

Systematic Theology: The Triune God

Systematic Theology

By Don Green

sermonaudio.com

Preached on: Tuesday, December 6, 2016

Truth Community Church

4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

Tonight we need to take an evening to finish our study on the character of God. It's been delayed over a couple of weeks because we had a thanksgiving communion service and then last week I was away and I want to be able to, for the sake of the series on systematic theology which will continue over time, to be able to wrap up one final aspect of the character and the nature of God which we started on the first weekend of November about a month ago, on November 5th with a number of messages. And just to kind of refresh your mind and memory and to get you into the flow of what we're going to talk about this evening, let me remind you of where we have been with the four prior messages that we did on the character of God. It's really stunning. It is awe-inspiring and provocative realization of who God is.

We looked at the nature of God and saw that he is an invisible spirit, independent, infinite and immutable in his very nature, in his incommunicable attributes, we said. And we looked at the mind of God, saw that he is omniscient, that he knows all things, and that he not only knows all things but that he is infinitely wise. He knows wise ends to establish and he knows wise means to reach those ends. That's true of the goal of history, it's true of the goal of salvation, it's true of the incarnation and the career, if you will, of the Lord Jesus Christ, it's true of our individual lives. God appointed wise ends and a wise purpose for your own existence and he has wisdom to know how to accomplish those in your life even if you don't understand what's happening as it is unfolding. We are always always always in the hand of an omniscient, wise God who is completely independent in his existence and so that brings us great cause for comfort and great reason to praise him. Now, along with that we looked at the power of God and saw that he is omnipotent, by which we mean that God is able to accomplish whatever he desires. He is sovereign over all.

And so we saw the nature of God and we saw the mind of God and we saw the power of God, and it was as though we were standing at the base of towering mountains and looking at a vista that was far beyond our ability to comprehend. Then the last message that we did in this series which would have been two weeks ago from tonight, I believe, maybe three, we looked at the character of God, the moral character of God, and we saw something that was infinitely pristine, wonderful, majestic, and awe-inspiring in a different way because we saw God high and holy and separated from sinners, separated

from sin. We said that he's a good God, a loving God, a true God, a righteous God, a holy God.

And so with everything that we saw in those four messages, the nature of God, the mind of God, the power of God, the character of God, our capacity to understand and express it adequately was shattered; it was far beyond anything that tongue could describe or that a mind could conceive of and so, beloved, when we gather together for a worship service, we are worshiping this great God, we are ascribing honor to him, we are bowing before him for his transcendent greatness in his nature, his mind and his power, and also in his imminent goodness, his love, his truth, his holiness, imminent meaning he is near; far above us and yet condescended to make himself near to be known by his people. What a great God. And those things are all far beyond our ability to understand and to be able to exhaust in description and so you could stop there, in one sense, but there is another aspect of God that we need to look at tonight and that is to consider him as the Triune God, the Trinity. And about three months ago, I did a message entitled "The Trinity in the Old Testament" which was kind of out of sequence to different things but it was something that I wanted to talk about at that time. If you were to go back and to listen to that message or to read the transcript, it would flow very nicely in with what we have to say here this evening. God is a Triune God. Although the word "Trinity" does not appear anywhere in the Bible, what the word "Trinity" stands for is a crucial, essential, nonnegotiable, biblical truth and we want to spend some time this afternoon, this evening I should say, looking at that.

So here's where we want to start with that: we should expect that when we come to study a transcendent God and we should expect that we are going to find things that are far beyond our ability to understand. We've already talked about that. You know, how could God be uncreated? How could a being always exist and never have a starting point? That's outside of our experience. We don't know anything about that by personal experience in our own...we have nothing to compare it to. The Trinity is like that as well. Charles Spurgeon appreciated that aspect of the doctrine of the Trinity when he said this, he said, "We can never understand how Father, Son and Holy Spirit can be three and yet one. I have long ago given up any desire to understand this great mystery for I am perfectly satisfied that if I could understand it, it would not be true because God from the very nature of things must be incomprehensible." It is a false standard and a very fundamental critical mistake for somebody to make to say, "Only the things that I can understand and explain can be true about God." That is a very bad way to think and to the extent that anyone has that as the starting point of their thinking, they need to repent and abandon that and humble themselves before the greatness and the incomprehensibility of God. God is greater than we are.

I may have said this at some point in the series, I know that I've said it in the past: what is the starting point of knowledge? Where do you begin to know what you know? And a very simple place to start is this: there is a God and you are not he. There is a God and you are not he. We expect to find when we come to God, we expect to find someone different than we are. We do not make God in our image, he made us in his. So we expect

as we enter into the doctrine of the Trinity to find things that are beyond our understanding. That helps condition our mind to receive what Scripture says.

Let me give you a definition of the Trinity to start with here and then we'll just kind of unpack the biblical support for it. Here is a definition of the Trinity for you: there is one true God with only one essence. There is one true God with only one essence who eternally exists in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I'll say that sentence again. The definition isn't done just yet. There is one true God with only one essence who eternally exists in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These three persons are each fully and equally God and equally deserve worship and obedience, yet these three persons are only one God. We just dove into the depths of the ocean of the being of God with that definition. There is one true God with only one essence who eternally exists in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These three persons are each fully and equally God and equally deserve worship and obedience, yet these three persons are only one God.

Now, beloved, one of the nice things about studying theology in a systematic way is this, is that when you approach it in a proper Reformed way, there is a context to help you understand everything that follows and we always come back to the context that we establish in our method of theology. We started, if you will recall that we started with the principle of authority and with revelation; that we know God because he has made himself known; he has revealed himself and he has revealed himself in his word. So when we ask the question, somebody considers the most basic question, "I would like to know God. I want to understand God. I want to know who he is." Then we say, "Okay," we start with biblical revelation because that's where God has preeminently made himself known. So with that presupposition, with that starting point, we look and say, "Okay, what does the Bible say about God?"

Point 1 here this evening as we teach on the Trinity is this, point 1, and all of these are just kind of elements of the definition that I gave you, point 1: there is one true God. There is one true God. There are not many gods. There are not many paths to God. There is one true God, there is one true way to that one true God and the Bible repeatedly emphasizes that. In Deuteronomy 6:4, you don't have to turn there, in Deuteronomy 6:4 it says,

4 Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!

One true God. In the message on the Old Testament and Trinity, we talked about the nature of that Hebrew word "echad" which is very important but we won't go into that here tonight. The Lord is one. In 1 Corinthians 8:4 the Bible says,

4 there is no God but one.

So Scripture emphasizes one God, one God. And in James 2:19 it says,

19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

So we realize that there is only one true God who reigns over the universe, the one true God who we have been making known through this study in his nature, his mind, his power, and in his character. That is the only God that exists. There is no other. And just the solitary, holy, set apart nature of God causes us to fear him, to respect and reverence him, and to realize that this transcendent God is the only true deity and any claim to any other deity whether it be the Islamic version, perversion called Allah, that is not the true God; that is not God and they cannot be equated. There is one true God and it is the God of the Bible.

Now, as that applies to the doctrine of the Trinity, beloved, we just want to understand this: Christianity teaches that there is only one true God, that there is only one God. We do not believe that there are three gods and that is a false accusation that uninformed people repeatedly try to make to discredit Christianity. They will say, Jews are particularly bad about this, unbelieving Jews, to say, "The Bible says that there is one God and yet you have three: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$," they would say. To which we say, "No, that's not what we're saying at all. You are distorting biblical teaching. You are misrepresenting the Christian doctrine of the Trinity when you say things like that. There is one true God." So we keep that in mind. That's point 1: there is one true God.

Now, point 2 here this evening is this: God eternally exists in three persons. God eternally exists in three persons. So what we have to do here is and, again, there is a certain methodology to the way that you think to keep you from getting confused and from going astray in your understanding of Scripture. We've established simply, quickly, admittedly, but we have established the principle, the unalterable principle that there is one true God. Now, nothing about that principal changes as we move into this second point that God eternally exists in three persons. So we, as we start to swim out further into sea, let's see what we have to say about this. Beloved, the Bible itself compels us to believe in the Trinity because it teaches very clearly that there is one God and yet it also very clearly teaches us that he exists in three persons and let me unpack that for you as we go along. We've said that there is one true God who eternally exists in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Quick timeout. On these matters, I want to be very careful to make sure that everybody comes along for the ride, so to speak, that everybody is on board the ship as we go, and that we don't go so quickly that we confuse people or lose them in the process. The most important thing to remember is this: is that we accept the Bible as being the word of God, that God has revealed himself in the Scripture, and that the Bible expresses the true mind of the one true God, and therefore the Bible never contradicts itself. Because God is infinitely omniscient, infinitely wise, when he makes himself known he does not engage in contradictions. He speaks truth and truth does not contradict itself. It is internally consistent.

So with that said and rooted in that belief in the revelation of God found in Scripture, we say, "Okay, he is one true God," and then what do we do? Here's what we do: we continue reading the Bible and continue studying and seeing what else it has to say about the nature of God. This is what we do. And as we do that, what do we find? Well, we find this, subpoint A if you're taking notes under point 2, subpoint A we find that the Father is God. The person, the Father is God. Jesus said in John 6:27, for the sake of time we're not looking up all of these references. You can jot them down and look them up later. Jesus said in John 6:27, he said this,

27 work for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.

So Jesus, speaking about God says, "the Father has set His seal on the Son of Man." And who is this Father according to Jesus? He is God. The Father is equated with God by the words of Jesus Christ himself, John 6:27. So the Father is, you could say, the first member of the Trinity. Now, we all kind of accept that. Only groups like the United Pentecostals would even contest that point in anything remotely related to Christendom and they are not even Christians because they deny the Trinity, but having said that, this is an accepted point. Almost everyone would start there so we don't have to really spend a lot of time establishing that any further. I just want to give you a little bit of Scripture where you can kind of hang your hat on this and go back and reestablish it in your own mind on your own.

Now, let's move into some more contested territory. The Father is God and the second aspect of this is that the Son is God. The Son, s-o-n. The Son is God and, oh, is this one worth fighting for. What do we say about this? The deity, that is the essence of God, the essence of God that belongs exclusively to God the Father also fully belongs to Jesus Christ without diminishment, without compromise, without any difference. Beloved, think about it this way: every attribute of God is also an attribute of Jesus Christ and we need to be very clear and definitive about this. The Bible talks about this at length.

Let me give you just a couple of verses for you to have in mind here. John 1:1 it says

1 the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Then in verse 14 it goes on to say and makes clear who the reference to "the Word" is,

14 the Word became flesh

What we sung about earlier as we were singing songs about the incarnation saying that the Word which was God, became flesh, referring to Jesus Christ. The Word was God, the Word is Jesus Christ, the Word became flesh and therefore making a clear and definitive statement that this Word that became flesh was God himself. It has to be. Remember, remember how we've unfolded the understanding here. There is only one God and the Father is God and Scripture does not contradict itself, and then it says, "the

Word was God." Oh, wow, now you realize you're starting to deal with truth that is immense and beyond human capacity to fully understand.

Colossians 2:9 says, speaking of Christ says,

9 in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form

All the fullness of Deity dwells in Christ in bodily form.

Philippians 2:5-8 speaks about the incarnation of Christ and says,

6 He existed in the form of God, [that by very nature He was God and yet He humbled himself] 7 ...and took on the form of a bond-servant, being made in the likeness of men.

So I think I've done this series here, I start to lose track of what...have I done my series on the deity of Christ here? My wife will know. Have I done that series here? You don't think so. Ah, I have more to teach on then, but not tonight. I need to keep moving on this.

When you study the Gospel of John, for example, you can find easily eight separate principles which reinforce the reality of the deity of Christ: he has the name of God; he has unity with God the Father; many other things that I won't go into right now. The point being is that the Bible calls Jesus God. He does the works of God. He has the name of God. He has unity with God the Father. It is plastered all over Scripture, especially in the New Testament, that Christ is God in human flesh.

Now, as we keep in mind what we're teaching on, we're teaching on the Trinity, there is one true God, this God eternally exists in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father is God, the Son is God, and then, thirdly, we come to the third member of the blessed Trinity: the Holy Spirit is God. The Holy Spirit is God and this is one that we probably don't focus on as much in theological circles as we could. The deity of Christ has historically been a great battlefield for the church fathers throughout all of church history, the Holy Spirit not quite receiving the same level of attention on this particular point, perhaps. But the Bible also teaches that the Holy Spirit is God. And beloved, before I get into some Scripture support for that, I would just say this: it's just so important for you to think rightly about God, you know, because what you think about God is going to determine whether you worship him properly, whether you know him properly, and eventually wrong thoughts about God will lead into wrong living as well. So I say that by way of preface to this, is that you should not think of the Holy Spirit as being some kind of impersonal force like gravity is a force and the Holy Spirit is a force. No, that's not true. The Holy Spirit is a person with intelligence, will and emotions.

Let's turn to this passage in Acts 5, if you would, the beginning of Acts 5, we'll look at verse 3 and 4 at this point. Acts 5:3-4. This was a preeminent example of church discipline when Ananias and Sapphira misled the apostles in the presentation of their gift. They made it sound like they were giving everything that they had earned from the sale

of their property but they actually held some back. They wanted the pride and honor of having been such givers but they also wanted to keep some for themselves. So they wanted the honor and they wanted to have their cake and eat it too, so to speak. Look at verse 3 with me. Peter said, actually, let's start in verse 1 and get the whole context.

1 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, 2 and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet.

That's not a good idea. Verse 3,

3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? 4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

Notice that Peter equates lying to the Holy Spirit with lying to God. That can only be true if the Holy Spirit himself is God himself. There are other places that we could look for this but we have to kind of keep moving here. What we've seen here is this, beloved: there is one true God and the Bible ascribes deity to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and so what we're left with is how do we put this together in a coherent fashion, a coherent doctrine, that leaves us in a way that we can understand something about the ineffable nature of God? The doctrine of the Trinity is how we put these things together.

Now, seminary professors tell you you've got to illustrate your teaching and the truth of the matter is, sometimes people will quibble with me over this but this needs to be said: you cannot give an adequate illustration of the Trinity. There is nothing to compare it to that fully expresses the reality that there is one true God with one single essence and yet this God exists in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Some people say, I mentioned this years ago from the pulpit at Truth Community when we were over in northern Kentucky, some people will say that the Trinity is like water. Maybe you've heard that illustration. The point is and what's said is that the same water can be ice, liquid or steam depending on the temperature that is applied to it. But that's not a good example, beloved. Water in ordinary human experience, water does not exist in all three forms at the same time. You have one volume of water at room temperature and it's liquid. You have to drop the temperature and change that for it to become ice. You have to heat it up to boiling so that it becomes steam. Water is not in ordinary human experience ice, liquid and steam at the same time. Now, whatever other value there is in illustrating things with water, we're not talking about that, we're simply talking about the doctrine of the Trinity. Understand the difference here. When we teach the Trinity, we say that God is simultaneously Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one person eternally existing all at the same time as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

To use water, I'm going to make a technical theological point here, bear with me: to use water as an illustration only illustrates the false doctrine of modalism which says that

there is one God who appears in three different forms at different times. That is not the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity is not that God sometimes appears as Father and sometimes as Son and sometimes as Holy Spirit, just as water is sometimes liquid, sometimes steam, sometimes ice, the same volume of water. That's not the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity is that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are simultaneously fully 100% God in one indivisible essence. How many of you have headaches right now from this? This will give it to you, won't it? I understand. That's why we're trying to just make it as clear and direct and streamlined as possible.

You know, it's interesting when you read something about church history and if any of you have an interest in church history on this particular doctrine, I have a very lengthy paper on the development of the doctrine of the deity of Christ as people understood it and studied it through church history, how the church came to articulate this over time. Just let me know and I'd be delighted to share that 50 page paper with you. It's a very fascinating study and as you see the historical development of how people came to understand what God had revealed, you start to have a perspective that is very very helpful.

And let me say at that point something that is very critical, beloved: as members of Truth Community Church, you should never be misled, not just that somebody would deny the doctrine of the Trinity, but what you can find anywhere on the internet is somebody who in his self-conceit will say, "I have studied Scripture personally. I have ignored all of the books and I have just studied Scripture by myself and I have spent 10 years and now I can definitively tell you that the Trinity is not true." Beloved, don't ever fall for that kind of spiritual hucksterism. Scripture makes very plain that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation and for somebody in the 21st century to say, "Oh, I spent 10 years studying this and I didn't pay any attention to what other men said, I just did it all on my own and you can take my word for it that the Trinity is not true," you know, you should just roll your eyes and turn off the TV or flip the page or click off of the website, whatever, because you can dismiss that out of hand. All that is is the conceit and arrogance of a deluded mind speaking and discounting what noble, godly, obviously God-honoring teachers for centuries and centuries have established. No single individual is in a position to deny this and all they do is bring judgment and condemnation on their own head when they talk that way. Don't listen to that kind of stuff. The doctrine of the Trinity is something that the church, first of all the doctrine of the Trinity most preeminently you find as you look at Scripture, it is revealed first of all in Scripture. It's not something that theologians made up later on. But it takes time to develop and to mature the way to express these things and we stand on the shoulders of great men like Athanasius from the fourth century who gave their lives and who suffered greatly in order to defend this doctrine. Don't throw away your heritage for the sake of some pinball head on the internet and think that God has finally after 21 centuries clarified somebody with a laptop in North Dakota. The absurdity of that should be evident. You can reject that out of hand and not even give it any consideration.

So there is one true God eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Now, if you think about it, I'm just illustrating it, my teaching methodology here with

what I'm about to say, I'm not getting ready to illustrate the character of God here but just for the sake of helping you understand my teaching methodology here this evening, we're about to come full circle. We started with the unity of God, that there is one true God, and we came down to the bottom of the circle and said three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Now we are going to tie this all together and come back up and say this on our third point: these three persons are one God. These three persons are one God. That's point 3 here this evening. And you can't help but, I suppose that there are many other ways that you could teach on the Trinity, but I like teaching the Trinity in three points because, you know, if you're saying that God is one and God is three, why not make it three points in order to express that? The balance of that is appealing to me.

So point 3: these three persons are one God and here's what we mean by that: Father, Son and Holy Spirit are repeatedly placed on equal standing in Scripture. You see the three of them being described, being spoken of, in the same breath as God. And let's take just a little bit more time with this aspect of our teaching here this evening. Go back to Matthew 3 and we'll consider Jesus' baptism. These three persons are one God and here's a subpoint for you: at Jesus' baptism.

Look at Matthew 3:16-17. As you read these things with a measure of understanding, you just start to shrink and you just start to feel small before the greatness of God. You realize that you're in the presence, you're in the mental realm of understanding of something that is very very far beyond you. That is the effect that the doctrine of the Trinity should have on your heart. It should humble you. In Matthew 3:16, Scripture says,

16 After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, 17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

Do you see it? One speaking of his Son, who is that but the Father? You have Jesus Christ, the one being baptized. You have the Holy Spirit descending and falling upon Christ, as it were. And so the Father speaks, Jesus is baptized, the Holy Spirit descends and they are distinguished and yet they are existing simultaneously with one another. It wasn't Jesus who spoke from heaven, it was the Father. It wasn't the Father who was baptized, it was Jesus. It wasn't the Father who descended, it was the Spirit. So what we see is that these three persons have different functions, they relate to one another, and yet they are one God.

Sometimes people ask, "What do you mean, the person? The Father is a person, Jesus is a person, the Spirit is a person?" Well, what we mean by that is that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit all have knowledge; they all have feelings, you could say; they all have volition, they all have a will. So they are persons in that sense. The Spirit, it's possible to grieve the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 4:30, for example. So when we talk about persons, that's what we're talking about. Jesus could say, "I have come." The Father can speak in the first person, "I." The Spirit can speak, "I." The Spirit says, "Come," for example. And

yet they share a single essence. These dynamics of individuality is why we call them persons.

Now, for another illustration of this, that these three persons are all one God, something that is very close to my heart as we turn to Matthew 28. Go to the very end of the Gospel of Matthew and as you're turning there, I will say this: we come back again, beloved, we come back to the reality that the Bible is the word of God; that God has revealed himself in Scripture. And as we said when we studied the doctrine of Scripture, we said that there is a plenary inspiration of Scripture that every word of Scripture is inspired and therefore every word is important in the Bible. Again, we go back to our doctrine of authority, our doctrine of Scripture, our doctrine of revelation and let that inform the significance of what we're saying. Every word of God is important and every word that God says is true. Every word matters. That's why, beloved, this is why we carefully study the Scriptures verse by verse and pay attention word by word because every word of God is important and sometimes very crucial matters of truth are built into the simplest of grammatical points. Because we believe in the inspiration of Scripture, the omniscience of God, the purpose of God, then we pay attention to things like what we're going to see here in Matthew 28:19-20.

Look at it with me. Jesus said,

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Look at verse 19. Look at it with me again, if you would, and just make a really simple observation about number here. Jesus said, "Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." I read that pretty fast. I did it intentionally. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. But wait a second, wait a second, Jesus says, "the name," singular, and then what follows are three names: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each separated by the Greek article, "the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit," making clear distinctions about them. You and I wouldn't talk that way about ordinary things. Why doesn't he say, "the names of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit," if there are three of them? Do you know why? Because the singular name, "the name," that's not an accident, Jesus didn't misspeak. He didn't think later when he went back and said, "Oh, do you know what? I kind of misspoke there. I should have said that differently." No, that's not it. He knew exactly what he was saying. Beloved, the singular name, "the name," singular, indicates the single indivisible essence of God. The three persons each with their own article in the Greek, distinguish "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," is the distinction between the three persons that we have been mentioning. One name, three persons sharing the essence that belongs to that one name. So we see it in the Great Commission. We see it in Jesus' baptism, we see it in the Great Commission.

Now, let me give you another bad analogy that sometimes you'll hear people use. Some people, you know, sometimes it's genuine and sincere teachers that are saying things like

this and they mean well but they just haven't thought through the fullness of what they are saying. You and I need to be more precise. We have a responsibility before God to think about him with precision, with accuracy, that we would honor him for who he is and not according to some diminished version that we make up in our own minds. So here's another bad illustration that you can understand and you will know instantly why it's a bad example just from your own personal experience. You've seen this, you've heard people talk this way, "Well, illustrate the Trinity with the concept of an egg." And they'll say, "You have one egg with its shell and with the yoke and with the white of the egg. One egg, three parts. There's your doctrine of the Trinity." What would we say about that? Well, that's not a good analogy and you know this from eating eggs. You do. What happens if you're eating a plate full of scrambled eggs and you suddenly crunch down on something and you go, "Yuck! There's eggshell in this!" And you call out to your wife and say, "How did you get eggshells in the scrambled eggs? That doesn't belong in what I'm ingesting here! This ruins my breakfast!" And you reach in and you pluck it out. Why do you do that? You say, "Well, because it's gross." Yeah, I know. I get that. But you do that because of this: the essence of the eggshell is not the essence of the yoke and the white. They are different and that's why you don't eat the eggshell. The essence of the eggshell is not the essence of the yoke.

Beloved, an egg is not like God. Better stated, God is not like an egg. And beloved, I mean, this stuff is all simple when you know to find your way through it, but beloved, here's the thing, and ultimately as we come to this point in the message and what we are preeminently concerned with is to honor the greatness of God and let us never as believing people in Christ, let us never as the people of this transcendent God, ever reduce him and, as it were, reach into heaven and pull down this ineffable God and say, "Do you know what? He's just like a common egg that I just pulled out of the refrigerator and this egg gives us a sense of what the essence of God is like." No. No. God forbid. Let's never think like that. Let's never reduce God and bring him down to the lowest elements of his creation and say, "Here's a good comparison." That's not a good comparison. You tell somebody that uses that illustration, the egg illustration, you say, "Okay, that's fine. You want to use that as an illustration of the Trinity, let me cook you up some scrambled eggs and I want to see you eat the eggshell too." You'll make your point.

When it comes to illustrations, Louis Berkhof nails it on this point. Nails it, hits it out of the ballpark and so I gladly quote this great Reformed theologian when he is speaking of the Trinity, speaking of the different analogies that have been attempted, he says this and I quote, he says, "All analogies fail us. The Trinity is a mystery far beyond our comprehension. It is the incomprehensible glory of the Godhead." Only that kind of statement about God directs our thoughts to his exclusive holy exaltation in a way that is worthy of his unique being.

So let me say this one final thing here, two final things, I guess, as the clock ticks down on my timer here. It's not an egg timer, by the way, it's a timer on my phone that just helps me keep track of things. Beloved, when we say that there is one God who eternally exists in three persons, this is what is very important for you to understand: we are not

engaging in a contradiction. God is not one in the same way that he is three and that's why there is no contradiction here. We are not saying there is one God and there are three gods, we're not saying there are three gods and there are three persons. We're not saying that, we're saying there is one God and that there are three persons. One essence, three persons who share that essence indivisibly. So it is not a contradiction, it is a great mystery of the Godhead.

One final thing to say here. We see this doctrine expressed in Christian benedictions. 2 Corinthians 13:14 for those of you taking notes. 2 Corinthians 13:14, turn to that with me. We'll close with this. 2 Corinthians 13:14 says this, it says,

14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

Notice this, beloved, just in that verse, again, one of those verses that you just say, "Oh, I'm at the end of my reading here and I'll just blow through that," and you realize that there is so much more there than you have ever seen before. As Paul closes this letter to the church at Corinth, he extends to them and pronounces blessings on them from the God of grace. He pronounces blessings from God, grace, love and fellowship – watch this – coming from three persons on an equal basis all at the same time. One God, three persons dispensing his goodness to believers. Ultimately, as we come to the end of this discussion here tonight, ultimately the doctrine of the Trinity goes to the very heart of who we are as Christians. It goes to the very heart of our salvation. It shapes our worship because, beloved, the Father sent the Son into the world to be the propitiation for our sins. The Son redeemed us with his blood. And the Holy Spirit in time in our lives, took that, awakened us and applied it to our lives individually. So the fullness of our salvation is rooted in the work of a Triune God who planned, executed and applied our redemption to our souls. Blessed be his holy name. Now through Christ we have communion with this ineffable Triune God.

Beloved, do you know this God through faith in Christ? Have you been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb?

Let's pray together.

O great God of highest praise, we honor you this evening. Father, in ways that far transcend our understanding, we ascribe glory and majesty to your holy name. And in the humble circumstances of this humble place on a humble ball of matter hurtling through space, O God, in the universe that you created, we bow before you and we praise you as the Triune God. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God eternally existing in three persons who planned, executed and applied our redemption to our souls. O God, we magnify your great and matchless name. As we come to the end of this study of your character which has not given you the full honor that you are due just in our humbling, halting words of baby babble, Father, as we try to speak of your nature, you, the invisible, independent, infinite, immutable God; you, the omniscient, wise God; you, the omnipotent, sovereign God, fully able to do your will; you, our heavenly Father, good,

loving, holy, righteous, true, utterly faithful, God, we come full circle. We end where we began an hour ago. We worship you for your transcendent greatness and your eminent goodness. We thank you, our Father, that through the Lord Jesus Christ we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of your grace. And Father, we pray that your Spirit would woo to yourself those who have not yet received this blood atonement for the forgiveness of their sins. Bless us now as we go. May our minds be forever bent more closely toward worship as a result of the time that we have spent here together this evening. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Thanks for listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find church information, Don's complete sermon library and other helpful materials at thetruthpulpit.com. This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.