

From Acorn to Oak

Who is God, and what is he like? Part 6: Does God have needs?

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“God needed Ole Joe. That’s why he took him.” “God was lonely; he needed someone to love and give him love. That’s why he created humankind.” Comments like these reflect a flawed view of God. As we’ve seen, God is perfect. If he had any needs, he would be lacking and, therefore, not perfect.

God has revealed his essential unity in his revelation in the Holy Scriptures, the Bible. We see that God is one and yet is comprised of three Persons sharing that one substance, a Trinity. Hence, he has in himself sufficient fellowship. Our creation is a manifestation of his love, not because of loneliness or any other need.

Further, if he had needs, he would be dependent on another or others. As the Bible teaches, the opposite is true: all creation is dependent on him.

God is independent.

We first see that he is the foundation of all being. In Hebrew the root word of his name that he revealed to Moses, יהוה, transliterated *yehwāh*, translated LORD, is the verb הָיָה *hāyāh*, to be. Everything has its existence in and because of him. Unlike us and the rest of creation, he does not depend on anything outside himself in order to exist. He has no need and is under no one’s authority, rule, or control.

God is not only independent in his very being but also in all his attributes and actions. With regard to his thinking, he discloses to Isaiah, “‘my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the LORD. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.’” (55:8-9; cf. Romans 11:33-36) To Job he says, “‘What is the way to the abode of light? And where does darkness reside? Can you take them to their places? Do you know the paths to their dwellings? Surely you know, for you were already born! You have lived so many years!’” (Job 38:19-21) This powerful irony drives a memory to my consciousness of some times in my teenage years when my mother sensed I needed some help to come down from my high horse. At such times she’d say, “Oh you’re still so wet behind the ears!”

God is also independent concerning his will. God asks Job a rhetorical question, “Who has a claim against me that I must pay?” (41:11a) Obviously the answer is no one, and God explains why in the next sentence. “Everything under heaven belongs to me.” (41:11b) Since God owns all that is, he is independent of anyone or anything. Job confesses, “‘I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.’” (42:2) Isaiah writes that “‘the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?’” (14:27) The prophet later quotes God saying, “‘so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will

accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” (55:11) This is the greatest guarantee ever made!

Even the mightiest humans on earth have acknowledged God’s independence and far superior power. Daniel records King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. superpower, admitting (after he came to his senses), “All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: ‘What have you done?’” (4:35; cf. Psalm 33:9-11) In Revelation God is worshiped with the words, “‘You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.’” (4:11)

His power also reveals God’s independence. “Our God...does whatever pleases him,” the Psalmist writes. (115:3) The Apostle Paul speaks of God’s “incomparably great power” and “his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything.” (Ephesians 1:19-22)

More benefits for us

The characteristics of God we’ve been considering in this series, are classified in theology according to two categories: those that are communicable, i.e., those of which he gives a limited measure to us, and those that are incommunicable, i.e., that he retains entirely for himself. Examples of God’s communicable characteristics include his goodness, his love, and his holiness. These attributes of God exist in him in a macrocosmic form, but in us in a microcosmic manner. We see glimpses in us of what is great in him. This reality is part of what is meant by our being created in and bearing God’s image. (Genesis 1:26-28)

His incommunicable characteristics include such attributes as his infinity, his unchangeableness, and his independence. We are very dependent on many dimensions of reality, to cite just a few: air, food, water, other people, and, most of all, God. But not so, God. He alone is independent, and that brings us countless blessings. Think about it!

That God is independent means he is not codependent with any aspect of his creation. He is fully capable of meeting all our needs at any time in any circumstances, and neither anyone nor anything in the universe can prohibit him from doing so. He is not controlled by any force or elements in the universe. Neither is he inhibited by them. You will never wake up and find that he is unable to do what he has promised.

Moreover, he is not under the influence of any human or other being who has evil in mind for you or me. He cannot be bribed. He cannot be manipulated. He is free to manifest his love as he wills without interference. Since his love is true and pure it also includes justice, and he will bring it to pass in the right timing in his sight.

We never have to worry about God doing something that is not good for us, because he has a need to fill, and at our expense! Those trying to be comforting to the loved ones of Ole Joe were neither comforting nor truthful. How scary it would be if God were the type of needy being who would reach down and snap someone up every time he started to feel lonely! When would it be your turn, or mine?! That view of God characterizes the Greek and Roman gods of mythology, and other religions—not the God revealed in the Bible.

God doesn't have needs. As the Apostle Paul explained to the Athenians, "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth...he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else." (Acts 17:24-25)

If you've seen the previous articles in this series, you've observed throughout this one how God's other characteristics are linked with his independence, which permits their free and complete expression, all for our eternal blessing. Let us walk in faith and obedience, trusting and obeying, so we can experience these blessings most fully and serve him more effectively in the high and holy calling he has given us.