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Introduction to Systematic Theology
Lecture 2 – Doctrine of God
First Presbyterian Church of Orlando
Spring 2017

I. Introduction

W. Tozer: “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

Augustine: no place where error is more potentially dangerous or where truth is more potentially rewarding

- A. Systematic theology is a way of studying the Bible that gives attention to the unity, full scope, proportions, and relations of biblical teaching.**
- B. WLC Q/As 6-7 provide a standard summary of what the church confesses about God on the basis of Holy Scripture.**

1. WLC 6

Q. What do the scriptures make known of God?

The scriptures make known

[1] what God is,

[2] the persons of the Godhead,

[3] his decrees,

[4] and the execution of his decrees

[in God’s works of nature, grace, and glory]

2. WLC 7

Q. What is God?

A. God is a Spirit,

in and of himself infinite in being, glory, blessedness, and perfection;

[Incommunicable]{

all-sufficient, eternal, unchangeable, incomprehensible, every where

present,

almighty,

[Communicable]{

knowing all things, most wise,
most holy, most just, most merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and
abundant in goodness and truth.

3. Overview

- a. The nature of idolatry
- b. Thinking about God in a divine way: God is infinite and independent in his being, attributes, and actions and, as such, he is “the happy God” (1 Tim 1.11; 6.17).
- c. Practical implications

II. The nature of idolatry

A. The First and Second Commandments prohibit two forms of idolatry.

B. Idolatry consists not only in worshipping a creature as God (Rom 1.23) but also in thinking about/treating God in a creaturely way (Num 23.19; 1 Sam 15.29; Isa 40.18; Acts 17.24).

C. Digging deeper

1. In terms of *design*, creatures resemble God (Gen 1.26), but God does not resemble creatures (Isa 40.18). Creatures are “theomorphic.”
2. In terms of *language*, God does not speak to us in a divine language (John 1.1); God in his grace stoops down to speak to us in human language. Biblical language of God is “anthropomorphic.”
 - i. Examples
3. Much idolatry consists in confusing the *direction of design* with the *direction of language*.

III. Thinking about God in a divine way: God is infinite and independent in his being, attributes, and actions and, as such, he is “the happy God” (1 Tim 1.11; 6.17).

A. Introduction

1. A nearly infinite multitude of creaturely characteristics are attributed to God. How can we think about these attributions in a *divine* rather than in an *idolatrous* manner?

2. **God is infinite and independent in his being, attributes, and actions and, as such, he is “the happy God” (1 Tim 1.11; 6.17).**

B. God is infinite in his being, attributes, and actions.

1. Infinity *negatively* stated; and *positively* stated (fullness)
2. God is infinite in his being (Job 11.7-9; 36.26; Ps 145.3; Rev 4.8).
3. He is infinite in his intellect (Isa 40.28).
4. God is infinite in his will and counsel (Ps 36.6; Rom 11.33; Eph 3.8-9).
5. God is infinite in his goodness, grace, and love (Exod 34.6; Ps 136; Eph 2.7; 3.18-19).
6. God is infinite in his power (Eph 3.20).

C. God is independent in his being, attributes, and actions.

1. Independence negatively stated; and positively stated (*self*-existence, etc.)
2. God is “independent, not only in his existence [Acts 17.25; John 5.26] but consequently also in all his attributes and perfections, in all his decrees and deeds.
3. He is independent in his intellect (Rom. 11:34-35).
4. God is independent in his will (Dan. 4:35; Rom. 9:19; Eph. 1:5; Rev. 4:11).
5. God is independent in his counsel (Ps. 33:11; Isa. 46:10).
6. God is independent in his love (Hos. 14:4).
7. God is independent in his power (Ps. 115:3), and so forth” (Bavinck, 2:150).

D. As the one (and the only one!) who is infinite and independent in his being, attributes, and action, God is “the happy God” (1 Tim 1.11; 6.15).

IV. Applications

- A. **The error of “works salvation” rests not only upon a misunderstanding of fallen human nature. It also rests upon a misunderstanding of God (Job 22.2-3; 35.6-7; 41.11; Rom 11.35).**

1. This puts good works and bad works in a whole new (God-centered!) light: Our good works *please* God but they do not *benefit* God; rather, they benefit *us* and our *neighbors*. Conversely our sin *displeases* God but it does not *harm* God; rather, it harms *us* and our *neighbors*.
2. This is transformative for recovering legalists!

B. The independence and infinity of the happy God are good news for God's covenant people.

1. **Psalm 33:12:** "Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage."
2. **Psalm 23:** "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."