

## THE TRINITY

“*Trinity*” is a theological term that defines God as an undivided unity expressed in the threefold nature of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. As a distinctive Christian doctrine, the Trinity is considered as a divine mystery beyond human comprehension to be reflected upon only through scriptural revelation. While the term *trinity* does not appear in Scripture, the trinitarian structure appears throughout the New Testament to affirm that God Himself is manifested through Jesus Christ by means of the Spirit. The concept is suggested as well throughout the Old Testament.

A proper biblical view of the Trinity balances the concepts of unity and distinctiveness. Two errors that appear in the history of the consideration of the doctrine are tritheism and unitarianism. In tritheism, error is made in emphasizing the distinctiveness of the Godhead to the point that the Trinity is seen as three separate Gods, or a Christian polytheism. On the other hand, unitarianism excludes the concept of distinctiveness while focusing solely on the aspect of God the Father. In this way, Christ and the Holy Spirit are placed in lower categories and made less than divine. Both errors compromise the effectiveness and contribution of the activity of God in redemptive history. The biblical concept of the Trinity developed through progressive revelation.

- **Doctrine proved from Scripture.** Mt. 3:16-17; 28:19; Ro. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:3-6; 2 Cor. 13:14; Ephes. 4:4-6; 1 Pt. 1:2; Jude 1:20-21; Rev. 1:4-5
- **Divine titles applied to the three persons.** Ex. 20:2; Jn. 20:28; Acts 5:3-4
- **EACH PERSON OF THE GODHEAD IS DESCRIBED AS:**
  - **Eternal.** Romans 16:26; Rev. 22:13; Hebrews 9:14
  - **Holy.** Rev. 4:8; Rev. 15:4; Acts 3:14; 1 John 2:20
  - **True.** John 7:28; Rev. 3:7
  - **Omnipresent.** Jeremiah 23:24; Ephes. 1:23; Psalm 139:7
  - **Omnipotent.** Ge. 17:1; Rev. 1:8; Ro. 15:19; Je. 32:17; He. 1:3; Lk. 1:35
  - **Omniscient.** Acts 15:18; John 21:17; 1 Cor. 2:10-11
  - **Creator.** Ge. 1:1; Col. 1:16; Job 33:4; Ps. 148:5; John 1:3; Job 26:13
  - **Sanctifier.** Jude 1:1; Hebrews 2:11; 1 Peter 1:2
  - **Author of all spiritual operations.** He. 13:21; Col. 1:29; 1 Cor. 12:11
  - **Source of eternal life.** Romans 6:23; John 10:28; Galatians 6:8
  - **Teacher.** Is. 54:13; Lk. 21:15; Jn. 14:26; Is. 48:17; Ga. 1:12; 1 Jn. 2:20
  - **Raising Christ from the dead.** 1 Cor. 6:14; John 2:19; 1 Peter 3:18
  - **Inspiring the prophets.** Hebrews 1:1; 2 Cor. 13:3; Mark 13:11
  - **Supplying ministers.** Mt. 10:5; Eph. 4:11; Acts 13:2, 20:28
  - **Salvation the work of the Spirit:** 2 Thes. 2:13-14; Titus 3:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2
  - **Baptism administered in name of the Spirit:** Matthew 28:19
  - **Benediction given in name of the Spirit:** 2 Cor. 13:14

## Questions for Personal Application<sup>1</sup>

1. Why is God pleased when people exhibit faithfulness, love, and harmony within a family? What are some ways in which members of your family reflect the diversity found in the members of the Trinity? How does your family reflect the unity found among members of the Trinity? What are some ways in which your family could reflect the unity of the Trinity more fully? How might the diversity of persons in the Trinity encourage parents to allow their children to develop different interests, from each other, and from their parents, without thinking that the unity of the family will be damaged?
2. Have you ever thought that if Grace Church were to offer new or different kinds of ministries to develop, that it might hinder the unity of the church? How might the fact of unity and diversity in the Trinity help you to approach this question? In other words, how might we who are created in God's image reflect more intentionally both the unity and the diversity of the Godhead?
3. Do you think that the Trinitarian nature of God is more fully reflected in a church in which all the members have the same racial background or one in which the members come from many different races? (Eph. 3:1-10).
4. In addition to our relationships within our families, we all exist in other relationships to human authority in government, in employment, in voluntary societies, in educational institutions, and even here in the church. Sometimes we have authority over others. Sometimes we are subject to the authority of others. Whether in the family or one of these other areas, give one example of a way in which your use of authority or your response to authority might become more like the pattern of relationships in the Trinity.
5. Do you think that God has so created us that we take delight in demonstrations of unity in diversity such as a musical composition that manifests great unity and yet great diversity, or the skillful execution of some planned strategy by members of an athletic team working together?
6. In the Trinity we have infinite unity combined with the preservation of distinct personalities belonging to the members of the Trinity. How can this fact reassure us if we ever begin to fear that becoming more united to Christ as we grow in the Christian life might tend to obliterate our personalities? In heaven, do you think that you will be exactly like everyone else, or will you have a personality that is distinctly your own?

<sup>1</sup> I'm grateful to Wayne Grudem for these probing questions found in his book, Systematic Theology, p. 258.