

Series: Incommunicable Attributes of God #1687

Title: John 5.26

God Is Self-Sufficient

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. We have been talking about one of the incommunicable attributes of God, His simplicity. As we have demonstrated from the Scripture, God is simple. We talk of the incommunicable attributes. These are the perfections and excellencies of the Creator that cannot be shared by His creatures. God's simplicity is one. This is exclusive to the Lord. And we talk of the communicable attributes. These are the perfections and excellencies of the Creator that creatures can also possess, but only to a finite extent. That which is communicable can be communicated to us, whereas that which is incommunicable cannot be.

As creatures we naturally find God's communicable attributes easier to discuss and understand. We can more easily relate to those perfections and excellencies in God. Right now we are dealing with two of the many *incommunicable* attributes: divine simplicity and divine self-sufficiency. These conversations require us, in a good way, to step back and reflect on the being of our great King. One of the many Scriptures that comes to mind is found in the sixth chapter of the Apostle Paul's first letter to Timothy. 1 Timothy 6, verses 15 and 16 reads, **"He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen."**

What a benediction! Our only Sovereign. We have one Master and He is God. The King of kings and Lord of lords. He makes all human kings and all human lords no ones. He *alone* possesses immortality. It is impossible for God to die. He has always been, He is, and He always will be. The Lord dwells in unapproachable light. He is absolutely holy, that majestic light of His holiness makes Him unapproachable by us because we are *unholy*. We cannot see Him for God is spirit. *To this God, the Only God* be honor and eternal dominion.

Friends, we are doing our best to understand God's simplicity and self-sufficiency and what these doctrines do is they put us face down on the ground in worship to and honor of *God*. They humble us before Him, because we realize He is too great for us to comprehend. All attempts to do so are feeble attempts. For one, we just do not have the vocabulary to describe how awesome He is. So I hope that, in these days together, you will join with me in exalting the High King of Heaven even when, *especially when* we struggle to grasp His incommunicable excellencies.

As Augustine said, regarding God, "I see the depth. I cannot reach the bottom." And as Anselm has said, "God is someone than whom none greater can be conceived." We too sometimes see the depth but we cannot reach the bottom. And we too believe that God is someone than whom none greater can ever be conceived. Blessed are You our God! Amen.

As we pivot to talk about the second of these two perfections before us, I remind you that God's simplicity and self-sufficiency are twins. They always go together. In fact, they are so close we can hardly tell them apart. I chose to put simplicity first in terms of teaching, but I could easily have done the reverse. An easy way, I think, to remember these divine excellencies is to think of them as simple and self-sufficient. Or self-sufficient and simple. Personalize them a little bit and be sure and give these place in your own theology of God. As we proceed, you will see how the two go together.

I also want to say that putting God's self-sufficiency under the banner of His attributes is not quite right, as if self-sufficiency is just another attribute. We'll see this as we go along, but when we say God is self-sufficient or He is self-existent what we are talking about is the very essence of who God is, His being. Really, all of the perfections or attributes of God are caught up together in His being. And here is where I remind you of the simplicity of God. All His attributes are ultimately just one attribute: God. As Sinclair Ferguson said, God has only one attribute: Godness.

That being said, we need to have a logical structure for our argument. As humans we need a way to think about God that is logical and makes the most sense to us. And certainly *I* need that as a teacher. Therefore, we will put self-sufficiency here, as one of the incommunicable attributes of the Living God. Just be careful that you do not think of this as a list in which one of the bullet points is self-sufficiency.

With that as an introduction, to the self-sufficient God we turn. As we get started, I just want to lay out some general words, definitions, and thoughts. My goal here is to get you engaged and thinking with me. All of this, in one way or another, will be repeated as the series progresses. So do not feel like I am going to say these things once and that's it. If you are having a bad day, you are distracted, you drive through a tunnel and lose the signal, or your child interrupts you as you listen to the podcast – “Well, I guess I missed *that*,” you might think. Do not worry. I will cycle these truths through again. We will take our time with this. And we'll look at this from a couple of different angles.

Actually, before we go further, let me pray for you and me. Father, thank You that You are simple. Thank You that You are self-sufficient. You have existence in Yourself. We exist because You exist and You made us. We acknowledge that while You are dependent on nothing and no one, we are dependent on *You*. So we come in our dependence, not our independence. And we again hoist ourselves on the breast of Jesus our Master-Teacher and upon the Holy Spirit who instructs us always.

Draw our attention to You. Protect us from the Evil One, Satan. Keep us from distraction. Please help me to teach this in a way that is clear and concise. Guard me from error. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight. Give me discernment. And fill me with your strength so that I do not grow weary. Meet all of our needs. We commit ourselves to You, and seek Your wisdom in all things. Thank You that You are with us. You are not far off, but You are near. In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray, Amen.

At the beginning there is a Latin term we have to know and that is *a se*. The Latin, *a se*. This means “from Himself” or “by Himself.” The word aseity was coined by the older theologians to capture this truth. Aseity is spelled A-S-E-I-T-Y. A-S-E-I-T-Y. When we use the word aseity we mean God's self-sufficiency. Some synonyms are self-existence, independence, and self-containment. God has life in Himself. He draws His unending energy from within Himself, says JI Packer. He is without anything else. He does not need anything or anyone else to exist. God has the ground of His existence within Himself.

Let's contrast this with ourselves. God is uncreated. We are created. God has life in Himself. We do not have life in ourselves. God is the Creator. We are created beings for whom God gives us life. God draws His energy from Himself. We draw our energy from Him. Berkhof puts it this way, “As the self-existent God, He is not only independent in Himself, but also causes everything to depend on Him (*Systematic Theology*, 58).” Listen to the Lord Jesus in John chapter 5 and verse 26. Jesus says, “**The Father has life in Himself...**” According to God's Son, our heavenly Father has life *in Himself*. He is self-existent.

RC Sproul said that with this word aseity is “captured all of the glory of the perfection of God's being... God and God alone has aseity. God and God alone exists by His own power.” That's very well said.

And we'll be talking more about this. When I considered the best way to teach this to you I decided that following one theologian – for the most part – is the best way to do this. And, as it turns out, one man above the others has put divine aseity in a most logical order. And while doing so has matched Scripture beautifully to each one of his insights. There is actually a lot of Scripture to consider. So, since we are almost out of time, then next time I will introduce this sound minded man to you and we'll take up each one of his points doing so because...God Is.

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