

Lesson 12

# GOD IS INDEPENDENT

Compiled by Darrell Crow based upon personal studies, notes and prayer.

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This means that God does not need anything. He doesn't need anything to be who He is or contribute to who He is. Tony Evans, Th.D, is a Christian pastor, speaker, author, and a widely-syndicated radio and television broadcaster and said this about God's independence:

*“This understanding can enhance our worship of God, because while God has a voluntary relationship to everything, He has a necessary relationship to nothing. In other words, God relates to His creation because He chooses to, not because He needs to. For example, if you show up for worship at your church, that's good and God is glad to see you. But He will not be worse off if you stay home. He's not going to panic.”*

We, on the other hand, are dependent. We are dependent on our parents for life and clothing as children, and when we are older, we are dependent upon friends, family, job, education, etc. There is a sense in which we need these things to make it in life and society.

But we serve a God who needs nothing because He is independent. Look at what Paul said to the Athenians in *Acts 17:24–25*: *The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; <sup>25</sup> nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things;*

Paul says, “He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything” (v. 25). What does Paul mean by “He is not served by human hands”? Paul means at least two things.

1. He simply means that God does not need anything. God is independent.
2. He means that God is not served by human hands because He is *the giver*.

We may get a good picture of this when small children buy their father a gift. Did they buy the gift? Yes. But in another sense, the dad bought the gift because it was dad's money. See, the dad is the one who makes the money in the household. Similarly, Paul says we can't really serve Him because He has given us all things. Can we really give God money on Sunday if He has already given it to us? There is a sense in which we can't. We can't because God is independent, and He is the true giver of all things. We can give only because He has given to us.

That is the wonderful thing about God. He doesn't need us, but He allows us and calls us to worship Him, though He doesn't need anything.

## **Created for His Enjoyment**

Why did God create us then if He is independent? Was it because He was lonely or bored?

Not at all. There are many things in life that I don't need. I don't need to look at ESPN to see who won the latest NBA game. That's something I do because I enjoy it. God made us because He enjoys us. Look at what He says about Israel and, through extension, the people of God of all times: *“The LORD your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy. (Zephaniah 3:17).*

It says, He takes great delight in us and He will rejoice over us with singing. We often see people who are musically talented write or sing songs to people they care about. Our worship songs to God are commonly written this way. However, God also sings over us and delights in us. He delights in us, especially, when we are following Him and walking in the unique gifts that He gave us. It brings Him pleasure because we are fulfilling His purpose.

Scripture would say our high calling is to bring God both joy and pleasure. *Colossians 1:16* says this: *For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him.*

All things were made for Him—to bring glory to God and to bring Him pleasure.

A great illustration of this is seen in the story of Olympic runner, Eric Liddell. In 1924, he was competing in the Olympics and had decided this would be his last competition before he went into full-time missions. One person asked him, why not just stop running now and go into missions? He told the person, “I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. And when I run I feel His pleasure.”

For each of us, God has given us certain gifts. For some, He made us intelligent, others athletic, others are great with their hands, and others are gifted at serving or teaching. When we do the things that God created us for, He takes great pleasure in us as well.

### Creation's Dependence

The other side of God's independence is our dependence on Him. Listen again to what Paul said to the Athenians: *nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things (Acts 17: 25).* We need God for everything, even life and breath.

Paul says in *Colossians 1:17: He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.* In talking about Christ, He says that He holds “all things together.” This means that not only does He give us life and breath, but He holds the trees, the plants, the oceans, the stars, and all the cosmos together. Everything is dependent upon Him; we can do nothing apart from God.

I think we may get a clearer picture of the dependence of man in David's illustration of God being a shepherd in Psalm 23.

*The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.*

*2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.*

*3 He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.*

*4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*

*5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.*

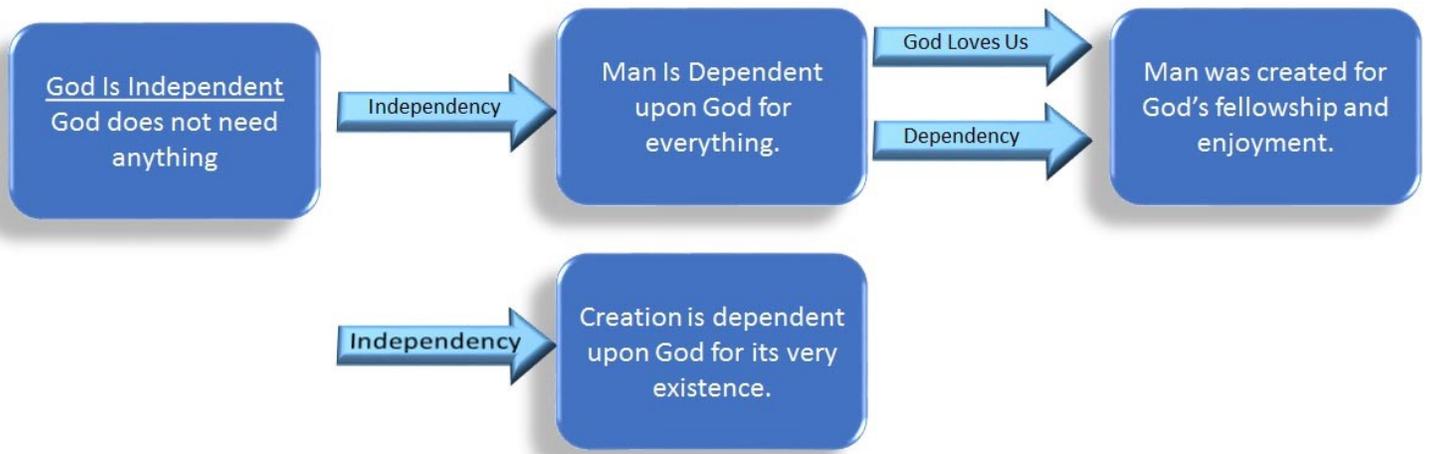
*6 Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

Sheep are animals that can't survive without a shepherd. They can't feed themselves. They can't protect themselves. Other animals can at least run away from predators but not sheep. They will idly standby until their death. From this we get the phrase, “Like a lamb to the slaughter”

- *Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.*

They are very fearful. One commentator said they are often fearful of running water or the dark. The shepherd must care for them like a baby. The shepherd would protect them with his rod and with his staff he would guide them. They are prone to go astray, and he must constantly bring them back.

Many have wondered if God made these dependent animals as an illustration of how much humans need God. We are prone to fear: fear about the past, present, and future. We need a shepherd who calms our fear. We cannot direct our lives; we need a shepherd to guide us in the direction to go. We frequently go astray. We need a shepherd to save us from our wandering heart. Our God is independent, and we are dependent upon Him.



Understanding God's independence reminds us of God's love for us. He didn't need to create us since He doesn't need anything, but God created us because He loves us. Paul believes this is a very important reality for Christians to understand. Look at what he prays in Ephesians 3:17–19:

- *Ephesians 3:17–19 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, (18) may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, (19) and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.*

Paul prayed for the saints to know the depth and height of God's love. This is important because knowing that someone loves us will often radically change us. On earth, those who experience the greatest human love typically marry and spend the rest of their lives serving and getting to know one another.

We must pray for ourselves and others to have power to grasp God's love so that we may be transformed by it. God's independence reminds us about how much God loves us. and reminds us of our need to be dependent.

Jesus said in *Matthew 18:3* "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. In order for a person to enter the kingdom of God, they must become like a child. The word *child* is used of a very young child, a toddler or an infant. He was saying that the person who enters the kingdom of God has learned dependence. An infant can't feed himself, clothe himself, guide himself, or protect himself. He is totally dependent upon his parents. In the same way, a person who is saved learns he can do nothing to get into the kingdom of God on his own; he is totally dependent upon God.

However, this is not only true in regards to salvation, but also in sanctification. In the next verse, Christ says, he who becomes like this child is greatest in the kingdom of God (*Matthew 18:4 Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*). The person who learns dependence upon this independent God shall be the greatest in the kingdom of God. This person knows his utter weakness and need for the Almighty.

How much do we need God? We can tell how much we need God by considering how much we pray, read the Bible, worship, or need to be around His people. This shows something of our dependence upon Him. Some people can go weeks without reading His Word, which shows their lack of dependence, their lack of childlikeness.

We must learn as a discipline to be like children in order to enter the kingdom. We can do nothing to save ourselves, and therefore, we must put our weight and faith fully on Christ. However, we must also learn this dependence to become great in the kingdom, essentially to grow. God's independence reminds us of these things. It reminds us of His love for us and our dependence upon Him. Let no one doubt how much He loves us, and let no one doubt how much we really need God.