

The God of Our Confession

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[0 : 00] Now, since I haven't had too much time to prepare for this, what I've decided to do is look at that Revelation 1, 1 to 8 passage, but using it as a board to think about God himself, the God of our confession.

The reason I'm looking at it as the God of our confession is because I think I recorded something on this about a week ago for Baruchhead Free Church.

They had begun looking at the Westminster Confession of Faith in the evening service, not preaching on the confession, of course, but the truths of the confession from Scripture. And I was asked to look at this second chapter of the confession of faith, which is very much to do with God.

And that's why I've called it the God of our confession. So as an elder, I subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith, and it is the confession of my faith.

And I'm sure the God that we'll explore tonight is also the confession of every single Christian listening in and watching tonight.

[1 : 16] And those who want to become Christians, I want you to listen and understand just the beauty of this God whom we are going to explore so briefly tonight, very briefly.

And there are three points that we're going to look at very briefly. You could have a whole series of lectures on all of this. First of all, God as he is towards us. Then secondly, God as he is in himself.

And then the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God as he is towards us. God as he is in himself and the triune God.

So first of all, then God as he is towards us. Isn't it amazing that this fantastic document, the Westminster Confession of Faith, doesn't begin to talk about God as he is in himself?

It actually is such a pastoral document. It talks about how God is towards us. And that's the beauty of it. See, this God that we believe in, he's not a God that you and I made up.

[2 : 24] We don't imagine God and then he comes to exist. He's there already. He's not imagined by us. And the beautiful thing about this God is that when Jesus came, and we'll mention that later, he came to tell us what God is really like.

We've got the Bible, of course, that tells us so much about God. I can look up in the sky outside there. I can see so much about God's power and so on. But only when God comes to us in Jesus do we really see what he's like towards us.

So John 1, 18, we're told that the one and only God, that's Jesus, who's in the bosom of the Father, he has exegeted God.

He's declared, he's explained to us who God is. So we know who God is. The reality is I know God better than I know myself.

I know God better than I knew my own father. See, God has opened his heart to us. So we know him as he is towards us.

[3 : 32] And one of the things we learn about him is that he's not visible. He's not visible. God is a spirit. And of course, remember the woman in Sumeria in John chapter 4, when she was talking to Jesus about worship and she's saying, well, which mountain shall we worship in?

Well, the reality is, you see, that Jesus says God is a spirit. And those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. In other words, he doesn't have a body.

That's not the way God is. He doesn't have a body. Now we'll say later, of course, that God the Son took on a body. He didn't need to do it.

But he did that. But by nature, God is not visible. And because he doesn't have a body, he doesn't have a body that can suffer change.

As our bodies grow older, we grow weaker, more frail. But that's not the way God is. And God wants us to know that he doesn't change.

[4 : 37] I am the God of Jacob. I change not. And it's brilliant to know that whatever changes there may be tomorrow, God will not have changed.

You can trust him. Absolutely. When Jesus stood up as this young person and said, before Abraham was, I am.

He's really saying the God of Abraham, he never changes. He is always there. I am. And something else about this God, you can never fully understand him.

He's more than you can understand. He's not like one subject. And then if you study hard, you've grasped it all. There's something about God in which he is like an ocean.

And even an ocean is not big enough. But he's an ocean. And you just cannot possibly take it all in. There's so much to God. There's so much to God that, you know, I've been studying theology for decades.

[5 : 46] And I feel I'm just scratching the edge of the surface. There's just so much to know. And really, eternity will be not long enough to grasp who God fully is.

There's something about him. Who has known the mind of the Lord? God is more than we can understand. Now, you might think that's a shame.

But it's not a shame. That actually is for our comfort. That is as he is towards us. And something else about this God, that's the chapter in Confession, says his plans do not change.

His plans do not change. Do you remember the way Jesus is spoken of in Hebrews 13? He's spoken of us the same yesterday, today, and forever.

He just does not change. In other words, the plans that God has never change. These have come to full expression in Jesus. And they never, ever change.

[6 : 54] The same yesterday, today, and forever. And it doesn't matter which part of the world you're in. That is absolutely true. And the way he is towards sinners.

Now, I have yet to meet any human being who is not a sinner. So when I speak of sinners, I'm thinking of every one of you. And I'm thinking of myself.

The only human being who hasn't sinned is Jesus. But all the rest of us are sinners. And what's God like towards us? Remarkably, he's loving.

He's gracious. He's incredibly patient. He is good. He is faithful. He is faithful. And he is forgiving.

I wouldn't like to take any of these adjectives away. This is the God of my confession. Loving, gracious, patient.

[7 : 58] Good, faithful, and forgiving. More could be said. But not less. And another thing about this God that the confession says is he can be found.

He can be found. Imagine if there was this God, but you could never find him. But this is God as he is towards us.

And there's something about the nature of God he wants to be found. And I still remember, and maybe I've told you the story of Professor Douglas Macmillan, when his son, one of his sons, who's now a minister, he went shopping with him into a big department store.

And, of course, as little children do, they start exploring under the various clothing and run away. And the little boy got lost. And his father went looking for him.

And he heard the cry of the little boy. And he went and found him. And as soon as the young boy found his father, he hugged him and he says, I am so glad I found you.

[9 : 14] And, of course, it is the father who actually found the boy. And yet there's something true in that the boy found the father. And that's the way God is towards us.

He puts us into a situation where we can find him. And he wants us to find him. He wants to be found.

He's like treasure in a field. He's like a pearl of imaginable price. And he wants to be found. Those who seek me earnestly will find me.

Is there anybody listening to this tonight? Is there anybody who's not yet a Christian? And you think you've given up asking, looking, seeking for God?

Don't. Absolutely don't. You keep on seeking him. Because I assure you, those who seek him earnestly will find him.

[10 : 20] And if he's waiting, he's got a good reason. You keep seeking. It's Satan who tells you, don't look for God. God wants to be found.

And something solemn also about the way God is towards us. And the confession makes this clear in this first chapter in section two. And it's, we matter so much to God that he will judge us.

Our God is a consuming fire. See, you can't put him in a box. You can't tame him. You can't make him the kind of God who doesn't judge.

He is holy. That's the way God is. And if you think about it, would you want an unholy God? Would you want a God who was unrighteous?

And who could just let sin pass by? No, you wouldn't. No, you wouldn't. He takes us so seriously. We will each be called to give an account before him.

[11 : 34] See, when that day comes, I'll have Christ beside me. That'll be enough. Will you have Christ beside you on that day?

Because that day will come. Will you have Christ beside you then? So God as he is towards us. And then secondly, God as he is in himself.

In a sense, maybe this is a false distinction. Because even the things in this section are also very important for us to know.

But what we mean by this would become clear. See, the thing is, God doesn't need us. That's the truth.

Before he ever created the universe, God was always there. And he didn't create the universe because he needed something.

[12 : 35] No, he doesn't need at all in that sense. And when we come to bring our offering or our worship before him, remember, he doesn't need that.

The cattle on a thousand hills is his. So we can't enrich God. We can't do that. See, as he is in himself, he's absolutely blessed.

Absolutely content. So anything he does towards us is always for our good. It's not to make him somehow more content.

Something else about him. He is not in need. He's not in need. If you were to think of God, and I gave you a choice.

Is he the great receiver? Or the great giver? Which would you choose? Now, we know that God receives.

[13 : 44] He receives our thanksgiving and so on. But he is essentially the great giver. He is somebody that gives himself.

So with one of my classes this week, we were looking at John 1.14. And here's this old man, the one who wrote the book of the Revelation, in fact, John. And he writes there, the word, that's God the Son, became flesh, dwelt among us.

And he says, we saw his glory. So he knows that he and a lot of other people, all the Christians, in fact, we saw his glory. Glorious of the one and only from the Father, full of grace and truth.

And then he goes on to say, out of his fullness, we have all received grace upon grace. See, he's the one that's full.

And he gives to us who are empty. He is the great giver. He is the great giver. He is the great giver. And you know this. He is so full of grace and truth that there's enough for you.

[14 : 57] He is so full of love for sinners that there's enough love even for you and your sins. He is so confident in all the promises that he has made.

He will be faithful to them even for you. He is full of grace and truth, undesired favour and faithful and true to all his promises.

He is the great giver. Go to him. He has grace to give. And isn't it true also, following on from that, he is independent.

He is independent. We've said it in different ways. He doesn't need any particular person to help him.

There's a sense in which we are all his servants and he gifts us to do various things. But even the way in which he gifts us shows that he is the one that gives so that we can give back to him.

[16 : 12] There's nobody ever given anything to God when he received it from God first. And even the love that you give to God, you can only give it because he first loved you.

Any strength that you have to serve him, it's only because he has given you the strength. It's really quite amazing.

So, he is this amazing, independent, blessed person. Something else about him. You know, and this is such a contrast to myself and to others.

Nothing ever gets on top of God. Nothing ever gets on top of God. He is on top of everything.

See, one of the beautiful ways in which he's described Daniel 7 is the Ancient of Days. Ancient of Days. And there's this picture of him, as it were, with white hair, seated on a throne.

[17 : 23] And it's as if he's been there from forever. And that's it. It's a picture, a human picture, of a king who has always been there, never really grows old.

He's the Ancient of Days and is perfectly calm. Daniel's full of scary pictures of scary kingdoms rising up.

The Ancient of Days is not perturbed. Not at all. Absolutely calm. We sang in Psalm 93 there.

The Lord is on high. He's seated on the throne. The floods come upon us. But he's okay. Nothing ever gets on top of him. And something else about him.

Nothing is hidden from him. How far can you see? How far can you actually see? I don't have my glasses on just now because the bulb ahead of me there tends to reflect on the glasses when I'm preaching in front of a camera.

[18 : 32] But even if I had my glasses on, I couldn't see terribly far. God, he can see all the way around the world at the same time.

He can see every individual. He can see where they are, what they're thinking, what they're feeling, what they're planning. And he knows exactly what they're facing.

He can see everything. Everything. Everything. Everything. Everything. At the same time. In fact, he can even see these things before they've happened. And he never forgets what he saw.

And he never forgets what he will see. He is absolutely seeing everything. That's why one of my favourite psalms is Psalm 139. Lord, thou hast searched me and known me.

You know all about me. You know my rising up and my sitting down. I don't even know when I'm going to get up and sit down. But you know all about me. And if I decide to go to another part of the world, you're there.

[19 : 40] But when I arrive, you've got the map already. There's just no surprises with God. Nothing is hidden from him. And also, how many are in his class?

How many are among his peers? If you think of your class in school, those of you who are younger, you may have quite a number in the class.

He's adopted to 33. You may be allowed these days. There's nobody in his class. He's unique. He's one of a kind.

He is mono. He is one of a kind. Isaiah, in chapter 6 of his prophecy, he was going to become a preacher for the rest of his life.

And God used one particular instance in history to shape him. And that was the death of a king. Pretty important king, Isaiah.

[20 : 50] He reigned for 52 years. That seems long. And yet he died. But in the year that he died, God showed himself to Isaiah.

Isaiah. And Isaiah heard angelic beings praising God and saying, Holy, holy, holy.

It's the Lord God Almighty. See, holy means that there's nobody else in his circle. He's one of a kind. He's set apart.

He's unique. And see, that's why he is the pearl of great price. He is so, so precious. There's no point looking for a gem like him anywhere else.

He really is one of a kind. And the way that God is towards us, and now the way that he is in himself, what does that draw forth from us?

[21 : 55] Well, it should, of course, be worship. Worship. As we saw in Isaiah 6, the angels worship him. At least some of them.

Satan and all these other angels who followed him don't worship him. But many of the angels do. And then there are human beings.

We are meant to worship him. I wonder if we took a percentage of all the human beings who ever lived, how many of them sincerely worship this God?

I wonder how many of them, like Isaiah, cry out before him and say, woe is me. I'm unclean. I wonder just how many.

I know that by the end of the story, there will actually be a whole human race that will worship this God. There will be a multitude greater than man can number.

- [23 : 03] There will be, you'll never see the finished people of God and say, ah, there are only a few. You will say, there are many.
- There are so many. In fact, there are so many, I can't number them. That's why people go into the housing schemes in Scotland to reach the people.
- That's why Jim and Megan go to Benin to reach the people there in this name. Because there are so many who are going to be rescued and saved and brought into the kingdom.
- God as he is towards us. God as he is in himself. And then finally and briefly, God as triune.
- Triune, that's what we mean by trinity. So he is one God, unity, but he's also three. There are three Persons.
- [24 : 02] Now the big message of the Old Testament is, there is one God. There are not many gods. So you don't have to go looking for many gods and trying to find a way of working with many gods.
- No, there is one God. Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one God. That's it. There is only one God.
- If you're listening to Jesus praying in John 17, just the night before he went to the cross, he prays and he asks the Father to give eternal life to those whom he has elected.
- And what is eternal life? That they might know you, the only true God. See, there's only one God. And that's brilliant.
- You only need to seek this one God. And this is the one who wants to be found. You don't need to look for many gods.
- [25 : 08] So if you had met people like Isaiah and Jeremiah and Samuel and Moses and Abraham and so on, and you ask them, how many gods are there?
- They would have said one. And if you said to them, but what about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? They may well have scratched their heads and says, I don't understand.
- See, God didn't reveal himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit until we needed to know that he was Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- See, this is the thing about God. I mean, you'd have thought that this rich dimension of God is something that he would tell us first. No, not at all.
- It's almost as if he kept this as the best kept secret, ready for when we actually need it. So when God sends his Son into the world, then all of a sudden we realize, wait a minute, when Jesus is being baptized, God speaks and says, this is my Son.
- [26 : 25] And you think, wait a minute, are there two gods? No, but there's a Father and a Son in the one God. And then you realize the Holy Spirit comes down from heaven and comes upon Jesus to help him with his ministry.
- Without that, he couldn't have done what he did. And then you think, wait a minute, is God the Holy Spirit another person in this one God?
- Yes, he is. And you think, wow, God is one. But now I know he's God the Father.
- He's God the Son. And he's God the Holy Spirit. And God the Son was sent by God the Father. And once he was sent, he became a human being as well as being God.
- And then when Jesus ascends back to heaven after the cross and the resurrection, remember, he goes back to heaven. That's why he's not here on earth.
- [27 : 32] He goes back to heaven. And then the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit. And this is the great age of the Spirit of God.

This is the age in which the Spirit is spoken of more than ever before. Jesus is spoken of more than ever before. And the Father is spoken of more than ever before.

This is the age of the Gospel. This is the good news that there's a God who is one, his Father, his Son, and his Holy Spirit.

But there's still only one God. The love with one love. The act with one live. One will.

One. Always, always one. When you think of it, when you and I begin to have faith in this amazing God in Jesus by the Spirit, you don't find that you can prise them apart.

[28 : 43] You can't divide them up. I'm not always very happy with trying to break up God when I'm praying to him because I think God wants to be worshipped as one.

He is Father and I can call him Father. He is the Lord, Jesus Christ, God the Son, and I can call him that. And he is the Holy Spirit.

And I love to worship him. But no sooner do I mention one of the passions than I feel instinctively I've got to mention the other.

Why? Because they belong so much together. And that's the way they want us. That's the way God wants us to think about him.

When we come to the judgment there will be one judgment. When I think of the glory that I have seen when I think of all that I have seen about God in Christ by the Spirit I think about how much of the Father I know.

[29 : 50] How much of the Son I know. How much of the Holy Spirit I know. I've been a Christian for many decades now and all the richer for that to know him is absolutely brilliant.

And if you think that your sins are so money that you couldn't possibly have this relationship you're wrong. You're absolutely wrong.

His hands are opened wide towards you inviting you to come and explore these wonderful riches of God.

God as he is towards us wants to be found. God as he is in himself who must be worshipped and God as triune Father, Son and Holy Spirit but one amazing God whom we can worship with a single heart.

God as he is so you the Lord's people isn't there so much that you want to explore? You who are seeking him surely you can't possibly pass this God by.

[31 : 14] Seek him with all your heart I'm telling you ask and you shall receive seek and you will find knock and the door will certainly be open to you.

Come to him. May the Lord bless his word. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father we are thankful that you are this amazing one God the Lord God Almighty the Alpha and the Omega the beginning and the end.

You are the one who is and who was and who is to come. You are Jesus Christ the faithful witness. You are the seven spirits before the throne.

Oh if we could only love you the way you deserve to be loved. If we could worship you the way you should be worshipped. How much greater would our heart speak of you.

And yet Lord to know you has been the greatest privilege of our lives. And we plead Lord that you would call others to know you.

[32 : 34] Call them to yourself. You are to be found or call them. We would pray. We ask it in Jesus name.

Amen. One hour was Everyone