

FBC POWELL 7-17-11 PM NOTES
"GOD IN THREE PERSONS, BLESSED TRINITY"
VARIOUS SCRIPTURES
#1 in Series, "The Forgotten Member of the Trinity"

"For it [the doctrine of the Trinity] is beyond any question the most mysterious and the most difficult of all biblical doctrines. There is no doctrine that shows so clearly...our absolute dependence upon the revelation that we have in the Scriptures. No human being would have thought of the doctrine of the Trinity. It comes directly from the Bible and nowhere else at all."

—Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

"There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being."

—The Baptist Faith and Message

"We believe in one living, sovereign, and all-glorious God, eternally existing in three infinitely excellent and admirable Persons: God the Father, fountain of all being; God the Son, eternally begotten, not made, without beginning, being of one essence with the Father; and God the Holy Spirit, proceeding in the full, divine essence, as a Person, eternally from the Father and the Son. Thus each person of the Godhead is fully and completely God."

—From the Doctrinal Statement of Bethlehem Institute

"There are three persons within the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory."

—The Westminster Confession of Faith

I. The Progressive Revelation of the Trinity in Scripture

"In His Trinitarian mode of being, God is unique; and, as there is nothing in the universe like Him in this respect, so is there nothing which can help us to comprehend Him."

—B. B. Warfield

"God is not *like* anything. He is incomprehensible, incomparable, and unlike any other being. He is outside our realm of existence and, thus, outside our ability to categorize Him. While analogies may be helpful in understanding certain aspects of Him, let's be careful not to think that our analogies in any way encapsulate His nature."

—Francis Chan

A. The Trinity in the Old Testament

Genesis 1:1 (NKJV) "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Genesis 1:26a (NKJV) "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...'"

Genesis 11:7 (NKJV) "Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech."

1 Corinthians 8:4b (NKJV) "... *there is* no other God but one."

James 2:19a (NKJV) "You believe that there is one God. You do well."

Deuteronomy 6:4 (NKJV) "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord *is* one!"

Psalms 110:1 (NKJV) "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'"

Isaiah 63:10a (NKJV) "But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit..."

B. The Trinity in the New Testament

Luke 1:35 (NKJV) "And the angel answered and said to her, '*The* Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.'"

Matthew 3:16-17 (NKJV) "¹⁶ When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. ¹⁷ And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"

Matthew 28:19-20 (NKJV) ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

2 Corinthians 13:14 (NKJV) “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.”

II. Three Statements That Summarize the Doctrine of the Trinity

A. God Is Three Persons

Romans 8:27a (NKJV) “Now He who searches the hearts knows what the **mind of the Spirit** is...”

Ephesians 4:30a (NKJV) “And do not **grieve** the Holy Spirit of God...”

1 Corinthians 12:11 (NKJV) “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He **wills**.”

B. Each Person Is Fully God

John 10:30 (NKJV) “I and *My* Father are one.”

Matthew 28:17a (NKJV) “When they saw Him, they worshiped Him...”

John 1:1 (NKJV) “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Acts 5:3-4 (NKJV) ³But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself? ⁴While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”

Hebrews 9:14 (NKJV) “how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

Zechariah 4:6b (NKJV) “‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the Lord of hosts.”

1 Corinthians 2:10b-11 (NKJV) ¹⁰“For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. ¹¹For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.”

Psalms 139:7-8 (NKJV) ⁷Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? ⁸If I ascend into heaven, You *are* there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You *are there*.”

C. There Is One God

1 Kings 8:60 (NKJV) “that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord *is* God; *there is* no other.”

Isaiah 45:5-6 (NKJV) ⁵I *am* the Lord, and *there is* no other; *there is* no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, ⁶that they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that *there is* none besides Me. I *am* the Lord, and *there is* no other.”

1 Timothy 2:5a (NKJV) “For *there is* one God...”

Romans 3:30a (NKJV) “since *there is* one God...”

III. The Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity

“May I beg of you, do not try to understand all this with your minds. It is for us humbly and as little children to receive the truth as it is revealed; to stand in worship, in adoration and amazement. It is beyond us, but it is true. And it is all true in a special way for us and for our salvation.”
—Martyn Lloyd-Jones

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“GOD IN THREE PERSONS, BLESSED TRINITY”
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Tonight and for the next seven weeks we are going to focus in on what the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit. In our TELL training I share a testimony about my personal experience with the Holy Spirit. The shortened version of that testimony is that after I became a Christian at an early age, I knew almost nothing about the Holy Spirit. I knew that He was a member of the Trinity, but I knew nothing of His work and how it affected me. I had been a Christian about 15 or 16 years before I ever remember being taught the first thing about the Holy Spirit and His indwelling and empowering work in the believer. My experience is not unique in the church. Others, however, grew up hearing a lot about the Holy Spirit, but the teaching they heard made the Holy Spirit a tool for us to use to get what we want. I almost think that is more devastating than hearing nothing about the Holy Spirit. There is a desperate need to see clearly what the Scriptures say about the Holy Spirit.

Before we are ready to look at the Scriptures concerning the ministry and work of the Holy Spirit in and through and for the Christian, we need to drop back a little and take a look at the Holy Spirit and the Trinity. We cannot really understand the person and work of the Holy Spirit apart from seeing the relationship of God the Spirit with God the Father and God the Son. Even though it is a foundational truth of Scripture, there is much ignorance and false teaching about the Trinity. The enemies of the Trinity are quick to say that the word “Trinity” is not in the Bible. They are correct in saying that, but it is a totally irrelevant statement. While the word “Trinity” is not in the Scripture, the Trinity is all through the Bible – Old and New Testaments. The word “Trinity” is from the Latin word “trinitas” and it means “threeness”. The word “Trinity” is simply a word describing what is in the Scriptures. Many people think that the Trinity is just some abstract concept that is unrelated to the practical things of life, and that it should be left to the professional theologians to figure out and debate. That is incorrect! A basic understanding of the Trinity is essential in comprehending what the Scripture says about God and how we know and relate to Him.

Let me make it clear that it is impossible to completely understand the doctrine of the Trinity. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, “For it [the doctrine of the Trinity] is beyond any question the most mysterious and the most difficult of all biblical doctrines. There is no doctrine that shows so clearly ... our absolute dependence upon the revelation that we have in the Scriptures. No human being would have thought of the doctrine of the Trinity. It comes directly from the Bible and nowhere else at all” [Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, “Great Doctrines of the Bible”, Page 84]. Let’s look at some doctrinal statements concerning the Trinity. The official doctrinal statement of our denomination that must be signed by the missionaries that are supported by our denomination and the teachers in our seminaries is called “The Baptist Faith and Message”. Here is what it says about the Trinity: “There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being” [The Baptist Faith and Message]. I especially like the doctrinal statement from The Bethlehem Institute, a ministry of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, MN. “We believe in one living, sovereign, and all-glorious God, eternally existing in three infinitely excellent and admirable Persons: God the father, fountain of all being; God the Son, eternally begotten, not made, without beginning, being of one essence with the father; and God the Holy Spirit, proceeding in the full, divine essence, as a Person, eternally from the Father and the Son. Thus each person of the Godhead is fully and completely God” [From the Doctrinal Statement of Bethlehem Institute]. The Westminster Confession of Faith from the 17th Century says, “There are three persons within the Godhead – the Father, the Son, and

the Holy Spirit; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.” Those are all good summary statements about the doctrine of the Trinity, but if you analyze them very much, you end up scratching your head. They speak of one God revealed in three persons, but without division of nature, essence, substance and being. That is hard to grasp! In the remainder of this message, I will try to clarify the Trinity, but I will not try to simplify it. It is not simple and cannot be simplified without changing who the Trinity is. As we examine church history and the many groups with warped views of the Trinity, most every one of them began when there was an attempt to simplify the Trinity and to fully and logically explain it. To put it another way, it was when a teacher tried to take the mystery out of the doctrine of the Trinity and fully explain it that error prevailed. This is not a simple doctrine and while it is not contradictory, unreasonable, or illogical; it is, however, above our capacity for logic and reason.

I. The Progressive Revelation of the Trinity in Scripture

Let me be clear that apart from the special revelation of the Scriptures, we could never know the Trinity. General revelation (creation and conscience) does not reveal the Trinity – only God’s written Word reveals it. The great Princeton scholar of a hundred years ago, B. B. Warfield emphasized this truth: “In His Trinitarian mode of being, God is unique; and, as there is nothing in the universe like Him in this respect, so is there nothing which can help us to comprehend Him” [The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology, Spring 2006, Page 58]. There seems to be no end to the attempts to illustrate the trinity from the natural world. Some of these illustrations are way off and don’t accurately illustrate the Trinity at all. Others are somewhat close and can be helpful once we have a basic grasp of the written revelation, but they all fall short. Let me give you an example from the universe itself. There is one universe but if you ask a scientist what makes up the universe he will tell you it is space, time, and matter. Just as God always exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the universe always exists as space time and matter. While this isn’t a perfect illustration of the Trinity, it shows the finger print of God upon the universe that He created. Let me reemphasize that there are no really good illustrations of the Trinity. The triune God revealed in Scripture is described like this by Francis Chan: “God is not *like* anything. He is incomprehensible, incomparable, and unlike any other being. He is outside our realm of existence and, thus, outside our ability to categorize Him. While analogies may be helpful in understanding certain aspects of Him, let’s be careful not to think that our analogies in any way encapsulate His nature” [Francis Chan, “The Forgotten God”, Page 100]. God is unique and cannot be seen or known through observation or reason. The Trinity is seen only through revelation.

When we speak of progressive revelation of the Trinity, what does that mean? It means that it was not all revealed all at once. Some about the trinity was revealed, and later in the Scripture more was revealed, and later more until we get the whole picture by the end of the New Testament.

A. The Trinity in the Old Testament

As we look back to the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament, we can very clearly see the Trinity. B. B. Warfield said that the Old Testament can be compared to a room beautifully furnished but with very dim light. When the light of the New Testament shines on the Old, nothing is added to the Old, but what is there is clearly seen.

We see the Trinity in the first verse of the Bible. **Genesis 1:1 (NKJV)** “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The Hebrew word for God is “Elohim”. The plural suffix “im” represents a singular God who is expressed as a plurality. We see this plural nature of God in **Genesis 1:26a (NKJV)** “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...’” When the Lord was about to destroy the Tower of Babel He said in **Genesis 11:7 (NKJV)** “Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.”

Many argue against the Trinity because they say that the Old Testament teaches that God is one. That is true and so does the New Testament. **1 Corinthians 8:4b (NKJV)** “...*there is* no other God but one.” **James 2:19a (NKJV)** “You believe that there is one God. You do well.” The clearest passage that teaches that God is one is **Deuteronomy 6:4 (NKJV)** “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord *is* one!” There is only one God! No legitimate theologian would argue with that. But let me point out something about that Hebrew word translated “one” It is the Hebrew word *echad* which does not mean one in isolation, but one in unity. The word is used in speaking of one bunch of grapes or the people of

Israel speaking as one. It is the word used in Genesis 2:24 when it says that Adam and Eve became “one flesh”. In a similar way, God is one but one in three persons. In addition, there are several passages where one person is called “God” or “the Lord” and is distinguished from another person who is also said to be God. An example would be **Psalms 110:1 (NKJV)** “The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’” We read in **Isaiah 63:10a (NKJV)** “But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit...” The Holy Spirit is distinct from God the Father. There are many more, but that is some of the places we see the Trinity in the Old Testament.

B. The Trinity in the New Testament

We see the Trinity in multiple places in the New Testament. We see the Trinity in the angel’s announcement of the incarnation of Christ in **Luke 1:35 (NKJV)** “And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The **Holy Spirit** will come upon you, and the power of **the Highest** will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called **the Son of God.**’” We see the Trinity when Jesus was baptized. **Matthew 3:16-17 (NKJV)** “¹⁶ When He had been baptized, **Jesus** came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw **the Spirit of God** descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. ¹⁷ And suddenly **a voice** came from heaven [obviously the Father], saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’” We know that the voice was the Father because of what He said about the Son. We see the Trinity revealed when Jesus gave us the Great Commission in **Matthew 28:19-20 (NKJV)** “¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of **the Father** and of **the Son** and of **the Holy Spirit,** ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” We will see later in the message that the Holy Spirit is called God and Jesus Christ is presented as God in flesh. A great verse that spotlights the Trinity is the last verse of 2 Corinthians – **2 Corinthians 13:14 (NKJV)** “The grace of **the Lord Jesus Christ**, and the love of **God**, and the communion of **the Holy Spirit** be with you all. Amen.” The whole doctrine of the Trinity is revealed in the New Testament and in the Light of the New Testament, we look back and see that the Trinity was there from the very first verse of the Old Testament.

II. Three Statements That Summarize the Doctrine of the Trinity

Bible scholars through the centuries have condensed the doctrine of the Trinity down to three statements. None of these three statements can be left out if we are to have an accurate doctrine of the Trinity. The three statements are: 1) God is three persons; 2) each person is fully God; 3) there is one God. All three of these statements must be accepted as true if the God we worship is indeed the true God.

A. God Is Three Persons

Let’s make sure that we know what “Person” means. It has nothing to do with a physical body. When we die, we are still persons even though we are separated from our physical bodies. Being a person means having a personality which means having mind, will, and emotions. The Father has mind, will, and emotion. The Son has mind, will, and emotion. The Father is not the Son, the Father nor the Son is the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is three persons. Most don’t have a problem with seeing the Father and the Son as persons, but the Holy Spirit is also revealed as a person. The Holy Spirit has mind – **Romans 8:27a (NKJV)** “Now He who searches the hearts knows what **the mind of the Spirit is...**” The Holy Spirit has emotion – **Ephesians 4:30a (NKJV)** “And do not **grieve** the Holy Spirit of God...” “Grieve” is an emotion word! The Holy Spirit has will – **1 Corinthians 12:11 (NKJV)** “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He **wills.**”

B. Each Person Is Fully God

Typically, there is no problem with understanding that God the Father is fully God. Even most of the cults teach that. The problem comes with seeing the Son and the Spirit as fully God. When it comes to the Son, Jesus Christ being fully God, there is overwhelming evidence. We have looked at message after message giving proof from the Scripture that the Bible presents Jesus Christ as fully God. Let me briefly give you just 3 of literally scores of passages where Jesus is presented as equal with God and thus God in flesh. First, Jesus claimed equality with God. **John 10:30 (NKJV)** “I and My Father are one.” Second, Jesus accepted worship and the Bible is clear that to worship other than the true God is blasphemy. **Matthew 28:17a (NKJV)** “When they saw Him, they worshipped Him”. Third, the Bible clearly states

that Jesus (who is called “the Word”) was God. **John 1:1 (NKJV)** “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God.**”

How do we know that the Holy Spirit is God? One major cult says that He is an impersonal power that flows from God. We have already established that the Holy Spirit is a person with mind will and emotion, but is He God? We see His equality with God in **Acts 5:3-4 (NKJV)** “³ But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart **to lie to the Holy Spirit** and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself? ⁴ While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? **You have not lied to men but to God.**” To lie to the Holy Spirit is to lie to God. We also see in Scripture that the Holy Spirit has the attributes of God. He is eternal. **Hebrews 9:14 (NKJV)** “how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through **the eternal Spirit** offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” The Holy Spirit is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. He is seen as omnipotent in **Zechariah 4:6b (NKJV)** “‘...Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the Lord of hosts.” The Holy Spirit is omniscient. **1 Corinthians 2:10b-11 (NKJV)** “¹⁰ For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. ¹¹ For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.” The Spirit is omnipresent. **Psalms 139:7-8 (NKJV)** “⁷ Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? ⁸ If I ascend into heaven, You *are* there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You *are there.*” The Father is God; the Son is God; the Spirit is God!

C. There Is One God

We have established earlier how this truth pervades both the Old and New Testaments. Anyone who knows anything about the Old Testament knows that it teaches that there is only one true God. **1 Kings 8:60 (NKJV)** “that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord *is* God; *there is* no other.” **Isaiah 45:5-6 (NKJV)** “⁵ I *am* the Lord, and *there is* no other; *there is* no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, ⁶ That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that *there is* none besides Me. I *am* the Lord, and *there is* no other”.

As we saw earlier, the New Testament where the doctrine of the Trinity is most clearly revealed, also repeatedly tells us that there is one God. **1 Timothy 2:5a (NKJV)** “For *there is* one God...” **Romans 3:30a (NKJV)** “since *there is* one God...”

God is three persons. Each person is fully God. There is one God. When any one of these three statements is denied, the result is doctrinal error leading to heresy.

III. The Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity

We do not have the option of saying, “This is all too complicated, nobody really understands it anyway, and I’m just going to ignore it; all that matters is that I love Jesus.” When you analyze that attitude, you begin to see the fallacy of it. First, who is the Jesus you claim to love? Second, how do you love Him if you don’t clearly know who He is? A basic understanding of the Trinity is of vital importance! Let me close by giving you some of the reasons it is so important that you have a basic grasp of the Trinity. First, the Trinity is the very identity of God and thus a basic understanding of the Trinity is necessary for worship. We don’t worship a vague god who is an example of deity in general. He is a very clearly revealed God. He is not the god of Islam. He is not the god of the cults. He is the true God revealed in Scripture who is one in three persons. Second, the Trinity affects how we pray. We pray to the Father in the name of the Son by the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Third, the Trinity affects the way that we approach evangelism. God the Father is the One we have offended with our sin. Because He is holy and just, our sin brings His wrath. Evangelism must start with God and the effects of our sin. God the Son is our only escape from the wrath of God. In love the Father sent the Son to bear our sins and to absorb the wrath from the Father that we deserve, so that all who repent of sin and believe the gospel that Christ died for us will be saved. As we share this glorious gospel, we don’t have to trust in our own eloquence, our own power of persuasion, nor do we have to make the truth more palatable or manipulate the lost person. Why are we freed from all these things? Because God the Spirit is the one who opens blind minds and unstops deaf ears and gives witness to the truth we share and gives life to their dead to God spirit and enables them to repent and believe the gospel.

The Trinity affects the way we worship, the way we have communion with God through prayer, the way we practice evangelism, and really, every aspect of the Christian life. You cannot afford to be ignorant of the Trinity.

CONCLUSION

Don't despair if you are struggling with this doctrine. I will close with a quote from one of the most Godly and most intelligent people that I know of. He is Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones who was a prominent London physician before becoming a preacher of the gospel. He said, "May I beg of you, do not try to understand all this with your minds. It is for us humbly and as little children to receive the truth as it is revealed; to stand in worship, in adoration and amazement. It is beyond us, but it is true. And it is all true in a special way for us and for our salvation" [Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "great Doctrines of the Bible", Page 91]. (3685)