

God Part 2

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. Please turn in your Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 9, Jeremiah chapter 9.

My name is BK. I have the pleasure of serving as one of the pastors here, and it is my joy to welcome you to our time of worship. We are actually in the middle of a series entitled, What We Believe and Why We Believe It.

For the last couple of weeks, we went over on why we believe the Bible is God's Word, how it is inspired, perfected, inerrant, and it is infallible for all of our lives.

Last week, I began a quick session, and I'll be finishing it up today, on this subject of God. God is obviously an immense subject, and if you're curious about more, I recently preached a sermon series on the attributes of God.

It's on our website. But this morning, I wanted to tie in some aspects of God in exactly what we are witnessing today in our time of baptism.

[1 : 18] Let me begin by reading from our affirmation of faith and what it says about our belief in God. It simply says, There is one and only one God, who is the creator of this universe.

God, who is a God of love and justice, has always existed and will always exist. He is the ultimate authority over all persons and things, and he answers to no higher being or principle.

In biblical terms, we affirm that he is holy, which means that he is in every way unique and in a category all his own, free from all limits and imperfections experienced by creatures.

In both the majesty of his being and the moral purity of his nature and action, he is uniquely perfect. Although God is of one being, he exists eternally in three divine persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Although the idea of the Trinity is a mystery beyond our full comprehension, we are compelled by the witness of Scripture to affirm it.

[2 : 33] For centuries, men, whether they be philosophers, astronomers, scientists, have been searching for God. They have been searching for the reasoning behind creation.

Who created the order? Who created this beauty? Who has the power to create? Where did this come from?

And man has always stumbled with these questions. When we open up our Bibles to Genesis 1.1, it simply states, In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

There is no defense for God. There is no explanation for God. There is no argument offered for God. God simply states, From the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Why? Why doesn't God feel the need to prove himself, prove that he exists? Well, Paul, later on in Romans 1.18-20, simply states that God is known from things that are, from creation from our conscience.

[3 : 52] All of creation cries out to the existence of a creator. Our consciences cry out with the knowledge of good and evil.

God simply is, has always been, and always will be God. Unlike the philosophers of old, who thought that true knowledge and honor would only come to those who could prove that God existed, God says something completely different.

Please turn with me in your text to Jeremiah chapter 9. Jeremiah chapter 9, verses 23 and 24.

It simply reads, this prophet of the Old Testament says, Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom. Let not the mighty man boast in his might.

Let not the rich man boast in his riches. But let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth.

[5 : 14] For in these things I delight, declares the Lord. God himself tells us that honor does not come or blessings do not come from discovering me or knowing about me.

This prophet tells us that the Lord says, Let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me.

There is one thing in this world that is worth boasting about. It is God. It is he who understands and knows me.

For in these I delight, says the Lord. The most obvious question that I have for you is, Do you know God?

Could I ask you a simple question? Do you understand God? Could you answer, not about God, but if you know God?

[6 : 32] You see, Jeremiah isn't referring to having positive thoughts about God. He's not referring to, I believe that there is a God. But he's simply saying, Can you unequivocally, or better yet, can you boast that you understand and know God?

God. It's a crazy question, isn't it? God is simply, by definition, incomprehensible.

His means are beyond our means. His ways are beyond our ways. But the word of God makes it incredibly clear over and over and over that we can know God.

Last week, I gave you, there's four types of people that Scripture says can know God. And this is a little quick review.

I won't go into much detail. But the first person that can know God is the reverend. The reverend. Psalm 25, 14 says, The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him.

[7 : 55] And he makes known to them his covenant. That word fear isn't dread or terror because he is a mean or horrible God.

But it simply means you understand his awesomeness and power. And he is not to be trifled with. So to enter into his presence begins with a fear of him.

Matthew 5, 8 tells us the second person who can know God is those that are pure in heart. On his Sermon on the Mount, he simply said, Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

pure mean, they are clean in a spiritual sense from the pollution and guilt of sin. And I will explain a little more later how a pure heart is attained.

The third person who may approach God is the childlike. Matthew 11, 25, 28 says, I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.

[9 : 11] Understanding God does not take a PhD. It is something, something simple that even a four-year-old can understand.

Perhaps in your journey searching for God, you believe that God is somehow hiding himself from you. Perhaps may I offer you a piece of advice.

Pursue him as a child, not as an intellectual. The fourth person that can receive God is the obedient.

John 14, 21 says, Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be beloved by my Father.

And I will love him and manifest myself in him. Can we truly ask God, where are you if we do not obey you?

[10 : 20] How can we obey the one we do not know? How can we obey, O God, who we do not know his word? The New Testament, especially the word of Jesus, tells us that to know Jesus is to know God the Father.

John 14, 9, as I stated last week, his apostles, despairing that Jesus is going to leave them for the cross, they do not understand, and they are not all that convinced that he is the Father.

And Jesus simply responds to them. He says, Have I been with you so long and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

How can you say, Show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you, I do not speak of my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his work.

Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. Simply says to these men who have been trudging along this path for three years, experiencing the most extensive teaching that any man could have ever received during that time, you either know me, and if that, at least trust the works that I did in your presence.

[11:49] This morning, we will be hearing the testimony in baptism of those who claim to know Jesus. Their claim is they just do not know about Jesus, but they know Jesus.

They are obeying Jesus as they come to this rite of Christian baptism. But before I get into a definition of baptism, I want to express to you four truths that the Holy Spirit has revealed to them in order for them to get to this position to know God.

The first truth that any person must understand before they come to a knowledge of God, that God is light. That God is light. 1 John 1.5 simply says, this is the message we have heard from him who is Jesus and proclaim to you that God is light and in him no darkness at all.

What John communicates for us here is that not only that God is evident, it's also evident from creation in his word that the living word that God is light.

in his power we see nothing but goodness, righteousness, creation. Even how our bodies are constructed speak of his incredible love for us.

[13:17] So the first truth that anybody must understand when they come to God is that God is light. He is perfect. He is without fault.

And as I spoke last week about his attributes, he is all things at all times. He is all knowing, all powerful, all seeing, holy, just, mercy, loving, all the time.

So that's the first truth that God is light. The second truth that anybody who can truly understand God is an understanding that man is in darkness. Man is in darkness.

And this may be shocking to you. It may be shocking to you. You might believe that there is a light and there is a darkness and man is somehow in the middle. And man is sometimes trying to earn the light.

He's trying to move to the light. He agrees with all that the light has to do. But God simply says that you are actually in darkness.

[14:24] Paul writing to the Ephesian church in Ephesians 4.17 says this, this, I say and testify in the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds.

And Gentiles means non-Jewish believers at the time. So he's speaking to these Jews and Jesus Christ was a Jew. He brought the truth of the Jew and to them the outsider was the Gentile.

And in verse 18 it says, they are darkened in their understanding. Alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart.

That right from the beginning man is in the dark place. He is in darkness whether or not they know it or not. Verse 19, they have become callous and have given themselves to sensuality greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

Like I said, man is not neutral. It's not up to the forces of good and evil to win them to their side. They're already on one side.

[15:43] The Bible is quite clear that all men and women are in darkness without Jesus Christ. some will try to prove they're in the light but even in their proving they undermine their own position.

You have heard it from this pulpit more than once. All the things of the world right now that we hear today in this culture the attempt at tolerance that love is love there is a concern for our planet and protection of Mother Earth is just simply evidence how dark man is.

If man was in the light we would seek God's wisdom in solving the problems that mankind has. Instead man stumbles gropes around in the dark.

Even in reading an article this week just with the desire against this climate crisis in their minds exists. We need to get rid of carbon so let's kill the animals.

That's going to save us as people. In saving the world we are dooming man. That is the spirit of the day. They worship the created not the creator.

[17:11] Now listen I get it. a lot of people understand or struggle with the idea that they are darkened in their understanding. That they are darkened in their understanding of God.

The fact is we are darkened in our understanding about us. We do think we are good. But the Bible tells us again that we are darkened.

We are prisoners. There is a term that the reformers used. It was called totally depraved. It means that there is absolutely no good in us that allows us to earn the righteousness of God.

And I concede we are good. People do good things. That's not what the idea of total depravity is.

But as far as trying to show and demonstrate my goodness to God, it's like using a dirty rag to clean yourself from a hot day's work in the yard.

Lord, it just spreads the grease and dirt all over you more and more. No matter how good your intentions may be, they just don't work.

[18 : 26] You see, what the apostle Paul is telling us, that in regard to being able to be in the light of Christ, the fact that we are in the darkness, we don't even see the light.

Where we are, we think is good. Where we live, we think is right. We are stuck in our own devices. We are stuck in our blindness. We are stuck with our darkness.

What can we do? Well, there's three things man tends to do to make themselves feel good about being in darkness, and I'll share with you them briefly with you.

One, we simply deceive ourselves. We lie to ourselves. ourselves. We wear a mask when we're in front of other people. We try to be someone that we know we are truly not.

If this is you, this should tell you that you are indeed in the darkness. You are false. Even if it's with the best intentions, that if people knew the true you, they would not accept you.

[19 : 31] the second way you try to deceive is you try to deceive others by masking the obvious problems in your life by comparing yourself to others around you.

It's really easy, right? You want to feel good about yourself? Just look to your left or right and find someone who's in a bigger mess than you are. If you can somehow prove that someone else is worse off than you, then maybe you're A-O-K.

And then the third way is you try to deceive God. Yeah, people do try. They use biblical phrases. They do biblical duties, works. And if they think that they can look like a Christian over a long period of time, they can indeed fool God into thinking that they are a Christian.

But what they don't understand is being a Christian, it matters more for who you are than what you do, amen? It's the who you are depends, powers, how you act.

[20 : 49] Through that power of the Holy Spirit in your life is where you act from. you may even say certain prayers, you might go to church, but ultimately the Christian faith is not about what you do, the Christian faith is all about what Jesus Christ has done for you.

So that is the second truth, is that you understand that you are in darkness. The third truth that our friends will attest to today is that sin is darkness.

Sin is darkness. John 3, 19 to 21 simply says, and this is the judgment, the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

If you are new to the Christian faith and you do not understand the imagery here, let me restate this verse. And this is the judgment. Jesus has come into the world, but people loved the darkness rather than Jesus because their works were evil.

For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.

[22 : 27] Maybe you're new to church and maybe you're new to this idea of sin or this word. It's a bit of an antiquated word. Here we see the word is darkness.

Well, why is it darkness? Well, by simple definition, sin is seen as being in rebellion against God and the laws of God.

So much so, and Paul had earlier stated there's this ignorance. Because even when you're over here in the darkness, you think your laws are good in everything you're doing.

But Paul says in the darkness you're ignorant about God. You don't even know the things you think you are doing to please God are tainted with this darkness. the fact is, sin is what separates us from God.

Sin is the pursuit of foolishness. It is the failure to live how God created you to live. We were created with a purpose in God's image.

[23 : 48] And the other effects of sin in our life is that we are incapable to overcome the darkness on our own. That's what sin does.

It is so powerful that you and I cannot overcome it. Romans 3.23 says for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

It would be so wonderful if we were only compared to our neighbors, right? Make sure my lawn is browner because that means I'm, you know, saving water to save the world, right?

How crazy that world is. I remember when I grew up, you know, whoever had the nicest, greenest lawn, but now it's the brownest lawn. Tells you how good changes in man's eyes.

You see, but the standard that God holds us to is him. Perfection. Perfection. He is light. He is holy.

[24 : 56] Every sin, even in that white lie, is darkness. So the first truth of those who are testifying here before you is that God is light, man is dark, sin is the reason there is darkness, and the fourth truth is salvation is found in Jesus Christ alone.

Salvation is found from Jesus Christ alone. The only way a person moves from darkness to light is because of the work of Jesus Christ alone.

in Isaiah 62, there is this verse that is incredible. It says, For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples.

But the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. In the darkness, a light shall rise.

and what will happen to that light, that light being Jesus Christ, Paul writes to us in Colossians 1.13, it says, Jesus has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the beloved son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin.

[26 : 18] Notice what it says. He, Jesus, delivered us from the domain of darkness. I didn't work my way from darkness to light.

I needed God to transfer me there. And Paul in Ephesians 5.8.9 says, For at one time you were darkness. Notice he didn't say you were in darkness.

You were darkness. But now you are light in the Lord. walk as children of light, for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true.

And try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. So this morning we are seeing what is called a Christian testimony that Jesus calls us to.

It essentially is the breaking from darkness to light. What you're going to see is I will be in the tank with them and they will be going down into the water.

[27 : 29] And what that means is they're going down into darkness, death. And then they rise up in Jesus Christ, the new life, which is the light.

light. So that is what is going to be symbolized to you as they take this walk of obedience.

So what I'm going to do now is I'm just going to end in prayer. I'm going to ask for some strong guys to move the cover and the worship team will come up and those who are about to be baptized to prepare themselves.

But before I say any more, let me just pray. Dear Holy Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are indeed the light. You are indeed the one who shined through in this world of darkness.

And the fact of the matter is we were darkness, we were lost, but now we are found. Scripture tells us, Jesus, that you loosed the chains.

[28 : 37] Many of us were bound by the powers of darkness and how we lived our lives and how we thought, but it was you who loosed those chains. You were the one who set us free from the prison.

And you prepared us for this time. So Lord, we thank you for your testimony of your word. We thank you for the testimony of your son. We thank you for the testimony of this word that teaches us the truth about you.

And I pray that you would continue to shine forth in these lives, some of them are taking some of the first steps of the Christian faith, this walk of obedience with you in baptism.

We ask these things in your most holy and heavenly name. Amen.