



In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God. Amen.

THEOLOGY IN EVANGELISM

“God is love” (*1John 4:8*). Out of God’s love for us, He reveals Himself to us so that we can know and feel His presence and therefore have a relationship with Him. This relationship should be one of love as a result of His love for us: “We love Him because He first loved us” (*1John 4:19*). Therefore, out of our love for God, we desire that all people taste and feel this love of God since the greatest commandment was that one should love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength, AND our neighbor as ourselves. This is evangelism – spreading the gospel of God’s love to all people. This is the testimony of our Christianity as our Lord Jesus Christ told the disciples: “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (*John 13:35*).

Just as God is love, our Lord Jesus Christ told the Samaritan woman that “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (*John 4:24*). If one truly loves God, he must not only love in word, but also in truth. “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (*1John 3:18*). It is this love for God that moves us to show and speak that truth to all people. It is a part of one’s love for God. Just as He is Truth (*John 14:6*), we must also learn, live, and practice that truth if we truly love God. St. Paul makes this clear when in the middle of speaking about what love is in *1Corinthians 13*, he says an extremely important verse that puts a balance for all the rest when he writes that love “does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth” (*1Cor. 13:6*).

Theology is the study of that Truth that God has revealed to us about Himself in order for us to have a relationship with Him. Therefore, theology is not just facts and formulas, but an opportunity for whoever studies it to go deeper into a relationship with God by understanding that truth that He has revealed to us. Our Lord Jesus Christ has taught us that these principles are not just words to be studied but that “The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” (*John 6:63*). This knowledge, not just textbook knowledge, but rather one of experience and a relationship, becomes eternal life: “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (*John 17:3*).

Unfortunately, there are some misconceptions about theology that discourage some people from even listening to any sort of theological dialogue. Theology is believed by some to be the opposite of spirituality. Often times people will say phrases like, “Don’t give me doctrine; don’t preach at me; just give me Jesus” or “doctrine will divide the body of Christ: Jesus told us to love” or even “I don’t know about that theological stuff; I just know I love Jesus”.

This mentality of theology being anti-spiritual or anti-God is quite contradictory. But this is the contemporary Christian culture that indirectly rejects God in the name of

love because instead of accepting and living by what God has revealed to us about Himself, He ends up being denied. This type of love that is presented to people is an empty one that cannot present God to them since it is a love devoid of the true God. It is not a divine love, but one subject to people's own mentalities and personal feelings and emotions. "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth". Thus, for me to have Jesus in my life, I must know about that Truth, that He is Truth and worship Him in spirit and truth. So theology is spiritual.

Without truly understanding God or having a relationship with Him, how can I present Him to other people? Thus, the importance of theology. Many people speak about God, but neither know Him nor know about Him. Who is the God that we worship? Who is Jesus Christ? Who is the Holy Spirit? Why did God create me? Why am I here? What is the purpose of this life? Why do I need to be saved? How am I saved?..... It is comments and beliefs as stated above that ignore all of these questions and thus the whole meaning of what Christianity is. Without theology, I cannot present Christianity in its true light to other people.

In fact, the more that I understand God should lead me to a closer relationship with Him. It is the same as any relationship. For example, a married couple knows only so much about each other when they first meet. But then they continue to grow in that relationship as they learn more about each other. How much more with God Who we will be learning about and experiencing for an eternity? "And this is **eternal life**, that they may **know You**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (*John* 17:3). This is theology.

In evangelism, one runs into many different religions, cults, and Christian denominations where there are numerous ideas about who God is, who our Lord Jesus Christ is, who the Holy Spirit is, and how one has a relationship with God and is saved from sin and corruption. The world is full of heresies and false conceptions about God and our salvation. We are called in these situations to speak about that truth out of love for God and love for the salvation of every soul which is the will of God: "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (*1Tim.* 2:3-4). "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (*1Pet.* 3:15). If anyone told a lie or spread false rumors about your father, wouldn't you stand up and defend him out of love even though he may not need for you to defend him? How much more God Who does not need for us to defend Him, but rejoices when we express our love to Him by making sure that the truth is said in a manner befitting Him, with meekness and fear, i.e. in a Christian manner, for the salvation of every person.

Theology is not textbook knowledge of God, but spirit and life. So the more that I know about God, the more that this should deepen my relationship with Him as St. Paul says: "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (*Eph.* 3:17-19).

There is always the danger that the study of theology becomes textbook knowledge which can have adverse affects: “Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies” (1Cor. 8:1). So for us to get the most out of our study of theology for our growth in Christ, let us do so with:

- 1) a spirit of prayer
- 2) humility
- 3) diligence and
- 4) making it a practical part of our spiritual life through living in the Church.

This was the life of the early Church that integrated all of these factors into one. The book of *Acts* describes this life of the early Church and that the apostles’ doctrine, including theology, was an essential part and the fruits that come as a result: **“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.** Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. **Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,** and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. **So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,** praising God and having favor with all the people. **And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved”** (Acts 2:42-47).

Glory be to God forever. Amen.

Questions for this lesson:

- 1) Many people believe that there is a contradiction between theology/doctrine and God’s love. Please explain the link between God’s love and theology and why they are one and the same?
- 2) Give two reasons why the proper understanding of theology is important in evangelism.
- 3) What is the proper way to study theology, i.e. with what spirit or state of mind?