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The Glory of God-15

Opening: Psa. 73:24-25; 1-17.

1. Bible reading: Romans 3:21-31.

2. The Spiritual life—life with God by proper knowledge and by proper love:
Luke 10:25-28; Rom 3:11; Eph. 2:8-10; 1 John 4:19; John 17:3; 2 Pet 1:2-4.

3. Philosophical Realism (WT, TT): Natural law (11).

- a. Consider the vast implications of natural law, which gives us higher divine standards than even some laws permitted in the Scriptures.
- b. From rational nature to human personhood.
- c. Given that natural law is unwritten, universal, intelligible, and objective, how is it that man comes to know it?
- d. Understanding the history of natural law enables one to better understand its development, proper use, and evil distortions.
- e. Overview of the Pre-Socratics (469-399 BC) and natural law.
 - 1) The Greek philosophers' pursuit of fixed first principles, fixed inner structures, fixed natures, and fixed moral principles in the physical world rather than the various myths of Greek gods.
 - 2) The Sophists opposed all fixity in favor of relativism and human convention—"man is the measure of all things," Protagoras.

4. Bible doctrine: the glory of God (15).

The Glory of God (15)

1. John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. **14** And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.
2. To properly conceive the Incarnation as proclaimed throughout in the New Testament, three truths must be simultaneously affirmed and held.
 - a. It is *truly God the Son* who is man—emphasizing His full deity.
 - b. It is *truly man* that the Son of God is—emphasizing His full and complete humanity.
 - c. The Son of God *truly is* man—emphasizing the ontological union between the person of the Son and his humanity. Jesus is one being or reality, and the one being or reality that Jesus *is* the Son of God *existing* as man.

3. Beginning in the 20th century, believers have increasingly lost an understanding of the transcendent nature of the God and with it the glory of God. They have left orthodox Christianity and created a God of their own making complete with emotions. This has led to a great deal of confusion and heresy with respect to the incarnation.

Understanding the Glory of our Impassible God

1. Impassibility: “Divine impassibility is that divine attribute whereby God is said not to experience inner emotional changes of state whether acted freely from within or affected by His relationship to and interaction with human beings and the created order.”
2. God is transcendent and immutable. He does not have emotional ups and downs. He does not experience pain in His “heart.” He does not suffer.

3. Overview of the two heresies that orthodox Christianity has unanimously rejected. The impassibility of God was universally held throughout church history including through and after the Reformation.
 - a. Theopaschitism: that God suffered on the Cross (monophysites).
 - b. Patripassianism: that Father suffering (modalism).
4. There are no divine affections or emotions or passions in the inner life of God.
5. If God had emotions or passions, then He can be affected or acted upon by others, He is subject to and part of creation and not all-powerful or all-perfect.
6. God does not experience any suffering.
7. Moreover, God does not have feelings that are analogous to human feelings.

8. Divine impassibility follows on His immutability. God is changeless and unchangeable. His inner emotional state cannot change from joy to sorrow or from delight to suffering.
9. This does not mean that God is inert or apathetic. He is not something like the Stoic philosopher. God is not an emotional iceberg.
10. The fact is that God is impassioned all of the time. He is not spasmodic or fitful. He is not a God with mood swings. He is fully actual all of the time.
11. The idea that God has emotions is a direct result of the influences of process theology, psychology, Bible-onlyism, the problem of evil, and the importation of modern views of love.

12. Philosophical exegesis (as opposed to Bible-onlyism).

- a. There are texts that describe God in language of human experience and emotions, Gen 6.6; Deut. 9:7-9; 1 Sam 15:11.
- b. There are other texts which deny that God has human experiences and emotions, 1 Sam 15:29; Num 23:19. Isa 27:4; Acts 14:15; Malachi 4:2; Gen 1:1; Ex 3:14.
- c. We need a hermeneutic rule to guide us in the different passages. The passages that tell us about God's being should take precedence over passages that explain God's actions.

- d. We need to recognize that Scripture uses accommodation to teach us about God in terms that we understand. In fact, the whole of Scripture is an accommodation on God's part. So when God condescends to talk in our language, He is described as having arms, and feet and eyes, but wants us to understand His strength and movement and knowledge.

- e. Although the revelation is accommodation it is not false. It is not univocal. There is some analogy but there is still a gulf. He is not quantitatively more than we are. He is not more goodness as we understand to be compared. His is wholly other. He is transcendent! He is other than we are. He does not feel as we do.

13. If an affection does not change, then it is properly predicated of God. Like love. Love in man is a passion, we fall in love, we fall out of love, we move from emotional state a to emotional state b. But this is not essential to the nature of love itself. It is our experience of love, but it is not love itself. When we ascribe love, joy, and mercy to God we need to remove the passion element of it, the changeable element in it. So we can say that God does not have love as an affection, but God is love in perfection. God has no imperfections.
14. Divine impassibility is often misunderstood to teach that God is not love in any way. This is false. It means that His love has no imperfections. We are just denying that God has love in any changeable manner.

15. Impassibility follows from simplicity. God does not have attributes. he just is his attributes. It is a grave mistake to set God's love against His justice. He is not composed of act and potency. He is Pure Act. God does not have a part that acts on another part.
16. God as Actus Purus. God is not being and then becoming. He is Pure Act always. He cannot caused Himself to be other than He is nor can anything outside of Him do this. Therefore He cannot become angry, or become sad, or be moved here or there. There is no potential in God, which is but possibility. Simplicity safeguards us against attributing passions to God.

17. Impassibility is essential for a proper Christology. Why has God become man? Heb. 2:9; 4:15. Because God cannot suffer as God. The gospel of Christ is more glorious because God is impassible. The mystery and majesty of the incarnation is weakened if God as God can experience pain. God made the captain perfect through sufferings. He has to partake of our nature to make Himself liable to death and suffering and through it destroy the works of the devil.

18. The more we lift God up relative to His impassibility, the more we marvel at the incarnation and wonder at the cross that a God who could not suffer for us in His nature, took our nature to suffer according to human nature to redeem us.

The Glory of God (15)

19. John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacle among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.
- a. Christ's glory revealed in the 6 signs that point to the coming new creation (water to wine, healing sick, healing lame, feeding 5,000, giving sight to the blind, and raising the dead)
 - b. Christ's glory revealed on the Cross, John 3:14-16; 12:23-24, 32;
 - c. Christ's glory revealed in the incarnation as God's new tabernacle, John 1:14.