

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

The Trinity: Basic Truths, Pt. 4
Selected Passages

Keywords: Trinity, God, Theology Proper, God the Father, Fatherhood of God

PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb: This sermon develops the idea of God as Father in preparation to see God also as the Son and the Holy Spirit. In doing so, much time is spent on considering the effects of seeing God as Father.

DISMISS

I. Introduction.

- A. As we continue to study the doctrine of the Trinity we come to the place of examining each person—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
 - 1. I have shown that the bible affirms that there is but one true God.
 - 2. But I have also shown you that the bible indicates a plurality of persons within the Godhead. As the scripture is unfolded it shows three person, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
 - 3. Along with this information I have pointed out where each person of the Trinity is working in some way at the same time that the other two are working as well. This is to show the inadequacy of modalism.
 - 4. We now need to examine how the bible reveals each person of the Trinity to show that each person is seen as God.
- B. Before we move into that part of this sermon I want to give some additional background and explanation of this doctrine.
 - 1. There is a creed called the Athanasian Creed. It was not written by Athanasius but named after him. It was written about 100 years after he lived. It is powerful and it does a good job in describing and delineating the Trinity.

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Athanasian Creed

Whoever desires to be saved should above all
hold to the catholic faith.

Anyone who does not keep it whole and unbroken
will doubtless perish eternally.

Now this is the catholic faith:

That we worship one God in trinity
and the trinity in unity,
neither blending their persons
nor dividing their essence.

For the person of the Father is a distinct person,
the person of the Son is another,
and that of the Holy Spirit still another.

But the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one,
their glory equal, their majesty coeternal.

What quality the Father has, the Son has, and the Holy Spirit has.

The Father is uncreated,
the Son is uncreated,
the Holy Spirit is uncreated.

The Father is immeasurable,
the Son is immeasurable,
the Holy Spirit is immeasurable.

The Father is eternal,
the Son is eternal,
the Holy Spirit is eternal.

And yet there are not three eternal beings;
there is but one eternal being.
So too there are not three uncreated or immeasurable beings;
there is but one uncreated and immeasurable being.

Similarly, the Father is almighty,

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the Son is almighty,
the Holy Spirit is almighty.
Yet there are not three almighty beings;
there is but one almighty being.

Thus the Father is God,
the Son is God,
the Holy Spirit is God.
Yet there are not three gods;
there is but one God.

Thus the Father is Lord,
the Son is Lord,
the Holy Spirit is Lord.
Yet there are not three lords;
there is but one Lord.

Just as Christian truth compels us
to confess each person individually
as both God and Lord,
so catholic religion forbids us
to say that there are three gods or lords.

2. The use of a creed is a powerful tool to help the people of God grow in their knowledge and understanding.
 - a. In any church you have true Christians, false ones, mature and immature, those who are learning what it means to follow Jesus and those teaching.
 - b. I read an account the other day that was interesting in who it was who was writing. Nicky Cruz, *Run, Baby Run*.
 - (1) Converted through David Wilkerson.
 - (2) Still evangelizing today. Wrote another book called *The Magnificent Three* regarding the Trinity. Fred Sanders uses his story to introduce the doctrine and importance of the Trinity.
 - c. Hear what is written here regarding Nicky:

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From the moment of his dramatic conversion, he had known that Jesus saves and that the father forgives. In his earliest days of Bible study he came to understand how it had been the sovereign “shove” of the Holy Spirit that had been at work behind the scenes. None of this was new information when he began to describe the Trinity as “the most important element” of his discipleship. In fact, Cruz had even affirmed the doctrine of the Trinity from the beginning. It seems as if nothing had changed, yet he began writing about his relationship with Father, Son, and Spirit with the excitement of having made a life-changing discovery. . . . Though Cruz had gained no new information, he wrote as if his new grasp of the Trinity had changed everything about his Christian life.

The difference is that he had gotten on the inside of the doctrine. He had moved from accepting it on the authority of Scripture and his trusted elders to understanding from within. “I didn’t understand it. I believed it was true, though at first only because I had such great confidence in those who taught it to me. Then later I believed it was true because I saw it to be true in the Bible.” This was an important transition in itself, maturing from unnecessarily immature trust in human authority, to direct reliance on divine authority. But it was still only authority, and only worked on Cruz from the outside. “So I believe that, but I still didn’t understand.” What Cruz experienced in his Trinitarian awakening was a kind of shift in how he perceived the same idea: first, he saw the Trinity is a difficult doctrine that had to be accepted but could hardly be explained, then he went on to see it as an illuminating doctrine that explained what he read in the Bible and what he experienced in his Christian life. Whereas he first encountered the doctrine as a problem, he came to understand it as a solution.

Cruz recalls his early exasperation with the doctrine in a way that probably rings true for many Christians who wouldn’t express it so bluntly: “Why have three persons, I thought, when it confuses me so much? It seemed to me such a totally unnecessary complication. Why couldn’t God just be God? Then I could understand him. This ‘Trinity’ business I accepted by faith, but I could not relate to it at all.” The transformation in his life took place when he realized that the things described in the doctrine were things he was already in contact with. He knew Jesus, the Father, and the Spirit through their work in his life. The doctrine of the Trinity was the key to understanding that those three experiences belong together because the God behind them was the one God, making himself known as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit precisely because he eternally exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. “I understand that God is so much more to me as three-in-one than he could ever be in any other way,” Cruise wrote. “I know now how much easier it is for me to relate to him in that day-to-day way because he is three.” He goes on:

“I am not talking about theology. What I am describing is something different from merely believing in the doctrine of the Trinity. I have always believed in the doctrine of the Trinity but I had never experienced God personally as three-in-one. It was at first merely a doctrine in which I believe, but now it has become a truth of everyday life. God has developed in the sense of the

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separate relationships which I can have with the father, Savior, and Holy Spirit. He showed me the strength that comes from those separate relationships, the power for living that comes from the three faces of God. He has taught me to feed off the Trinity for my daily sustenance, rather than just having some vague feeling that the Trinity is somehow true.”

People can become Christians after learning a very small amount of doctrine and information. As a growing discipleship, they read more of the Bible and come to understand more than they had understood before. What Nikki cruises Trinitarian testimony highlights is that the decisive factor is not a transfer of information. There was no brand-new data put into his thought process, and he did not have to change his mind about any of his beliefs. He had already been believing in the Trinity for some time when he woke up to the difference the Trinity makes for every aspect of his Christian life. His radical Trinitarianism did not come from an advanced theology lesson; it came from the gospel and then led him to an advanced theology lesson. He was like a man who found treasure hidden in a field he didn't have to buy, because he already owned it. He heard God calling him to dig into the depths, and what he found there changed everything for him. (From *The Deep Things of God: How The Trinity Changes Everything*, Fred Sanders. Kindle edition, loc 515-551)

- C. With these thoughts in our minds let's look again at the Trinity and see if we can begin to move beyond mere words and see the glory of this doctrine.

II. The Father as God.

- A. This is usually not an issue. Most people accept the deity of the Father. Seeing Him as God anytime “God” is mentioned in the bible. However, that is not always the case. At times it refers to Jesus or the Spirit, and other times it refers to the Godhead.
 - 1. However, the understanding and richness that is attached to the Fatherhood of God is often lost upon us.
 - 2. I find that with the rise of the gospel-centered movement there can be a tendency to so emphasize Jesus that the Father is lost on us. But in Philippians 2:10-11 we see the biblical pattern emerge: “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”
 - a. We can never make too much of Jesus Christ, but if we are properly making much of Jesus we will always make much of the Father as well.

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- b. It is the purpose of Jesus to reveal the Father. If you are not seeing God the Father as you consider Jesus then something is wrong in how you are considering Him.
3. Within many Charismatic and Pentecostal circles the emphasis becomes the Spirit, though the Father and Son are part of the time of worship, it is the Spirit who moves into the forefront. However, the biblical norm is that the Spirit reveals to us the Son and the Father, with the Father being the one in the forefront
4. Within modern Reformed churches the desire is so strong to emphasize that God is sovereign and all powerful that again the Fatherhood of God is lost.
 - a. There is such a timidity in approaching God because what is foremost on the mind is His power and sovereignty.
 - b. We are called to address Him as “Our Father.” We are to cry out to Him as “Abba, Father.”
 - c. Even in many of the passages speaking of God’s sovereign will in salvation we see Him as Father. Jesus said in John 6,
 - (1) (37) All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.
 - (2) (40) For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.
 - (3) (44) No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.
 - (4) (65) For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.
 - (5) Is God sovereign? Yes. Do we force our will upon Him? No. But notice that all of those passages speaking of Him as sovereign also call Him Father.
 - (6) Therefore John also says in 1 John 3:1, “See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God.”

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- B. We know God as Father because this is how Jesus knew Him and how He revealed Him.
1. Over 256 times God is called “Father” in the N.T.
 2. Jesus Christ spoke of His equality with God because He called Him “Father.” (John 5:18)
 3. We must always remember that the entire work and ministry of Jesus on earth was in relationship to God as Father and He as Son; not ever as slave to master.
- C. General passages.
1. When we see the O.T. the idea of Father is not as well defined as the N.T. But nonetheless the Fatherhood of God runs throughout.
 - a. The choosing of Abraham out of idolatry is a key example.
 - b. In Gen. 12 we see this and from that point onward the focus of the entire O.T. essentially is upon the nation raised by God through Abraham.
 - c. In Hosea 11:1 it is written, “When Israel was a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son.”
 - (1) This speaks of two things, one is Jesus Christ and God’s unique care and love protecting Him from Herod in Matthew 2:15.
 - (2) But also is considering the historical fact of the Exodus. The bringing out of Israel was the act of a loving Father protecting, providing, caring, and loving His child.
 - d. In **Isaiah 1:2-4** it is written, “Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth; For the LORD speaks, "Sons I have reared and brought up, But they have revolted against Me. An ox knows its owner, And a donkey its master's manger, But Israel does not know, My people do not understand. Alas, sinful nation, People weighed down with iniquity, Offspring of evildoers, Sons who act corruptly! They have abandoned the LORD, They have despised the Holy One of Israel, They have turned away from Him.”

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- (1) The prophet Isaiah speaks out against Israel. And when he speaks, he speaks for God.
 - (2) Here we see the pain of the Father toward rebellious children.
 - (3) Any father who has seen children rebel can understand to a small degree what God experienced with Israel's rebellion.
 - (4) You hear the real emotion and faithful love in **Jeremiah 3:22**, "Return, O faithless sons, I will heal your faithlessness. Behold, we come to Thee; For Thou art the LORD our God."
2. Deut. 32:6.
 3. Isaiah 63:16.
 4. Isaiah 64:8.
 5. Malachi 1:6.
- D. Now, how does all of this work itself out within the bible? In other words. "Fine, God is called 'Father,' so what?"
1. This title speaks to a key relational orientation toward all people.
 - a. Ephesians 3:14-15,
 - b. Acts 17:24-26.
 - c. But remember John 8:41-44 with 1 John 3:8.
 2. A Caring and Merciful Father.
 - a. Psalm 68:5-6.
 - b. Psalm 103:13.
 3. A Father to even His Rebellious Children.
 - a. 2 Samuel 7:14-15.
 - b. Jer. 3:22.
 4. We can approach Him as Father.
 - a. Matthew 6:9.

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5. He gives to us as a Father.
 - a. James 1:17.
6. He is merciful and forgives.
 - a. Luke 6:36.
 - b. 1 John 2:1.
7. He makes us His children.
 - a. 1 John 3:1.
 - b. Gal. 4:4-9 (speak the gospel)

III. Conclusion.

- A. The Trinity, as I have already said, is not something we should know in abstract.
- B. Whether you know it or not you are intimately involved in a Trinitarian life if you are a Christian.
 1. You are fully encompassed by the presence and love of the Holy Trinity.
 2. The Triune God began a good work in you and will complete it.
 3. You live a life blessed because of the Triune God
- C. Example: Prayer.
 1. You pray to the Father.
 2. You can pray because Jesus is your sin bearer and High Priest and through His death you became a child of God.
 3. Your prayers are heard because the Spirit prays on your behalf and through His life-giving work made you alive in Jesus.
- D. Example: Serving one another (1 Corinthians 12)
 1. It is the Spirit who gives us gifts to serve one another with.
 2. It is Jesus who gives us the ministries in which we use those gifts.
 3. It is the Father who works in and through the gifts and ministries to bring about His desired effects.

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Small Group Questions

- Spend time thinking about how the Trinity works itself out practically in your lives. Take your time on this.
- What stood out to you regarding the idea of the fatherhood of God? Anything new? Anything remembered?