

# What Is the Trinity?

*Together in Truth*

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The prevalent model of preaching is to try to entertain people and to give them things that will make them feel better, make them think that God is on their side and will help them through life and all of that, and pastor tells a few funny jokes, tells a few stories about himself or about his family, and it's all really cotton candy preaching, you know, there's no real substance to it and we're trying to swim upstream and to swim against that tide with what we are doing, and it's important biblically for us to do that. At the end of 2 Peter 3:17 and 18, the Apostle Peter said this writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he said,

17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

You see, it's our biblical responsibility as individual Christians to grow in our knowledge and our understanding of Jesus Christ, and the way that you do that is through learning biblical doctrine and understanding what the Bible teaches. You'll remember if you were with us a couple of days ago, we started out this series that we're loosely calling "Together in Truth," and we started with answering the fundamental ultimate question why do we believe the Bible and we saw the answer to that is the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Christ affirmed the Old Testament, he commissioned the New Testament, and therefore the Bible carries the imprimatur of the authority of Jesus Christ. Christ is the guarantee that everything that the Bible says is true. Then last time we looked at the question who is God and we certainly didn't exhaust the topic, we hardly scratched the surface to be honest, but we're coming back to another ultimate question about the nature of God here this evening as we address the question what is the Trinity. What is the Trinity, and it's as you study a doctrine like this that you grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and what we need to understand in a most simple, basic, fundamental way as we begin here this evening, is that as we open the Bible and we read about God, we find that it teaches us things that are beyond our understanding to put together, and so we wrestle with these things. The Bible is not a superficial book, the Bible is not a book of humor, it's not a book of comedy, it's not a book to entertain us, and that's one of the ways that you can distinguish true from false

preaching is that someone who uses the Bible to make you laugh and entertain you is not treating the Bible on its own terms. He's twisting it. It's an unprincipled man doing something ungodly with the highest and loftiest book that the universe will ever know.

So what you and I need to do since you're joining us here, I believe certain lofty things and noble things about who you are, that you want to know these things, that you want to grow in these things. It's a privilege for us to come to God's word together and to do that and to realize that the Bible gives us an ongoing responsibility to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are to be like a billowing cloud in our understanding, in our knowledge, that its ever-growing, ever-expanding because there's always more for us to learn, there's always more about the wonders of Christ for us to love and adore and understand, and we're to love God with all of our mind, and so we come and we seek out Scripture because Christ said this is the very word of God and as the people of God we want to learn and we want to absorb it to the best of our ability. Now as we do that, it humbles us. We realize that it seems like the more our circle of knowledge grows, the more that we realize that there's more that we don't know, but the more I grow as a Christian, the more I realize there's so much that I don't know and I just, you know, I'm overwhelmed by the inadequacy of what I don't know and what I have not yet become in Christ in a way that would have been foreign to my thinking when I was a new Christian and everything was fresh and new. You grow and you realize that there are more places for you to grow. Well, that's kind of what we want to address and to feed that hunger, that thirst for righteousness, we want to address that that's in you as you join us here this evening, and so I'm very grateful to be able to do that.

So tonight we consider and we answer the question what is the Trinity, and tonight's message will also bleed over into tomorrow morning's message in a wonderful way, and so I'm grateful for the way these things are all coming together. Let's put it this way, if you're a member of Truth Community Church you affirmed the doctrine of the Trinity. You cannot become a member of Truth Community Church unless you believe and affirm that and certainly no one is a Christian who denies the doctrine of the Trinity. We can struggle with it and be a Christian, we can say, "Boy, there are things about this that I just don't understand," and we're looking to grow and a Christian can be in that position, I know I was for many years trying to put these things together, but to be a Christian is to have a fundamental disposition toward believing and accepting the doctrine of the Trinity even if it is difficult to understand and it is, but here's the thing that I want to say: so we're here, we're speaking together as believers tonight, and you and I, we affirmed the doctrine of the Trinity but the question is could you defend it? Could you explain it? Do you even understand why the doctrine of the Trinity is taught by Scripture? Do you know why you believe it?

Well, let me remind you as we kind of start to dive into it as we step deeper into the water here this evening, let me remind you of a passage that I believe I quoted last time on Thursday from Isaiah 55:8 and 9. This is preparatory for entering into a study of the doctrine of the Trinity. God's nature is beyond our understanding. It is more than we can grasp on our own. We can grasp things truly but we realize that there are things that are beyond our understanding that we cannot comprehend and this is exactly what Scripture

teaches us to expect as we study the nature of God. Isaiah 55:8 and 9 say this, God is speaking and he says,

8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. 9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts."

So we approach Scripture and we approach the nature of God and we expect to be humbled if we are studying it truly. We are going to find that God's ways and God's nature are far above us, as far above us as the kaleidoscope of galaxies is beyond the earth, so also and even in an more infinite way, the nature of God and the understanding of God is far beyond our capacity to grasp. And so this humbles us and the crucial thing for tonight's study is that when we come to study the character of God, the nature of God, the essence of God, the perfections of God, when we come to study these things, my friends, we expect to find things that transcend our understanding. That is so important to realize. Someone who reduces everything about God to what they can understand is worshiping a false god. If your God is someone that you can thoroughly understand and explain everything rationally and cut corners on Scripture, then you're worshiping a god of your own making because there are things that transcend our understanding that are not contrary to reason but based on Scripture and revelation they go beyond our reason and that's what we find as we study the doctrine of the Trinity. We start with that expectation that it's going to be beyond what we can fully grasp and that's okay. Charles Spurgeon said this speaking about the Trinity, he said, "We can never understand how Father, Son and Holy Spirit can be three and yet one." He goes on to say, "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." By the very nature of things, God must be beyond our understanding. The infinite is beyond the understanding of the finite. To be an uncreated Creator is beyond the understanding of the time-bound creature. To be infinite in perfection and holiness is beyond what you and I can understand as sinful beings.

So we go back to that theme that we developed last time as we study the nature of God, the greatness of God, the goodness of God, the creator role of God, we realize that all of this drives us to worship and it's because it humbles us, it's because it drives us to humility and it drives us to worship that we start to get an appreciation that we're on the right track because it's so much bigger than what you and I are, okay? That's where we start out as we start to answer this question what is the Trinity.

Now let me begin by giving you a definition of the doctrine of the Trinity. Here's a definition of the Trinity: 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. Let me start over. We're only halfway through it. 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. These three persons are each fully and equally God and equally deserve worship and obedience yet these three persons are only one God. So it's come full circle. I'll say it one more time to help you if you're taking

notes. 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. So there is a sense in which God is one and there is a sense in which God is three. That is the mystery of the biblical doctrine of the Trinity.

Now before I go any further, let me give you an offer, something that you can go to our church website and leave a note and request and we'll be happy to send this to you. I have about a 50 page paper that I wrote in my seminary days examining the doctrine of the Trinity and the history of how that doctrine developed in early church history, we would be delighted to send that to you if you want to explore this in much greater depth. It was one of the most fascinating studies that I had ever done in seminary, and so if you just go to our website [truthcommunitychurch.org](http://truthcommunitychurch.org) and request the paper on the Trinity, we'll send that off to you and it would be our joy to minister to you that way to explore things in greater depth.

Tonight we're just kind of skimming the surface and just showing in very basic terms why we believe the Trinity based on the assertions that Scripture makes, and so we're going to break into three principles with supporting Scripture those definitions or those aspects of the definition that I just mentioned. First of all, point 1 for this evening: there is one true God. There is one true God. In some ways this statement is Bible 101. There is one true God and the Bible emphasizes that repeatedly, and what I'm going to do as we go through this is just give you two or three Scriptures for each supporting point so that you can just go to them and see them later and start to realize and meditate on them, that there is something very deep and profound here as you put all of these things together and you get – this is very crucial what I'm about to say – as you give equal weight to different aspects of biblical teaching. We give equal weight to all of Scripture, not elevating one point over another, but we let all of Scripture speak and as we do that, we are driven to affirm the doctrine of the Trinity as it was developed in early church history.

So in Deuteronomy 6:4 Moses said this to the children of God. He said,

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

The Lord is one. In the New Testament in 1 Corinthians 8:4, it says

4 ... there is no God but one.

And then in the book of James 2:19, he says,

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

So we are presented clearly in basic Bible teaching that there is only one God. This is the teaching of Christianity and the opponents of Christianity, those who try to make a mockery of it, those perhaps from an Islam perspective who have their own distorted idea

of what it means for there to be one God, or Jews that have not embraced their own Messiah, will hear something about the doctrine of the Trinity and make false accusations that Christians believe in three Gods, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That is not true. That is not the teaching of Christianity at all. Christianity teaches based on the full authority of Scripture that there is only one God. He is one. There is only one God with one essence and that is the teaching of Christianity. We do not believe in three Gods, we believe in one God as it is expressed in the doctrine of the Trinity. Scripture makes it clear, there is no God but one. You believe that God is one. One. One. One. And so we understand and we accept with full submission, full humility and with a full belief that the Bible teaches that there is only one true God.

Now having established that point rather simply and in a most basic way, we have to keep that thought firmly in mind as we move to our second point here this evening. You have to keep the thought that there is only one God firmly in mind as we come to this second principle for this evening, and the second principle for this evening is this, it's that God eternally exists in three persons. God eternally exists in three persons and so there is one God but in a manner that goes beyond our understanding, he somehow exists eternally in three persons and you see that again and this is just kind of the important interpretive principle for tonight, giving equal weight to every aspect of God's word which is all equally inspired by the Holy Spirit, we have to take the teaching of Scripture, accept each passage for what it says and then deal earnestly with trying to put it together in a way that is consistent with the revelation of God's word. And so as the Bible teaches that there is only one God, the Bible also teaches that this God exists in three persons.

So we're going to break this second point down into three subpoints. We're going to see that the Father is God, that the Son is God, and that the Spirit is God. And again, I just want to remind you that what we're doing here this evening is a very basic introduction. We're not plumbing the depths of it here, we're only giving an outline, a structure by which further study becomes possible, and for us, for you and me as the people of Truth Community Church speaking to you particularly, for us to have a common ability, a shared ability corporately for us to be able to articulate this most important doctrine. If I can go on a brief tangent here, we have a lot of young men that show such promise spiritually, that have aspirations to grow in Christ and one day perhaps to be teachers or spiritual leaders in their own right, well, I would just say to those of you that have those hungers and aspirations, this is one of the places the doctrine of the Trinity is one of the places where you need to cut your teeth. A man teaching, a man in spiritual leadership should be able to articulate these basic things that I'm explaining here this evening as a foundation upon which his further teaching is built. We need to be able to understand this doctrine from the Bible and to be able to defend it also from the Bible.

So God eternally exists in three persons and the first point is that the Father is God. God the Father is God and the Father is the first member of the Trinity, you could say, and we'll see a passage in Matthew 28 that gives us reason to approach it that way later on, but in John 6:27 Jesus said this, he said,

27 ... work for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you [and here's the central point for this evening], which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.

Jesus says, "Work for the food that I will give you, do that because the Father has put His seal on Me," and he uses an appositive, he uses another word to explain who the Father is, he says, "the Father, God, has set His seal on the Son of Man." So God the Father is God. He has the essence of God. He possesses everything of complete and absolute deity.

Now almost every remotely Christian group would accept that and teach that so I'm not going to belabor the point. The only group of any prominence that would deny that would be the heretical group the United Pentecostals who assign deity to Christ alone and would not give deity to the Father. Only groups like the United Pentecostals would dispute that point and so I don't feel the need to belabor it here today. Where the contest comes, contest not being a very good word, where the conflict comes, where the heresy pours in is on this second point and we'll spend more time here. Remember what we're saying here is that there is only one true God, that was point 1, point 2, God eternally exists in three persons and now we're developing three subpoints there to show the three persons of the one true God and here we come to the second point, the Son is God. S-o-n. The Son of God is God himself and Scripture teaches this abundantly, it teaches it clearly, and it teaches it in a way that is beyond contradiction. Groups like the Jehovah's Witnesses or The Way International notwithstanding, the Bible teaches this very clearly.

When I became a Christian, I struggled with this very point on the deity of Christ. I had had some false influences in my thinking before I was a Christian and one of the ways that God had to sanctify me in my mind was to help me come to a clearer understanding of the deity of Christ. It's not that I denied it as a Christian, if you deny the deity of Christ you're not a Christian and the truth of the matter is, if you don't repent of that you're going to go to eternal destruction in hell because Jesus said, "Unless you believe that I am He, you will perish in your sins." So this is not a matter of fine theological debate, this is central to who our Savior is. And so I had to wrestle with these things and it took a long period of time for me to come to a settled finality about these things and so if you struggle with these things, let me encourage you that it is worth the effort to study these things out and come to these conclusions, and also not to be discouraged by the fact that you don't get it the first time you read through the Bible. You know, it took the church theologians three or four centuries to work this out in a way that brought great finality to it, and so it doesn't surprise us that it would take you or me some extended deep study to come to grips with these things.

I say all of that to encourage you and to help you, but having said that, here's what we mean when we say that the Son is God and listen to me carefully: the deity that belongs to God belongs fully and without diminishment to the Son of God. John 1:1 says this,

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

Listen to that again because it's a very critical verse in this whole discussion and it's one that Jehovah's Witnesses have distorted in shameful ways, and sometime I may take the time to define that and to explore that in more detail. But in John 1:1, "the Word was with God, and that Word was God." Now not to get too technical here tonight, but notice that the Word is somehow distinguished from God because he is with God, and yet at the same time the Word is identified completely with God because the Word was God, pointing to the time before time began and the fullness of that verse says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," going back to the very beginning of time, prior to that as time began, the Word had already been existing with God and as time began, the Word had already been existing fully as God, John 1:1. You see, there's a distinction between the Word and God, and yet there is a full identity that the Word is God, and so you step back and you look at that and you read those passages and you say to yourself something's going on here that is beyond my ability to grasp, something is deep and significant here that is not a superficial matter, going to the very essence of who Jesus Christ is. He is with God and he always has been and yet he is God.

Now in Colossians 2:9, another very clear text on this point it says this speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ it says,

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

All the fullness, everything about deity belongs to Jesus Christ and all of it dwells in him in bodily form. He who was God took on human flesh, John 1:14, "the Word became flesh," God became a man in the person of Jesus Christ, and so you see these clear absolute statements of Scripture telling us that the Son is God, that the Son has full deity.

Now for those of you interested in exploring this, if you've struggled with this, I did an entire series on this matter that's available on our website under the title "And the Word was God." And the Word was God, and if you want to study out the deity of Christ in greater detail, go to our website, do a search for that series and you'll find a number of messages there defending the deity of Christ. Again, today is only an overview. We're not trying to answer every objection, we're not trying to go to every text, we're not trying to plumb the depths, we're simply laying down a foundation by which other matters can be assimilated because we understand these basic things from the start.

Let me just call a little time-out here. If you think about learning mathematics, and I was not a great math student in college at all, but to study the greater things of mathematics you have to start with learning the basics of numbers and addition and subtraction, and you move on to multiplication and division, and then you move on to greater levels of understanding and exploring the depths of mathematics if that's your thing and the way that God has gifted you, but we don't despise learning basic arithmetic because we realize that that leads to other things. Well, in the same way here in what we're looking at tonight, we're looking at very basic things about the nature of God understanding that this provides the foundation upon which we grow and build our understanding later on. So that's very very important.

What you find if you explore the deity of Christ in greater detail, you find that the Bible calls Jesus God, he does the works of God, he has the name of God, he has unity with the Father and you just see all of these manifestations of the way that Christ is fully identified with God the Father and he claims this for himself. And it reminds me of a passage that I want to turn your attention to in John 14. So turn in your Bibles to John 14 with me. As you're turning there, I just want to repeat how delighted I am that you're with us. I feel very privileged to share these things with you in a setting like this, and so I'm just so glad for this time.

John 14:7. In verse 7 Jesus is speaking to his disciples and he said,

7 "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; for now on you know Him, and have seen Him." 8 Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip?"

Philip asked to see the Father and Jesus says, "You mean you haven't come to know Me?" There's a complete identity between the Father and Jesus in what he is saying here. And he goes on and makes that point further when Jesus said,

He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?

Jesus says, "If you have seen Me, you have seen exactly what the Father is like," and that can only be true when you realize that God is infinite, unique and only one; that can only be true if Jesus is fully God himself, that he contains everything about the essence of God, that all of the essence of God dwells in Jesus Christ just as it does in the Father, and that's why Jesus could say, "If you've seen Me, you've seen what God the Father is in the way as you look at Me."

We can state this another way, that every attribute of God is also an attribute of Jesus Christ. In Hebrews 1:3 speaking of Christ it says,

3 ... He is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His nature,

You see in Jesus Christ the exact revelation of God and what that means is, we talk often about the fact that God has revealed himself in the Bible, God has disclosed himself, he has made himself known in the 66 books of the Bible. Well, what we need to understand is that in Jesus Christ God has also revealed himself in the Incarnate Word. He's revealed himself in the written word of God that we can study and understand, he also has revealed himself to all of humanity in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. As Jesus Christ walked on the earth as I quoted the Christmas Carol a few days ago, I can't begin to keep track of it all, the Christmas Carol says "veiled in flesh, the Godhead see, hail the Incarnate deity." So God has revealed himself in the Lord Jesus Christ and the only way

that God can reveal himself is if Christ is fully God himself. Listen to me and this is serious, if Christ was a lesser being, somehow a created being, if he was somehow a high angel or a mighty prophet or a good teacher or something like that, he would not be a revelation of God himself. You could not look at him and say, "I am seeing God the Father," if you were just looking at an angel or at a human prophet or something else, or something anything below God looking at Christ, you could not look at him and say, "Oh, I see the Father in the Lord Jesus Christ." It's not the same and so Christ says, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father," indicating that Christ in human flesh was a manifestation of the very essence of God. That's why we say the Father is God and the Son is God.

Now moving on to the third person of the Trinity, our third subpoint four point 2 here tonight, it's that the Holy Spirit is God. The Holy Spirit is God and for that I invite you to turn in your Bibles to the book of Acts 5 in verse 3. Acts 5 in verse 3, and actually we'll start back in verse 1 just to set the context. Acts 5 beginning in verse 1 in these days of the early church there was

1 ... a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira [and they], sold a piece of property, 2 and [they] 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.

So Ananias is being deceptive here. He's presenting an offering to the apostles, giving the impression that it was the full purchase price of the house but he's kept some of it back for himself, and so he is misrepresenting things to the apostles of Jesus Christ. That's not too smart. In verse 3,

3 ... 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."

You see, lying to the Holy Spirit in verse 3 is equated fully with lying to God in verse 4, and so you look at this and you say the Holy Spirit then is God. He is not simply a force. He's not an impersonal force that somehow strengthens us. He's not like electricity. He is a full member of the Godhead, sharing full deity with the Father and with the Son. So as you look at this, you see that that can only be true if the Holy Spirit is God himself.

Now let's step back and just remember the ground that we've covered here. Scripture teaches that there is only one true God. Scripture teaches that this God eternally exists in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit because it attributes deity to each one of those persons. The Father is God. The Son is God. And the Holy Spirit is God. Wow, this is pretty profound things that we see in God's word.

Now they tell you if you go to seminary, as you're preaching you should illustrate the points that you are making. Personally I think that maybe that's a little bit oversold but that's a big discussion for another time, but when it comes to the doctrine of the Trinity, people have attempted to illustrate it in different ways and what I'm telling you here tonight is that you cannot do that with the Trinity. To what will you compare the Triune God?

Now some people will say and they mean well, they mean well most of them when they say things like this, they'll say that the Trinity is like water and the same water can be ice, liquid, or steam, and so you see, there's one water and then there are these three states in which water exists under normal conditions. But beloved, that's not a good example. That does not illustrate the Trinity at all because water does not exist in all three of those forms at the same time. Water does not exist in those three forms, the same body of water does not exist in those three forms at the same time, and so that doesn't illustrate the Trinity at all because the Trinity says there is one essence of God that at the same time simultaneously is fully resident in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These three share the essence of God simultaneously from before the beginning of time and they will share it throughout all of eternity. No, what the water example does, it only illustrates the false doctrine of modalism which says that God manifests himself and he appears in three different forms at different times, sometimes as the Father, sometimes as the Son, sometimes as the Holy Spirit but never together at the same time. That's the doctrine of modalism. The illustration of water illustrates modalism, beloved, that's heresy, we don't want to go there. That's not where you go with this. You cannot illustrate the Trinity accurately with the example of water.

So we see that the Father, Son and Spirit are each deity in a unified essence as we come to our third point here this evening, and we're coming full-circle here. We've said at the top of the circle there is only one true God. We worked through the fact that there are three persons who are each called God in Scripture and share in his essence, and now we come back and we complete the circle of our thinking with this third point, that these three persons are one God. There is one God, God exists in three persons, and these three persons are one God.

Now the Father, the Son and the Spirit are repeatedly placed on equal standing in the Bible and I'm going to show you three examples of this as well. The Father, the Son and the Spirit are repeatedly placed on equal standing in the Bible in different aspects that we find in the New Testament. So if you would, turn in your Bible to Matthew 3 beginning in verse 16. This is at Jesus' baptism. At the baptism of Jesus you find this illustrated and without going into the full context here, you remember the story, Jesus went to John the Baptist to be baptized, John said, "I need to be baptized by You. Why are You coming to me to be baptized? You're the holy one." And Jesus said, "No, permit it at this time, for it is fitting for all righteousness to be fulfilled." Now in verse 16 watch this very carefully,

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."

That is just an incredible passage to contemplate with the doctrine of the Trinity in mind because you see each person distinctly acting, distinctly referred to in separation from one another and yet acting in full concert with one another. You see the Father saying, looking as it were down from heaven upon Jesus and saying, "This is My beloved Son." The Son of the Father. The Father says and looks out and says, "This is My beloved Son." You see the Spirit of God descending out of heaven and it's the Spirit of God. This is not an angel that is coming down, this is God's Spirit. This is God coming down in this form at this time, lighting upon his Son and giving affirmation and supernatural testimony to the fact that this one who was just baptized was the very Son of God. So at Jesus' baptism you see the Father, the Son and the Spirit distinctly acting and yet acting in a unified manner existing simultaneously.

Now notice this, here you see the three of them functioning in relationship to one another and it's that relational dynamic, whatever that means, it's explained more in that paper that I offered to you earlier, but that relational dynamic between the three members of the Trinity within the one Godhead, that relational dynamic is a primary reason why we refer to them as persons. To be a person is to relate to others and so the person of the Father relates to the person of the Son, relates to the person of the Spirit. So this Father who is God, this Son who is God, this Spirit who is God, they function within the Godhead relating to one another and yet carrying out different aspects of the task at hand. So at Jesus' baptism, you see these three persons acting in one concert together.

Now with that said, go to the end of the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew 28. These three persons are one God. It's seen at Jesus' baptism, it's seen now in the Great Commission. In the Great Commission. In Matthew 28:19, watch this very very carefully. We use this text whenever we baptize anyone at Truth Community Church in the baptistery that's off to my left. Jesus said in verse 18 he said,

18 ..."All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations [watch this], baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

Have you ever read that carefully and been struck by the number of the nouns? When I mean number I don't mean to count them but the grammatical number of the nouns that are in play here? Jesus says, "Baptize them in the name," singular. Baptize them in the name, the one name, but then he goes on and he lists three persons under that name, the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. So you have the singular name and yet you have three persons being listed under that name, and a very important grammatical point that is reflected in the English text and jumps off the page in the Greek text is that Father, Son and Spirit, each name has its own article which separates them from one another. The name of the Father and the Son and the Spirit, they are carefully distinguished from one another as persons and yet they are joined together and expressed as one name. One name, three persons. Beloved, this is a manifestation of the doctrine of

the Trinity and so we see this being expressed, this doctrine being expressed in the baptismal formula that Jesus said would exist for all disciples, and to be a disciple of Christ, then, to be made a disciple of Christ and to be baptized into this is to enter into a believing submission of this doctrine of the Trinity, one name, three persons, that's inherent to what Jesus calls a true disciple. So this is very very significant.

Now did I mention that seminary tells you that you're supposed to illustrate your teaching? Let me give you another illustration that's used to attempt to illustrate the doctrine of the Trinity. You may have heard this one also, that the Trinity is compared to an egg. You have an egg that has the eggshell and then within you have the white of the egg and the yolk of the egg. And so you have one egg with eggshell, yolk and egg white. It sounds great, right? You've got one and three and so people like to use that analogy to illustrate the Trinity. Well, I have one word to say about that: fail. That is not true. That does not work and your own experience in eating breakfast can prove my point easily. The doctrine of the Trinity teaches that Father, Son and Holy Spirit, they all share the exact same essence; the one essence of the one true God is fully possessed by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Now beloved, that is not true of an egg. The essence of the eggshell is not the essence of the yolk, is not the essence of the white of the egg, and your own experience, I promised you that I would say this, your own experience proves that to be true. Your own approach to eating breakfast proves that the egg illustration of the Trinity is false. What do you do if you're eating eggs, scrambled eggs let's say, and you find eggshell in it? Do you eat it? No, you separate it out. It's not supposed to be there because you know that the essence of the eggshell is not the essence of the yolk or the egg white, and so you separate it out because the eggshell is not edible like the yolk and the egg white are, and so you separate it out and you do not eat it because it's not of the essence of the interior of the egg. So it's different from that. It's of a different essence and therefore the egg cannot be a proper illustration of the Trinity at all and we should stop saying such foolish things like that.

Does that sound a bit harsh? Well, let me explain why we say that and why we are so dogmatic about it. Ultimately, beloved, there is nothing less than defending the glory of God in rejecting those illustrations that are commonly used because think about it, I'm just about to get animated here in what I'm about to say: an egg is not like God. God is not like an egg. Do I really have to say that? Is that really necessary to make that point? I would say this: shame on the one who compares – watch this, you'll see why this is so important – shame on the one who brings down the ineffable glory of the Triune Godhead and makes it equivalent to a common farm egg. Really, is that what we're going to do? Are we going to look at an egg and say this is like God? God forbid that we would speak in such casual careless terms. This egg which is lower than man and man is lower than God, are we going to take something that's below us and say God is like this? No, no, beloved. No, that sacrifices the glory of God. It is an attack on the glory of God to do that. You and I need to be far more protective of the glory of God, we need to have far more reverence and fear of him than to casually in a simpleminded way compare him to common objects of ordinary daily life. God is distinct from his creation, God is infinitely glorious, and so we need to be very careful about saying God is like something else. God

isn't like anything else. Nothing is like God. To what will you compare him, Scripture says, with the implied answer being there's nothing that we can compare God to.

The great theologian Louis Berkhof said this, making the point, my point that I'm making here right now is that some things about God simply cannot be illustrated and Louis Berkhof agrees when he says this and I quote from his "Systematic Theology," he says, "All analogies fail us. The Trinity is a mystery far beyond our comprehension. It is the incomprehensible glory of the Godhead." And so when we say there is one God who eternally exists in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and these three persons exist as one God, these three persons are one God, when we say that we are saying something to which there is no comparison in all of the universe. This is something that we study, that we see in Scripture, that we accept and believe even though it transcends our understanding, and we submit to it and we are careful not to diminish the glory of God by trying to illustrate it in ways that are unwise and profoundly misguided at best.

Now there's one other place where we see this aspect that these three persons are one God, one other place that for tonight; tomorrow morning there is going to be another whole dimension to this that we're going to study together as we consider the matter of our salvation together, but for tonight we're going to stop with this final subpoint of point 3, you see this in Christian blessings in Scripture. In Christian blessings or in Christian benedictions. There is one final place that we'll go to this evening where we see these three persons placed on an equal plane, plane, p-l-a-n-e, and that's in 2 Corinthians, the last verse in 2 Corinthians 13:14 where the Apostle Paul says this, he 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.

Do you see it there, beloved? Jesus Christ put on the same plane as God, put on the same plane of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual blessings coming equally from Jesus Christ in his grace, coming from God the Father in his love, and coming from the Holy Spirit. What we see here is that the blessings of grace, love and fellowship come from three persons on an equal basis at the same time. One God, one essence, three persons. One God, three persons here dispensing blessings on an equal plane with equal authority. So we see these three persons existing as one God at the baptism of Jesus, in the Great Commission, and here in this closing benediction from 2 Corinthians.

Now as I wrap this up and today's message is really functioning as an introduction to tomorrow's message as well so I hope you'll be with us at 9 o'clock tomorrow, but let me just say this one final point and listen to me very carefully because the mockers of Christianity, the critics of Christianity, the demonically ruled opponents of Christianity will accuse us of engaging in a contradiction. They're saying, "You're just talking in circles. This is all a contradiction that you're making." Well, you listen to me carefully and you put your thinking cap on and turn it up to high right now with the energy that this requires us to think. Listen to me carefully: to say one God, three persons, is not a contradiction. That is not a contradiction. To say one God, three Gods, that would be a contradiction. To say one person, three persons, that would be a contradiction. But that's

not what we're saying. We're saying something profound revealed to us in Scripture that goes far beyond our understanding. We're saying one God, three persons. Do you see the difference? We're using different nouns as we used different numbers to describe one great eternal reality.

So it's not a contradiction and here's what you need to understand about it is this, is that God is not one in the same way in which he is three. The oneness of God is speaking about his essence, his undivided essence. The threeness of God is speaking about the persons in whom that one essence all fully dwell. Colossians 2:9, "In Him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form." So God is not one in the same way in which he is three. He has one essence of which three persons all fully possess.

R. B. Kuiper said this, he said, "The doctrine of the Trinity is basic to the Christian religion. It is no exaggeration to assert that the whole of Christianity stands or falls with it." In other words, the doctrine of the Trinity is what distinguishes true Christianity from every other false religion. Every false religion that tries to have Jesus as a lesser God, as a created being, is exposed by holding it up to the glorious light of this doctrine of the Trinity. As we'll see tomorrow, if the Trinity is not true, there is no salvation for any of us. We're all still lost in our sins. It's as serious and as important as that and I hope you will be with us tomorrow as we look into that.

For tonight, we just close with this summary: the doctrine of the Trinity says there is one God who eternally exists in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is great. This is glorious. This is magnificent. This is stunning and stupendous and awesome and every other possible adjective you could use to describe. It shows forth the glory of God and in light of this glorious doctrine of the Trinity, my friend, all I can say is this, "Come, let us adore Him."

Let's bow together in prayer.

*Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three in one, we give You praise for the riches that we inherit heart and soul and voice, we raise. God, we pray for the help of Your indwelling Holy Spirit to help us understand these things more fully. We pray for grace to be faithful to defend them. We pray for discernment to recognize attacks on Your true person. And Father, we are lost in wonder, love and praise at the great majesty of Your holy being. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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