

**Series: Incommunicable Attributes of God #1684**

**Title: *God Is Without Parts***

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 return now to what we affirmed last time: God is simple. God is simple. When we say this we need to be careful to define that word “simple.” By simple we *do not* mean that God is easy to understand, because He is not. By simple we *do not* mean that God is simple minded. By simple we *do not* mean that God is slow or dim-witted. By simple we *do not* mean that God is simplistic. We must grasp this, the negative if you will, what we *do not* mean.

If that is what we *do not* mean, then what *do* we mean? We mean that God has no parts. God is *not* a compound being. The older doctrinal statements, the creeds and confessions, the older theologians, pastors, teachers, and every day Christians believed that God is simple. Listen to, as you know by now, one of my all-time favorite teachers Francis Turretin. Quoting him now, “The orthodox has constantly taught that the essence of God is perfectly simple and free from all composition (*The Institutes of Elenctic Theology, Volume I*, 191).” Close quote. We, however, live in an age where we need to recover this doctrine, believe it, teach it, and pass it along. I hope you will talk about this with your family and friends.

Admittedly, this may not seem that practical to you. But remember what we have said about the balance between what is theoretical and what is practical. This teaching gives us a much needed opportunity to reflect on who God is without rushing into what can be immediately helpful to us in our everyday problems. This is a study in the nature of God; the Being God. And today I want to direct our attention to a person who has done some great work to bring the simplicity of God into our present day discourse. His name is James Dolezal and he is professor of theology in the school of divinity at Cairn University in Pennsylvania. He is the author of a fascinating book by the title *God Without Parts* that focuses on God being simple.

This is not exactly a beach read or a volume you’ll want to dig into as you lie in bed and prepare to drift off to sleep. This is not John Grisham or Agatha Christie. The book gets technical. However, there are those of you who listen to this broadcast and podcast and want to explore some of what we talk about in greater detail. For you, I recommend Dr. James Dolezal’s *God Without Parts*. It was published in 2011. Let me draw from his work now as we continue to understand what is meant by the reality that God is simple.

Professor Dolezal (spelled D-O-L-E-Z-A-L) suggests problems from two perspectives. The first problem deals with why this doctrine is hardly ever taught to Christians today. And that is because we live in the age of the machines! We accept that when a machine has a multiplicity of parts, that machine can do far more than a machine with only a few parts. Think of a bicycle versus an airplane. The bicycle has two wheels, chains, a handle bar, a seat, and so on but an airplane, like a Boeing 747 has upwards of six *million* parts. Although, newer Boeing airplanes seem to be having a hard time holding onto all their parts, *while airborne*! Let’s hope that is now fixed. The majority of us accept that an airplane, with all those parts, going up 35,000 feet into the air is a more powerful machine than a bicycle our daughter is peddling down the driveway. Right?

And we think that since God is so big and complex, surely He must have a lot of parts. More than a big jet, anyway. But this is a problem for us, because not only does God not have many parts, *He has no parts*! And this brings us to our second problem, and the more important one. If we say “God has parts,” in whatever way we say it (or think it), then what we’re saying is first, God has a maker who is not God. Second, God depends on His various parts to be God. And we do not want to say these things concerning God, that’s for sure!

What we want to say, what we must say because it is true is that God does not depend upon parts and God does not depend on a maker, a composer, or an assembler of His parts to be God.

Put your thinking cap on for a moment. Wouldn't you agree that anything made of parts requires a maker? You may be driving along in your car as we speak, or sitting still in traffic (I'm sorry). Do you think your car, made up of all those parts, put itself together? No, it did not. Correct. Your vehicle has a maker (the good folks over at Ford or Toyota or Dodge, whatever). Or, think about your own body. Your body is made up of many different parts. And you have a Maker, He is God. Everything made of parts requires a maker, or a composer, or an assembler.

And, Professor Dolezal asks, wouldn't you agree that all multi-parted entities depend on the parts of which they are composed and whatever agent imposes unity on those parts? Your car depends on the engine to function. Your body depends on the heart to function. The car is dependent on the engine. The human body is dependent on the heart. And your car is dependent on you or your mechanic to take care of it. You have to feed it gas. Your mechanic has to change the oil, apply new brake pads, etcetera. And you feed your body the food it needs to function, food that comes from God your Maker. This all makes logical sense. Anything made of parts requires a maker and all multi-parted entities depend on the parts of which they are composed and depend on whatever agent imposes unity on those parts.

*But God does not depend upon a maker outside of Himself. And God does not depend on any parts and therefore He does not depend on an agent to impose unity on His parts.* Friends, God has no parts! God is simple. God is God. Nobody and nothing made God. Nobody and nothing put God together, like a puzzle with many parts. Quoting Dolezal now, "Nothing not God makes God be God. There is nothing in God that is not God. All that is in God is God." I hope you still have your thinking cap on! Let me give these three statements to you again

James Dolezal says, "Nothing not God makes God be God. There is nothing in God that is not God. All that is in God is God." Ponder this, will you? When you grasp it, you'll be filled with awe and wonder at who God is, and that will make you worship the Lord today, I think.

You see, this is why it is significant for us to talk about the simplicity of God. We want to address those people who say that God has a maker outside of Himself. We want to address those who say the God of the Bible is just one of many gods and that all these gods have a source outside of themselves for themselves. "Who made God," a child will often ask? The logic is to say that if God was made then He must have been made by a bigger God who was, in turn, made by an even bigger God who was, in turn, made by an even bigger, bigger, bigger God and so forth and so on. The correct answer for the child is "Nothing and no one made God. God is God." Really, we quote the name of this ministry, "God is." Of course, this boy or girl won't buy our answer and may (somewhat annoyingly keep asking), but that is the answer.

And we also want to address the really bad teaching circling around in Christian minds and churches, Christian schools that gives God parts and therefore makes Him dependent on those parts. We saw this last time regarding the attributes of God. The false teaching that God is part love, part holy, part justice, part all-knowing, part all-powerful and when we add up all these parts, the sum of the parts equals God. No. No. No. To refute this, I hope you understand, we have to state the doctrine of divine simplicity. God is simple.

I give God thanks for our forefathers who affirmed this doctrine. And I give God thanks for someone as relatively young and present as James Dolezal for his efforts in reclaiming this doctrine for our time. In one of his lectures he asks this question, then comments, "Does God depend on what is not God to be God? Again, does God depend on what is not God to be God? If you say, 'no,' then you are already committed to divine simplicity." So true. And that is why many Christians *are* already committed to this even though they/you may not have realized it.

Hopefully what is happening is that you are adding simplicity to your own doctrine of who God is. I will have more to say about this when we get together next time. But do give pause now and think about what has been said thus far. Make the message yours and join us next time because God Is.

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