, and so on and so forth. So, what about us, human beings, people? As independent as we adults would like to think that we are, or as independent as children want to be, what, if taken away, would cause us to cease living? Think of the things that we need to live. Well, oxygen, water, food, things like that, air, yeah, oxygen. You take any of these things away. So, it's said that you can go three weeks without food, three days without water, three minutes without air. It's a general rule of thumb.

Take any of those things away for good, and we stop living. Now, these are given to us. We are made in the way that we're made, that these things help us live and grow, right? We need, we're not independent. We need things outside of ourself to live and grow, right? Now, the things that we fill our houses with, the things that we spend our money on, do they give us life? No, they do not. Most, I mean, even food. We buy food, and it helps us, gives us energy, but if you were to give—and I know this is crass—if you were to give food to a dead person, it's not going to make them alive. You know, and sometimes with CPR, you can blow in as much air as you like, and it's not going to bring them back, you know, or feed water or electricity. There's something more that's given us life.

And so most, if not all of us, have experienced what it's like to know someone that we love who has ceased living. Now, just this week, I was at a funeral on Thursday, and all I could think about was this woman that I knew. All I could think about was her standing with her cup of tea and the porch of her—front porch of her house with the smile that she always had.

We just can't keep ourselves alive. No matter how much we try and we like to think we could, we cannot keep ourselves alive. So, Psalm 150 says, let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Why? Because everything that has breath has breath from the Lord. There isn't a part of creation that is not dependent on something outside of itself for life. Every part of creation is dependent on something else for it to exist and live.

Everything derives life and existence from outside of itself. Every animal, every tree, every pet, every plant, every person, we did not bring about our own existence, nor can we keep ourselves alive, for we do not have life in ourselves, and nor can we keep the life that we are given.

[7 : 48] But God, this is the difference between us and God. God exists completely of Himself. He needs nothing outside of Himself. In Exodus 3.14, God says of Himself, He says, I am that I am. That's what this little thing means here. Yahweh, God's name means, I am that I am. I just exist. I need nothing else outside of myself to exist. He never came to exist, nor will He ever cease to exist. He simply is. All that He is, He derives from Himself. And this is known as the aseity of God. This is a Latin term, the ase, and Latin a means from, and se means self. So, God is from Himself. His existence is from Himself. The Dutch theologian Hermann Bavinck says this of God, that He is whatever He is by His own self or of His own self.

There's nothing lacking in God. Nothing He needs outside of Himself for Him to be perfectly who He is, all at once, all of the time. And so, we see this in Scriptures like Psalm 50. Psalm 50 talks about the offerings and sacrifices, but they're not given to God because He needs a gift, or as if God is hungry, that He should eat bulls and goats. He doesn't need our offerings. God does not need our worship, nor our sacrifices. As radical as that might sound, God does not need our worship. It's not for Him that we worship. Rather, it's because of what we gain from acknowledging that He is self-sufficient, and He is great, and that He is our God, and from Him we derive every good gift.

that because He is self-existing and self-sustaining, that we can depend on Him. That's why we worship. The breath that we have comes from Him. Let everything that has breath praise God.

Similarly, in Isaiah 66, the prophet Isaiah shows us that nothing we can build for God, he will need, as though he needs a house. God doesn't need a house. God doesn't need to rest.

Solomon, when he built the temple, as glorious as the temple was, King Solomon said this when he built the temple, when he was dedicating the temple to God, this is what Solomon said. He said, these things cannot contain God. Even heaven in the highest heaven cannot contain God. And then in Acts 17, Paul says to the pagans in Athens who had a statue for every God, and they had a statue dedicated to the unknown God, just in case. You know, we're going to cover every God, and we're going to build one for the God that we don't know, just in case. You know, just to cover all bases. And Paul says this.

[10:56] Paul says, listen, you see, the true God does not need any of this. You know, you're not going to get away with what you get away with because you're giving something to God as though he needs anything. And so Paul said to the people in Athens, he said, the true God, being maker of the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn't live in temples made by man, and he's not served by human hands as though God needed anything, since God himself gives to mankind life and breath and everything. You see, if God owns everything and made everything, and God gives to us life and breath and everything, God doesn't need anything.

Certainly not from us. God does not need anything. And this tells us that God is the source and sustainer of all of our life and breath and everything. It's because of the aseity of God that we live and move and have our being. You see, without God, nothing would exist and nothing would live.

You see, I used to be an atheist when I was younger, and when I was an atheist, I held a very common view among atheists, and that common view is that life came from non-life.

One day the universe will return to non-life. So, the view of atheists when I used to be one was, at first there was nothing and there was no life, and then out of that arose life and everything, and then everything is going to nothing and no life. And it was as though the original thing was non-life. And I held this view that once you were dead, you were dead. When the body dies, life completely ends and we cease to exist. But that's not so. Life is actually the original, because God is the original, and He has always existed, and He has life in Himself. So, before there was anything, there was pure life in God. Now, there are six miracles that you need to believe if you want to be an atheist. I don't know if you know this, but if you ever struggle with somebody who's wrestling with that, and trust me, you know, people sometimes are sincere. You know, they just believe what they've heard, right? But there are six miracles that you need to believe if you're an atheist, right, that are evident in our world. Number one, that existence comes from non-existence.

Number two, that order comes from chaos. Number three, that life comes from non-life. Number four, that the personal comes from non-personal. Number five, that reason comes from non-reason. And number six, that morality comes from matter. It would have to be an absolute miracle for any of that to be true.

[14 : 08] But yet we know that we have existence. We know that this world is ordered. We know that life exists. Life has never been demonstrated to come from non-life. Never. And the theory of evolution, the question still remains, where did life come from? We know that things are personal. We have consciousness, personality. Does personal come from non-personal? We have reason. Where does this reason and intellect come from? And we have morality. Explain to me where morality comes from, because every one of us knows in our hearts what is right and what is wrong. And so there's six miracles. Because the truth of the matter is, these things do not arise out of nothing. They come from the very being of God, of an ever-existing, life-giving, personal, rational, intellectual, loving, good, and holy God. That's where all these things come from. And so this is what Jesus revealed to us, because as the Father has life in himself, so the Son also has life in himself. John 1.4 says, that Jesus has life in himself. In him was life. God is the living God. He's a living God. Before anything was created, there was a living God, self-existing, depending on nothing. So Jesus said a radical statement before Abraham was, I am. See, Jesus has always existed. He's always existed before he was a human. Jesus said before he went to the cross. He said, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. Life did not arise from matter. Matter was created by the living God. God did not create anything because he was lonely. And Jesus didn't come and die for us because he needs friends. 1 John 4.8 says that God is love at the very core of his being. He is love.

That's where love comes from. He is both the one who loves and the one who is beloved, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One God, pure light, pure life, and pure love, self-existing, self-sufficient, depending on nothing and no one outside of himself. There's nothing he needs. He is and was and always will be. Nothing brought him into being. Nothing can make him cease to be. He simply is. This is God.

And we do not exist to supplement some lack in God. Nothing in creation was created to fulfill a need in God because by nature God has no needs. This is what the Puritan Jonathan Edwards says. He said, God is infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself and perfectly beholding, infinitely loving, and rejoicing in his own essence and perfections. He doesn't need anything. We are not made to give God company. We're not made to make God complete or happy. He created us because God, by his nature, delights in sharing his life-giving, glorious joy and being with others. We are created to enjoy God.

Is that not a radical statement of what the world thinks of God? Do you enjoy God? Because you're meant to. People think that God isn't a happy God. Think of the most happy, joyful being that you could possibly think of, and you're not even scratching the surface of who God is. Do you enjoy living? That's a place to start. Think, and I'm not talking about the challenges of life or pain or suffering, but the very essence of life at its core. Do you enjoy that? Do you enjoy being alive? Well, then you enjoy God.

You're tasting something of God. Have you ever loved? Have you ever experienced love or light or life? Then you have tasted something of God. We are made to enjoy God. You see, every good gift comes from above, from God. By nature, God not only derives his existence from himself, but he emanates life and existence from himself. By nature, he radiates life and existence which comes solely from himself.

[18 : 57] He doesn't only have it himself. He doesn't keep it to himself. He's emanating it, radiating it, giving it out generously. And we, our very existence today, is living evidence of that fact.

So not only is God by nature the living God, but by nature he is the life-giving God. Jesus said in John 11, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he dies, he shall live. He said in John 5, as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. And this is why the exclusive claim of Jesus as being the only way makes perfect sense. You see, there are not many roads to heaven. It's not true that all religions lead to God. And being good enough is never going to give us eternal life for this simple fact. Not only do we not deserve life as though God owes us anything, but we do not derive life from ourselves. That's just a fact. We do not give ourselves life. The exclusivity of Jesus is simply because he is the one who has life that he gives to others. It's not about being unfair or being so close-minded. It would be unloving to not tell you the truth if there was only one source of life. And the world was saying there's many sources of life. There's only one source of life. And that's why he came to show us that he is the way and the truth and the life. He's the only source of life.

It says in Colossians, For by him all things were created in heaven and earth, visible things and visible things. All things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. It says in John 1 that all things were made through him and without him. Not anything that was made would be made. And so John says in 1 John 5, this is the plain fact of who Jesus is. He is the one who has life in himself, who by very nature has life in himself and is the life giver. And so John says, if you have the Son, you have life. You have life. If you do not have the Son, you do not have life.

And did God withhold his Son from us? No, he did not, because God wants us to have life. And you can go back to the Garden of Eden and see this very fact. There was a tree of life and a tree of death. God did not withhold the tree of life from us. He just said, don't touch the tree of death, because I want you to have life. Jesus is the tree of life. And believing in Jesus isn't just some mental acknowledgement or acceptance of a view. Faith in Jesus is more than just believing a fact. It is being in relationship with a person. It is being connected to the source of all our life. And if you're connected to the source, you will always have life. So think about it. We all carry about a phone in our pocket.

And what does it need just about every night? It needs charged. Because the thing that it has in itself doesn't last, and it didn't get it from itself. But if you're connected to the source, you will just keep having life. I tell that to my sons. It's not a perfect analogy. But I'm like, Jesus is like electricity. Too much will kill you. No, that's not true. But being plugged into the source, you will always have life. And that's why Jesus is the only way. And so the struggle that people have often misunderstand evil and suffering and pain. But God is not the author of sin. He's the author of life. God is not the author and giver of death. He's the giver of life. And that was the original choice. If you choose sin, which is to reject God, that will lead to death, because you're rejecting the very source of life. But if you choose God, which is choosing life, then you will enjoy all the delights of the fullness of life in and through Him. And because of the aseity of God, not only do we get our life from Him, but with Jesus, we will never not receive life from Him. Because He is always emanating life from Himself. If you have Jesus, you will never not have life. You will never not have joy. You will never not have peace. By His nature, He is the life giver. And He is His own source of life and existence. When you have the Son, there will never be an end to life and all the riches that are in Him.

[24:10] Because He is the source and absolute fullness of love and joy and peace and righteousness and grace and goodness and all the glory of God. When you have the Son, you enjoy all that is in the Son and Him forever. So, I went on too much. Let me pray.

God, these are hard things for us to understand, but we can look at this world and ourselves and life and the things that we know to see evidence of these things. That life does not come from non-life and that life does not come from us. We thank You that if we know these things and we have tasted these things, we've tasted something of You. God, please help us to see that Jesus is the source of all that we need and more, and that in Jesus we can have these wonderful things to a greater extent than we can possibly imagine. We thank You that You didn't withhold Jesus from us. Help us to know Him personally. Amen. We're going to sing one more song, and then we're going to enjoy some time over tea and coffee together.