

The God Who is Sufficient Acts 17:26

We are in this chapter where Paul is in Athens all on his own, and he has been preaching Jesus Christ in the market places. He is brought to the council of Athens to present this strange God that they do not know about. The various gods which were almost too numerous in Athens had to be authorized. And Paul begins to talk about the unknown God which they have a statue for, just in case they missed any gods. And Paul begins his presentation by bringing to the forefront the one and only true God that they know nothing about.

And we saw that this God is the creator of heaven and earth and everything in it. He is Lord and ruler of all. There is none beside him. And this is one of the aspects of Christianity that people hate or find intolerable. It is not that you believe in God. You are free to believe whatever you want to believe. You believe God is like this — I believe God is like that. We each have our own views. But it is here. There is only one God, and only one truth of who he is. If He is creator of all, then Zeus or Hermes are nothing, Dianna is nothing. Even the Emperor is no God. This one true God is ultimately the one we are answerable to. There is a God who has created everything. Evidence of his existence is on display every single day.

The other thing is here it is amazing how really smart people and intelligent people will believe so many different things and absurd things about God, not only in our own time but throughout history. Only a fool says there is no God. But it is incredible in our sinful nature how we are reduced to fools in our thoughts of God. And here the Athenians prided themselves in wisdom and deep thinking about primary things and origins and the gods. But they had so many contradictory beliefs about their various gods and how to serve them and who they were. Think of it, because you even see this today, intelligent people would rather bow down to an image of Mary rather than bow down to the one true living God. That image cannot do anything for you. It is lifeless, and Mary never had, nor ever will have divine status. People bow down to the almighty dollar. Money cannot give you the security and save your soul. Our thoughts of God outside the Scripture reduce us all to fools.

So before there can be any meaningful presentation of sin and the ravages of sin and the cost of sin before a holy God, before there can be any talk about Jesus who came to redeem us from the penalty of our sin, there needs to be an understanding of who God is. And so Paul takes his time here to explain, teach, inform, preach the glory and the preeminence, Lordship and sovereignty of the one we are all answerable to, and the one who is ever present. And many things of God should be obvious but the sinner suppresses the truth of God in unrighteousness. But God has made himself known. He has not only revealed himself in creation but given specific revelation of who he is in his Word — the Bible.

And here is the glory of the knowledge of God is that because God is inexhaustible, we never plumb the depths of what is written in his word. There is so much more to discover about our great God. I have had the privilege of studying our God weekly for over two and half decades full time, and sometimes I look at my knowledge of our God and it seems so infantile, it seems that my knowledge of God can be contained in a thimble, because there is so much more to learn and discover

and be blown away as far as the knowledge and knowing our true God. And some of the other worldly and glorious truths about who he is are right here in this sermon of Paul before the Athenians.

And I cannot say this enough, the way we are changed is by spending time in the presence of our God. The more we know of Him, the more we are drawn toward him. We often wonder why our lives are not being changed and transformed but how often are we beholding who he is? How often are we spending time in worship just in his word? Because many of us have grand thoughts and high thoughts of God, but we have only just begun, there is so much more to discover. And are you beholding your God? Sam Storms has a saying that “beholding is a way of becoming,” and he takes that from 2 Corinthians 3:18, **“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”**

Are you beholding God? I want to look at what Paul says here in verse 25 this morning and I want us to see the unneeded God — the absolute sufficient God. Answer this question and then think about it because God truly is in a category all by himself. What does God need? And the answer is nothing. Let’s seek to behold our God this morning and seek to be changed from one degree of glory to another.

1. God is not dependant on anything. 25a.

It is such a glorious and humbling truth because we are drawn toward greatness, and in our sin we try to find that greatness in ourselves. We want others to be dependant on us because we are self-sufficient. But there has only been one who has ever been self-sufficient in the truest sense of the word, and that is God. He is in need of nothing. There is really nothing that I can give to the Lord that he needs. Think of that because that is humbling. He doesn’t need our worship or adoration this morning. He doesn’t need our service. He is absolutely complete and sufficient in and of himself. Do you recognize that about God? You are adding nothing to him by being here this morning? God is not gaining by your presence or my presence. All our thoughts and boasts about who we are and our accomplishments and greatness come shattering down when we come into the presence of God.

And what Paul says here would have been mind numbing for many who were listening to him. Consider these words of Paul, **“nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything.”** This would have been a shocking statement. The gods of the Greek Parthenon were needy. They needed the worship of others. And think of what Paul means here of service by human hands. It meant the multiple animal sacrifices they would make. They would feed a particular deity and through their service they would not only gain the favour of the deity but that particular deity would become stronger. They would build temples or shrines, carve reliefs in worship. The more worship the stronger the god would become. They would take an image and dress it up in costly array and lead it in a parade through the streets and the gods needed this work. And the people in turn needed the favour of the gods or they would not prosper. Their crops would fail or they would be defeated in battle. Their service by hands was necessary for their success and the success of their gods. They took great

pride in a bountiful harvest or a military victory. Not only did their god triumph but they triumphed also. Their gods needed them.

But God is a God who needs nothing. He is creator of all who does not need creation. He exists without any input or forces or resources or anything outside of himself. The biblical picture of God is that he is flawless and complete and sufficient. Before there was creation God existed as the absolute and complete God. Completely satisfied and all in himself. Think of when Moses was told to go to Israel and deliver the people of God he asks but who do I say sent me. Listen to the answer given in Exodus 3:14, **“God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And he said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”** Think of it. He is Yahweh. And this name of God is used six thousand times in Scripture. Any time we see the capital letters LORD in the Bible it is literally saying the name of God this way — “I AM.” Not I was or will be but what I am I always will be. He is the perfect and unchanging God. He is absolutely and needing nothing. Since he needs nothing, our God is perfectly satisfied in himself.

This is so different from process theologians who say that as God interacts with his creation he is growing and maturing and developing. God is not developing. He is perfect. God in many ways is simple in this sense — there is no mixture in him. Since he is perfect and always will be perfect needing nothing, then he will always be all holy. There is not mixture of unholiness in him. All his ways are righteous and glorious. He is all loving. He cannot grow in love. His love is never depleted. He is perfect in love and the execution of that love. We are in process, but God is never in process. He is perfect and absolutely self-sufficient. When we say there is no one like our God — he truly is in a category all on his own. We are needy and he is not.

So if God doesn't need anything then why did he create the universe? And I think we have to go against much of the popular teaching that he was somehow lonely or needed to somehow love others. God has perfect delight and perfect fellowship in himself and in the Triune nature of who he is. He created the universe out of the free delight to display his glory. He created you and me not out of need but freely and volitionally and purposefully simply to display his glory. It is highest and most glorious reason for everything and why we exist. So as we get out of bed in the morning, as we interact with our spouse or children and face the pressures of the day, God has given us purpose and that purpose is simply to display his glory. You see life is really not about you and me but about him.

Now think of why this so important in our worship of God and our living out of this truth. Think of why this is so important even to the Athenians. The reason why is they thought they could gain the favour of God through their efforts. God needed them, so they could manipulate God in order to get what they wanted. But God doesn't need you and me, He doesn't need the work of our hands. So think of his perfections in not only love but in righteousness. No one can say to him, look at all I given to you God — you owe me. God is not indebted to no one. Therefore his judgments will always be perfect and impartial. Listen to Deuteronomy 10:17-19, **“For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.”**

Now think of it, why would anyone accept a bribe? Because they are giving me something that I want. I might not need it but it might make my life better. God is Creator of all. He owns everything that we have, and therefore even owns the bribe money. There is nothing that you can give him that he does not own or that somehow will complete him. Think of why we show partiality to someone also. It is the same reason. They can give something to me that I want or need. God needs nothing — nothing from you and nothing from me. There is no trade off with God. Think of how this brings in the seriousness of our sin. There is no way I can manipulate God and have my sin too. An all-sufficient God is a God who is impartial in judgment. He is never put into a corner.

So think of where this is all leading. It is all leading to grace. If I cannot manipulate God or corner God, if God is perfectly righteous and I am not, and if I am ever going to come into his presence then it has to be somehow and somehow through his grace. And that grace somehow and somehow must ultimately glorify his character because in the end it is all about his glory. Behold, the unneedy God. He truly is seated on the throne and beckons us to come adore him.

2. Since God is independent than everything and everyone is dependant on Him. V.25

If we had to describe mankind in one word what would it be? We could probably think of many — maybe “sinful”, or even “noble,” because we are made in the image of God. But how about this word — “needy.” Do you realize how needy you are in a course of a day? I think many times we do not realize all the things that have to go on in the course of a day in order for us to live and function and even glorify our great God. We are needy and so needy. Here is the thing, once you start to realize who God is as Creator God and the all self-sufficient one, you start to realize how utterly dependant we are on the one and only true God. We often try to reverse the order and make God dependant on us but we are dependant on him. And not just believers but every single person and thing in all the universe is dependant on him. Every single person has life right now because of the independent God above. We foolishly ask when we are going through trials and difficulties — where is God? But the question is ludicrous, because the only reason why we have life right at that very moment is because of God. And we forget the multiple ways that he blesses us with life and certainly above what we deserve.

Now this last half of this verse is so important because it really answers the question about the involvement of God in his creation. There are those who look at the created order and they have to admit that this could never happened by chance. What we see is none other than intelligent design as they call it, and they are absolutely right. But that is far as they are willing to go. They say that God created everything. He made it self sustainable but in the end is uninvolved. What this verse teaches is not only God Creator and independent but he is Sustainer. The reason why we can hear and think and comprehend and exist at this very moment is because of none other than the sustaining power of God. It is incredible the amount of functions that are going on in your body that make it possible for you to hear this very message. There is a God who holds all things together by the power of his will. It is not that God created everything, wound the universe up, and then left, he has been uninvolved. We are told that he is either a mere spectator or uncaring distant landlord of everything going on.

The picture that Scripture gives is so different. Speaking of Jesus in Colossians 1:16-17 Paul says, **“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”** Notice that all things hold together, in other words, all things are sustained from him. Listen to Psalm 104:14-15, **“You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man’s heart.”** Even something as simple as the grass growing and the crops cultivating are not a natural processes but dependant on God.

So think of the things around us but also think of our own lives. Look at what Paul says here, **“nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.”** Notice the word “since” here. God is not dependant upon us but it is the other way around. He is the one who gives breath and life and every single blessing that we have in our life both physical and spiritual. Everything is from the hand of God. So think of it — you really cannot understand the nature and identity of mankind unless you understand this fundamental truth of our absolute dependance on God for moment by moment life. This is what should make sin so shocking and so awful in our sights. It should bring such conviction. Sin is me thinking I can live independently. The reason why I am allowed to exist is none other than the preserving activity of our God.

Now it also should call us to do a couple of things as believers. One is it should cause such gratitude. I think we are very good at seeing what we don’t have or things we wish we had. But we are so blind so often of seeing and revelling in the many things that we do have. It could be things like sight or hearing or tastebuds or mobility or the ability to think. We do not recognize all the people around us that do not have these functions or have lost them. It could be our homes or autos or the food around our table or the warm and comfortable clothes. How often do we open the closet and it is full and say, “I have nothing to wear,” or open the full refrigerator and say there is nothing to eat! Then we come to our salvation and how gracious God has been. He had to open our hearts or we would never have come to Christ. James 1:17, **“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”** All the multiple good things in my life, and they are really too numerous to count and given by an all good God. And maybe we came with bitterness because we don’t have certain things.

We might not have a certain spouse you dreamed of, or a spouse at all. We might have battle with your children and you never thought it was suppose to be this way. We might have even gone through rejection for our faith. But even in these things God is active and God is blessing. He is actually doing more good than we realize. James also says in James 1:2-4, **“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing”** James says you know this. God has given these trial not to take away from your life but so that you would lack nothing! And here is my point. All things that make up who we are, and all of my life in the here and now is from

God, and therefore how much gratitude do we have in our lives. Many Christians asked, "How are you doing?" Reply — "Better than I deserve." They realize the blessing and the goodness of God. Do we? Are we living a life of gratitude? You see a life that recognizes God's presence and activity in our lives truly cannot help but be thankful, and cannot help but be constantly rejoicing.

And let me end with this — we need God. God doesn't need us. So there is a way that we can serve God that is actually an affront to his character and his holiness, which might seem strange because can you think of anything better than serving our God — anything higher? And here is where it becomes sin — thinking we can earn or somehow pay back God for his blessings. Many people want certain things from God. And they might serve and then grow bitter when God doesn't deliver. That person thinks somehow God has robbed them — God is their debtor. This is none other than the ancient religions of Athens who thought they could manipulate God through their worship. Give God and he has to give. He owes you.

We need God this very moment for life. And remember why God created everything. He created everything for his glory — for the display of his character, and nothing could bring God more joy than the display of his character. So think of why we serve — not to get or earn from God, but simply because of who God is. It is a response to realizing the glory and goodness of God. There is a delight in this great God — an enjoyment of him. And here is the incredible thing here — a right understanding of God should always lead to heartfelt service for who God is. There is no one greater than our God. Praise him, recognize him, and serve him.