

The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 2 – “Of God and the Holy Trinity”, Message # 2 – “God’s Subsistence is of Himself”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School Class by Pastor Paul Rendall on August 14th, 2016.

Chapter 2 – Of God and the Holy Trinity, Paragraph 1 -

The Lord our God is but (a)one only living and true God; whose (b)subsistence is in and of Himself, (c)infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but Himself; (d)a most pure spirit, (e) invisible, without body, parts, or passions, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; who is (f)immutable, (g)immense, (h)eternal, incomprehensible, (i)almighty, every way infinite, (k)most holy, most wise, most free, most absolute; (l)working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, (m)for his own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; (n)the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and withal most just (o)and terrible in his judgments, (p)hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the (q)guilty.

a 1st Corinthians 8: 4 and 6; Deuteronomy 6: 4; b Jeremiah 10: 10; Isa 48: 12; c Exodus 3: 14; d John 4: 24; e 1st Timothy 1: 17; Deut. 4: 15-16; f Malachi 3:6; g 1st Kings 8: 27; Jeremiah 23: 23; h Psalm 90: 2; j Genesis 17: 1; k Isa 6: 3; l Psalm 115: 3; Isa 46: 10; m Pro 16: 4; Rom 11: 36; n Exodus 34: 6-7; Hebrews 11:6; o Nehemiah 9: 32-33; p Psalm 5: 5-6; q Exodus 34:7; Nahum 1: 2-3

In thinking about God’s subsistence, or life, which is in and of Himself, it will also require that we think about God’s aseity. “God’s aseity is the divine attribute of uncaused existence.” “It is the essence of God to exist.” (Definition taken from the book *Confessing the Impassible God*, P. 440) God is independent of His creation (that is He is transcendent; above and outside of it). And yet He is also immanent (that is, He is present to, and active within His creation).

The Westminster Shorter Catechism states in Question 4 – “What is God?” “God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.”

Question 5 states: Are there more Gods than one ?

Answer: There is but One only, the living and true God.

It is very important as a part of our witness to our glorious Triune God, that we are able to declare before other people around us, that we believe that He is the One and only True and Living God. This declaration is an important part of the battle for truth and righteousness which is taking place in the world today. For if you declare that there is only one True and Living God, then you will worship and serve only the one True and Living God. And furthermore, you will be attempting to show other people around you that the gods which they worship and serve are false, and that our God alone is to be worshiped.

Look with me at 1st Corinthians 8: 1-7 – “Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.” “And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.” “But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.” “Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one.” “For even if there are so-

called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.” “However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience being weak, is defiled.”

We see here that all Christians have a certain amount of knowledge concerning God. We find here in these verses certain truths which are very important to our “knowing as we ought to know”. We are told here that there must be in every Christian the love of God in active practice if they would know God aright. A love for God coupled with a willingness to learn and grow in the knowledge of God will consider how we should live in a world where many people hold to false gods. False gods are the idols which are mentioned in our text. They are described as “nothing in the world”, and the Christian knows that they are nothing, because there is no God but the God of the Bible. There may be many gods and many lords among men, but among Christians, there is only the recognition of the True and Living God. If anyone loves the only True and Living God, they are known by Him it says in verse 3. Psalm 145: 20 says: “The Lord preserves all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy.” For us, as Christians there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.”

Notice the wording – “One God the Father, of whom are all things”. From God come all things that have life and breath. This means that all life subsists originally in God and comes from God to any living thing. When our Confession states here that “the Lord our God is but one only living and true God; whose subsistence is in and of Himself, it is speaking of His Being, and His essential life being from Himself. God always has been and always will be; He is uncreated essential life in Himself, and gives life to all things which have life. I would like to focus on this aspect of God’s being today and not fully enter in to the truth of Paragraph 3 (3 Subsistences in the Godhead) until we reach that paragraph. It is stated in Paragraph 3 – “In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided.” This morning I want you to think about God’s being the originator of life because it is in His being alone that life exists essentially. This life exists in the uncreated essence of the Triune God, and it does not exist essentially in anything or anyone else. It exists in Him alone.

You can see this truth if you will turn with me over to Exodus chapter 3, verses 13-15. “Then Moses said to God, ‘Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your father has sent me to you, and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them” “And God said to Moses, ‘I Am Who I Am.’” “And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you.” “Moreover God said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’” “This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.”

We can see that God by His name Yahweh or Jehovah, YHWH, I AM WHO I AM, reveals Himself as the One who always was, and who was present with Moses, when He spoke to him, in all of His unchangeable attributes and glory. He is the eternal self-existent One and He is the One who has an unchangeable purpose to be outworked in the world in terms of His people who would come to know Him by this memorial name, to all generations. “Thus, you shall say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you.”

A Quote from Michael Horton in his Systematic Theology, the Christian Faith, A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way. He says on Page 230 – “Before we speak of God relating freely to creatures and entering into human history as Lord and Redeemer, our starting point is God’s aseity (from-himself-ness), or independence from the world.” “It goes without saying that a dependent deity would be involved with the world. What is remarkable is that the triune God – self-existing, perfect, and independent – would nevertheless create and enter into covenantal relationships with creature in freedom and love.” “Karl Barth properly stressed the point that the God who is God without us has nevertheless determined to be God with us.” “Freedom *from* creation is the ground of God’s freedom *for* creation.” “Classical Christian theology has affirmed that God is a-se, which basically means independent of all external dependence.” “A similar term is *absolute* – literally, “without relation”. “This does not mean that God is incapable of relationship; it simply affirms that God relates creatures to Himself but is not related to (i.e. dependent on) the world.”

Look also at Revelation chapter 1, verses 4,5, and 8.

“John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.” “To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood....”

Vs. 8 – “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, says the Lord(Margin – the Lord God), who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

The Lord Jesus Christ in His deity has subsistence (the uncaused all-powerful life of God) within Himself, just as much as the Father and the Spirit).

John 8: 51-59 - Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death." Then the Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.' Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do You make Yourself out to be?" Jesus answered, "If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, 'I do not know Him,' I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

Also – **John 5: 26** – “For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.”

Practical Implications from Michael Horton – “If God were not free from creation, we might pray for Him, but not to Him.” “We would have no confidence that He could overcome evil or rescue us from death.” “Yet God’s freedom for creation – even for those who are not only finite but sinful – is the presupposition of our hope in Christ.” “God does not need time, but He freely enters it; He does not need a house, but He builds one anyway.” “All of this is for our benefit, out of God’s zeal to dwell together with finite, embodied creatures in covenant.”

