

Satisfaction in the Trinity (Part 2)

1 Peter 1:2 and Selected Scriptures

Transcript of a Sermon Preached by Tony A. Bartolucci on December 05, 2004

Part 2 The Trinity in Scripture, Continued

Introduction

Often you hear people say things like, “The Trinity is confusing to me.” And again, that is, they don’t really have much of a grasp on what it means - what it means to serve a Triune God, and I suppose that can be a bit confusing. I spent this past week, probably about 15 hours, just reading - reading different materials on the Trinity and trying to sharpen my understanding – and the next week or two, I’ll spend many, many more hours doing much of the same. And it’s certainly helped me clarify some things that I’ve even wondered about and struggled with. And so I understand it can be a bit confusing. And I’m certainly not beyond being confused. Just ask my wife. She’ll tell you I’m confused all the time.

Last week, Lois and I went out for a dinner in celebration of her birthday and afterward we went to a mall nearby. She knows where this is going. Don’t worry, I’ll say it tactfully. And Lois went into a store (and if it doesn’t have car parts or rusty stuff or things like that, tools, I’m not really that interested in it) so I decided that I needed to go to the restroom. In this particular mall, you get a workout just going to the restroom. It’s down one long corridor, you make a left, you go down another corridor – and I’m kind of daydreaming and I’m looking – they had some nice signs on the walls and I’m looking around, and as I get to the opening of the restroom (it’s one of those deals where you don’t have any doors; it’s just kind of this big opening that you walk into) a guy came out of what would be my right-hand side and I almost walked into him, and I decided, well, he came from that side, I’ll go around to the other side. Have I told you this story? Well, I walked in – it sort of looked (if I can describe it to you maybe you know what I’m talking about) – it had a big opening and then there’s a wall and you can go right or left (it’s one of those big restrooms that has two sides to it). You’ve seen those, haven’t you? Well, I walk in and something seemed kind of odd. I won’t go into any detail, but something was missing *as far as appliances are concerned*, but that was okay, I figured they must be on the other side. So I did what I had come there to do and fortunately nobody else was in there. And I was just kind of straightening up my clothes and I look up and there’s a woman walking in and I’m thinking, “What in the world is this woman doing in the men’s room?” And I said to her, “I think this is the men’s room.” And she looked at me and walked out and then a moment later came back in and said, “No, you’re in the ladies’ room.” Well, we both had a bit of a laugh, and as I walked out, I noticed that there was a little sign that said, “Men this way, women that way” which I neglected to see. Well, I thought to myself after that, gee, Tony, you can... you

know, you can get a pretty good grasp of the Trinity, but you can't figure out where to go when it comes to using the restroom. Isn't that a bit ironic?

I've got to tell you another story. Back several years ago, when we lived in Arizona (talk about confusing) Lois and I took some time off and spent the weekend in Tucson. And it happened to be the weekend of the Big Game. Now in Arizona, the Big Game is Arizona State University out of Tempe, a suburb of Phoenix, playing the University of Arizona in Tucson. And I'm a big Arizona State University fan. And we happened to be there the weekend of that game and for some reason it wasn't on TV. And it was in Tucson and I don't know what the reason was, but I figured, well, we've got to find a place where we can watch it and at that point you're pretty much looking at a sports bar sort of place. You know, where you have a restaurant on one side and a bar on the other and TVs all over the place, and so that's kind of what we were looking for. And I found one place - I wish I could remember the name of it because it was pretty innocuous; I mean it seemed to suggest sports-bar-TV-sort-of place and so we went in there, and parked, and with Lois behind me, walked in, the place was kind of dark and there was this sort of lobby area and a big desk with this woman standing there in a cheap-looking outfit and, all I'm looking for is a TV; I happened to notice there aren't really many women around and all of a sudden I feel this hand grab me from behind and pull me out toward the parking lot. It was my wife and I caught a glimpse of why she was dragging me out. There were women there but they were "dancers" and happened to be the entertainment for the day. Ahhh, sometimes it is very good to be married.

So, you know, in some ways it's kind of funny to be mistaken and to be wrong about certain things. It's humorous. But on the other hand, when it comes to issues such as the nature of the Godhead, we need to be much more careful, and such is the issue of the Trinity as it relates to us as Christians.

Trinity versus Triunity

Now last week, we said, "What do we mean by 'Trinity'?" It's from the Latin word, *trinitas* which means "threeness". It's certainly a biblical word in that it conveys biblical truth. However, a preferable word, as I mentioned last time, would be the word "Triunity" and most theologians prefer that word even though we're sort of stuck with the word "Trinity" and we use that just so not to be mistaken. But a more accurate term would be "Triunity" because it withholds and encompasses that which we believe, that God is one, but also encompasses the idea that there is a threeness that relates to His oneness. So I like to use the word "Triunity" and that's the word that you'll probably hear me say most of the time.

The Believer's Hope

Our main idea, as we looked at it from verses 1 and 2 – and you might remember this, really came out of verse 2 – is that as Christians this is where our hope is. Our hope is found in the electing grace of the Father, the sanctifying grace of the Spirit, and the saving grace of the Son. That is, friends, where our hope lies. You can ask someone like Kevin's Dad where is his hope. What happens as a Christian when you're stricken with an illness that looks like it's terminal? Your hope

isn't ultimately found in doctors; your hope isn't ultimately found in this life. Your hope is found in the electing grace of the Father, the sanctifying grace of the Spirit and the saving grace of the Son. And certainly that is a place, as difficult as it is to go through hard times like sickness and illness, that's a place that we can go to that's rock solid. And we can say, "Yes, this is my hope; it's eternal. It transcends this world."

A Threefold Main Idea

Now, as it relates to the Trinity, our main idea is sort of threefold. If our hope is found in the triune God, and it is, then, we must know and love Him in His Triunity, and if we must know and love Him in His Triunity, then we must know about His Triunity, and if we must know and love Him in His Triunity, then we must believe in His Triunity. And in short, I'll sort of put it this way, that true believers will embrace the Triune God in all of His fullness.

A Non-Negotiable Doctrine

Talk about a non-negotiable issue. The doctrine of the Trinity is at the heart of the Christian faith. It sits at the feet of the throne of God with other non-negotiable issues like the virgin birth, like the inerrancy of Scripture and the inspiration of Scripture, like justification by grace through faith. It is a non-negotiable sort of thing and so there's really not a lot of wiggle room when we talk about this sort of issue.

John 17:3

Now, remember what Jesus said in John, chapter 17, verse 3, he said, "This is eternal life... this is eternal life - to know the only true God and Jesus Christ Whom He has sent." So if that's eternal life - to know God and to know Christ - then to know the God of the Bible is to know the triune God of the Bible. In other words, if eternal life is knowing Him, then we need to know what He is and what He's all about, because to miss the mark there can, in many cases, be a fatal terminal error. To deny a triune God is to deny the God of the Bible, the One Whom Jesus Christ said we must know if we're to have eternal life.

God is One as to Essence; Three as to Person

Now I told you (and I quizzed my wife last week; I said, "Do you remember the simple definition I gave?" and she did) I want you to remember this definition because it's simple. We can define the Trinity as this: *God is one as to essence, three as to person*. It's not "Gods are," but "God is." Make no mistake about it: we uphold monotheism. We believe in one God, not three (that is heresy). We don't say we believe in one person and three persons, because that would be a contradiction. Or one essence and three essences, that would be a contradiction. But we believe in God Who is one as to essence, three as to person.

Three Essential Elements of the Trinity

We spent some time last week just looking briefly at some historical issues and I want to now set the stage and bring us to three essential elements of the Triunity of God. And that's sort of the way I've chosen to outline this thing (I got a little bit of an insight from doing it this way from Dr. Wayne Grudem, who's one of the foremost theologians who are contemporary with us). Grudem was a man that teaches at my alma mater, Phoenix Seminary (he was on my oral examination team when I graduated) and I thought just to keep it simple we'd look at it this way: three essential elements of the triunity of God, or three necessary truths as it relates to who God is in His Trinality, or in His Trinity. We could call this three pillars of the faith. And if you take away any one of the pillars, the structure is going to fall. I want you to look at it that way. I want you to picture a roof supported at three points, or a stool with three legs. What good is a two-legged stool? Good for nothing. Okay, I want you to picture a roof supported at three points, or a stool with three legs, and if you were to knock out any one of the supports - any one of the three, or two of the three, or all of the three - the entire thing's going to come crashing down. That's the way I want you to picture this as we go through it this morning and next week. Each of these points forms a non-negotiable pillar. If you take one away, if you take two away, it's going to cause your theology to come crashing down into a pile of rubble.

Pillar Number One: God is One as to Essence

Now, here's the first pillar. Pillar number one: God is one as to essence. God is one in unity. By this we affirm clearly, dogmatically, historically, the church of Jesus Christ affirms, this church affirms, I affirm, the elders affirm that God is one. There is only one God. Trinitarians get accused all the time of believing in three deities. And that is not true. That is a misstatement. We believe in one God. We're not bi-theists, we don't believe in two gods. We're not tri-theists, we don't in three gods. We're not polytheists, we don't believe in many gods. No, we're monotheists, we believe in one God.

This is foundational to the faith. It was foundational to the Old Testament and to the Jews, the Jewish faith. I could read verse after verse, but a couple will suffice. Isaiah, chapter 44, verse 6: *Thus says the Lord of Hosts, I am the first and I am the Last, and there is no god besides Me.* Isaiah 46:9: *I am God, there is no other, I am God and there is no one like Me.* You see, this is echoed time and time again throughout the Scriptures. Especially in the Old Testament, the Jews lived among pagan neighbors, pagan nations, pagan religions that believed in many gods. By nature, false religions tend to be polytheistic. They tend to believe in many gods, lots of gods. And the unique feature - at least one unique feature of Israel's belief in God - was that it was a belief in **one** God. Now did they stray from that? Certainly they did from time to time throughout their history. But the fact remains they were exhorted in the Scriptures to believe in one God because that's all there is - One God.

In the New Testament, James, a Jew, writing to Jews reflects this in James 2:19 when he says, *You believe that God is one; you do well, but be reminded the demons also believe and shudder.* So even

demons are monotheistic. The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 8:4 says the same thing. *We know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one.* Now the central passage on this in the Old Testament is found in Deuteronomy, chapter 6, verse 4. I'm going to invite you where you can and when you can to turn to some of these passages and look at them for yourself. Deuteronomy, chapter 6, verse 4 is the central confession of faith for the Jews. It's known as the *Shema*. *Shema* comes from the first word in the Hebrew, the first word of that verse which means "hear". Deuteronomy 6:4 says this: *Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God; the Lord is one.* That word "one" carries the idea of uniqueness. There's no other like the Lord. He is unique; He is the only God; He has no like or equal in the entirety of the universe. Hear O Israel, the Lord - Yahweh - is our God; the Lord - Yahweh - is one. That was something Jesus Himself affirmed in Mark 12. One of the scribes queried Him about which was the greatest commandment and Jesus replied, *The foremost commandment is this* - He quotes the *Shema* - *Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.* Listen, you cannot be considered a true believer in God in the Old Testament or in the New Testament if you didn't believe in this, if you didn't believe in the *Shema*, if you didn't believe that God is one and He alone is God. Now our first pillar, number one: God is one as to essence, and I think it says it there someplace in your outline - God is one in unity. In other words, God's oneness isn't a wooden one, it isn't a wooden one like a dead piece of lumber. Give me one 2x4, or like a stone: here's one stone. God's oneness is a unity in plurality. The word "one" in the *Shema* is the Hebrew word *echad*, which comes from the root word "to unite." It's used to refer to a compound unity. It can be used in the sense of (for some English parallels) in the sense of the word "rain". "Rain" is a singular word which reflects a plurality, or "Here is my class of students." "Class" is a singular word that reflects a plurality. Well, such is the same with the Hebrew word *echad* that is used in Deuteronomy, chapter 6, verse 4. The word show that sense in Genesis 2:24, "A man shall leave his father and mother, cleave to his wife, and they shall become *echad* - they shall become one flesh". The two become one. So it's a similar sort of idea.

Now in case you're curious, there was another word in Hebrew, *yachid*, which carries the idea of a wooden one, like a stone - one stone. But that's not the word that's used here in Deuteronomy 6:4. So at least at this point I want you to note that in Israel's central confession of faith, we find a word that allows for the concept of the Trinity of God - even as it guards the belief in one God. So again, God is one as to essence; God is one in unity.

Now I want you to put on your thinking caps for a moment, because I want to throw two words out to you that I think will be helpful, especially if you do any further reading on this yourself. When we talk about essence, we're talking about Who God is. Here's a big word, but I know you can handle it: ontologically; we're talking about Who God is ontologically. "Ontological" means what something is at its very essence. It's from the word *ontos* in the Greek which means "being". It's that which something inherently is, regardless of rank, regardless of order, it's what something is. Now it would be like saying (and I've done quite a bit of teaching on the roles of men and women in the church) and along with that sort of teaching, when you say things like, "The Bible teaches that women are to submit to their husbands" or "The Bible teaches that only men are the elders in the church" automatically people start thinking, "inequality". "That's not equal; that's not fair." And at that point it's good to point out that no, there's no inequality between men and women,

ontologically speaking. At their very essence, they are equals. Those who have been created in God's image, men and women, are equal as to their essence. Men are not inherently superior to women; women are not inherently superior to men. Now that said, there may be differences in function; there may be differences in rank, if you will. Our President is not inherently superior, as a man created in the image of God, than anyone in this room – or anyone alive for that matter. We are ontologically equal, yet he certainly has a higher rank than I do before men and before God in his responsibilities. So when we're talking about ontological equality, we're talking about the fact that even as it relates - and we'll get to this - even as it relates to the members of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, they are ontologically equal. Each one is fully and perfectly and completely God, and again, I'm getting a little bit ahead of myself.

Now another word that means much the same thing as “essence” or “ontology” is “substance” and that's a word that you see often in creeds. It's a word that was used by the ancients: God is one as to substance or subsistence - that's the way it's often put. But I don't want to confuse you, I just want you to kind of understand that when I say, God is one as to essence, it's the same as saying, God is one ontologically, or God is one as it relates to His substance, okay? We're not saying, however, that being one is essence, or substance means that God cannot be Trinal or a Trinity of person. So stick with me, because this brings us now to pillar number 2. Pillar number one was this: God is one as to essence. There is one God, and He is one as to His essence, and if I were to remove that pillar my theology is going to come crashing down.

Pillar Number Two: God is Three as to Person

Number two: God is three as to person, pillar number two. Now again, I didn't say, “Gods are...”, but “God is...” God is three as to person, or God is three in distinction. Now there are glimpses of the fact that God is manifold in person in the Old Testament. You see it in plural pronouns used in reference to God. Let me read a few of them to you. Genesis, chapter 1, verse 26: *Let us... Let us make man in our own image.* God's speaking. Genesis, chapter 3, verse 22: God, speaking, says, *Man, in knowing good and evil, has become like us.* Genesis, chapter 11, verse 7: *Let us go down and confuse their language.* Let us go down and confuse their language. This would seem to indicate a distinction of persons within the one God. Now some have said “this is what you call the plural of majesty”, in other words, it's a way to just show manifold greatness to a supreme person or being, but the problem is, in Hebrew, we have no other examples of a king using plural verbs or plural pronouns of himself, so this suggestion really has no evidence to support it. Others have said that when God says, “Let us make man in our own image”, He's speaking to the angels around Him, but angels don't participate in the creation of man, and man wasn't created in the image and likeness of angels. So we see, even from the plural pronouns that are used - and used with singular verbs, I might add - we get a glimpse into the Trinity of God.

Now another glimpse into this fact is what we sometimes see - and I'll just give you one example of it - it's a redundancy of the name Yahweh, or a redundancy of the name of God. Listen to Genesis, chapter 19, verse 24 and you'll see what I mean. *Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven.* The Lord rained fire and brimstone **from**

the Lord out of heaven. Now in this case, again, it would seem to indicate that there is more than one person in the Godhead. I could give lots of other examples, and just for space of time I won't do so, but the point I want to make is that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct persons. They each have personality.

Now when we talk about what makes someone a person, or what makes someone have personality, we talk about three factors. To have personhood, or personality, you have to have intellect, emotion and will. Those are the three defining characteristics of what it means to be a person - intellect, emotion and will. And also we see that the three persons of the Trinity each relate to the other -- and this is important -- they each relate to one another on a me, you, he basis. This isn't one God wearing three hats - now I'm the Father; oh, now I'm going to be the Son; oh, now I'm going to be the Holy Spirit. You see because at that point there's no relationship in a he, me, you sort of way that we see throughout the Scriptures.

Now, if we talk about the personality of the Father, that's sort of a given, I'm not even going to spend much time on that. The Father is God. That's clear. The Father is a person as opposed to some sort of impersonal force. That's also clear. He has intellect, obviously God knows all things. He has will, He has a will that He expresses to us, such as in the ten commandments. We know what pleases Him, what displeases Him. And He also shows emotion. God loves. God also hates in a holy sort of way, Psalm 5:5; Romans 9. And God also can be grieved; He grieves. So when we're talking about the Father there's no real debate that we're talking about a person.

What about the personality of the Son? Well, there's not really much debate about this either, really. Clearly Jesus has intellect, He thinks, He reasons. Luke, chapter 2, verse 40 says that even as a boy He grew in wisdom and knowledge. Luke, chapter 4, verse 32 talks about how the Jews were amazed at His teaching because He taught as one having authority, so He has intellect. He has emotion; we know that, Matthew 23:37, He wept over Jerusalem. John, chapter 11, verse 35, for some of you a favorite memory verse because it's so brief, *Jesus wept*. He wept over the death of His friend Lazarus. We know that Jesus could become angry. One only has to think about the money changers in the temple in John, chapter 2, verse 15. So Jesus has intellect, He has emotion, and He also has will, John 14:15: *If you love me, you'll keep my commandments*. Commandments imply a will. And He even prayed in the garden, *Not as I will, but as Thou wilt*, as He prayed to the Father. So we can establish the personality of the Father, we can establish the personality of the Son.

What about the Holy Spirit? This is the one area where sometimes cultists and false teachers will fall off the chair, so to speak. Some would say that the Holy Spirit isn't a person at all; some would say He's an impersonal force that emanates from God, kind of like the whole Star Wars thing. *The force be with you*, that sort of thing. But there's clear evidence that the Holy Spirit is a person. What did I say were the defining characteristics of personhood? Intellect, emotion and will. Well listen to some of these attributes: The Holy Spirit teaches John 14:26, He bears witness John 15:26, Romans 8:16, He prays on our behalf Romans 8:26 and 27, He searches and knows the depths and thoughts of God 1 Corinthians 2:10 and 11, He gives spiritual gifts to the body as He wills 1 Corinthians 12:11, He disallows certain activities Acts 16, verses 6 and 7 -- and in that passage we

see Paul, Silas and Timothy forbidden (and this is the way it's phrased) forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach in Asia or Bithynia. He speaks Acts 8:29, Acts 13:2. Two times we have the phrase, the Holy Spirit - or the Spirit - said, Do this, and He can be grieved - emotion - He can be grieved. *Do not grieve the Holy Spirit.* Ephesians 4:30. So clearly the Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force, the Holy Spirit is, indeed, a person. Another great evidence of this that comes out of Greek grammar is that the word "spirit," the word *pneuma* in the Greek, is neuter. Greek has masculine, feminine and neuter. However, grammatically you would expect that if the word were neuter, you would have neuter pronouns used of it, being the exact way I phrased it. In other words, it should be, by Greek grammar, it should be the Holy Spirit, It - neuter, not he or she -- the Holy Spirit, It or That. But rather in the Greek you have masculine pronouns that are used with a neuter object - He, Him, not It and some examples of that would be John 14:26 and 15:26 among many others.

Now remember what we said - we said that pillar number two, God is three as to person also means that God is three in distinction. Now this is where we sometimes run into problems. It's three in distinction, not three manifestations. If we say that God manifests Himself in three different ways, we're echoing an age-old heresy known as Modalism. Modalism has also gone by the titles Sebellianism, Monarchianism, Modalistic Monarchianism, and Patripassionism (the Father suffering on the cross). It is sometimes today called "oneness" or "Jesus only." Now this is why the illustration of the Trinity, that God is like a man who is a father, son and husband, doesn't work. I know we've probably all used it at some time, but it reflects a heresy. It doesn't really reflect the truth. You see, saying that a father is a son and a husband or a man is a father, a son or a husband, that's demonstrating modes or manifestations. Follow me here. I may be a father and a son and a husband, but each of those are not distinct persons. I can't be a father at home and call myself at the office and talk to the husband. You see what I'm saying? That's where the analogy breaks down. You see, it goes back to the issue, Who was Jesus praying to in the garden? If I'm modalistic, then Jesus has to be praying to Himself. Or some say, His humanity was praying to His divinity, but that is also theological suicide. And it even threatens the doctrine of the atonement, and I'll get into that in the next week or two. You see, neither of those make any sense. Remember our definition: God is one as to essence, three as to person.

Now what do we mean by person? Person presupposes the quality of personality, and personality presupposes the power of self-consciousness and self-determination. We're talking about an individual existence with reason and with will. One theologian put it this way:

"While the attributes of deity are held in common by each member of the Godhead, there are attributes of each individual person, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which are peculiarly theirs and are held separately."

Now, part of the problem is that sometimes we just run out of language and the right kind of language and the right word when it comes to describing the indescribable. God is an indescribable God and doctrines, such as the Trinity, simply point out to the fact that God is smarter than we are and that's a no-brainer. The word "person" is the best that we have in the English language but it still falls short because when we think of a person, we think of someone with a bodily existence.

Jerry is a person. Roger is a person. Vern is a person. And so we starts thinking of three separate essences and that's not what we're talking about here. So we have to keep in mind that we are talking about a God Who is eternal, omnipotent, infinite, omnipresent, and Who is not bound by the laws of physics because He's spirit.

It's sort of like the fact that God indwells each believer. We're told that the entirety of the Godhead, in the Gospel of John, indwells each believer. Now how can it be that God is indwelling you, and God is indwelling you, and you, and you, and you, and you, and you, and you, and you, and you, and yet He's one God? Because we're not talking about a material existence. We're talking about a spiritual existence. Now as we've said that God is not a unit like a piece of wood, He is a unity. Trinity in unity and unity in Trinity. The great theologian of the 19th century W. G. T. Shedd writes this (now see if you can follow me, this is a little bit deep, but listen along):

“God is not a unit, but a unity. A unit like a stone or a stick is marked by mere singleness. It admits no interior distinctions and is incapable of that inherent Trinality which is necessary to self-knowledge and self-consciousness.”

He goes on to say,

“Mere singleness [that is a kind of wooden singleness] is therefore incompatible with divine communion and blessedness. God is blessed only as He is self-knowing and self-communing. A subject without an object cannot experience either love or joy. Love and joy are societal, they imply more than one single person.”

In other words, God's attributes would seem hollow apart from an object with which to demonstrate them. How could God eternally be love, if there was no one in eternity to love? How could God know fellowship if He was a mere singleness of person with no object? Now this is why some oneness writers have said that God **had** to create. God **had** to create because He **needed** some objects with which to show His love, some objects with which to fellowship. Now obviously, if you stop to think about that, that's like saying God in all of eternity was somehow incomplete. And the One who is by nature, independent of His creation was somehow made dependent upon it. That, theologically, is nonsense. So even the fact that God loves, even the fact that God can have fellowship in eternity, that He wasn't "lonely" is something that's demonstrated in the very fact of the trinality of God's existence. There was eternal fellowship between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit Who are one God, blessed forever.

Now I want to take this a step further. Let's take a look at the distinctions between the three persons Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I just want to read a few passages and again this is to show that we're not talking about one God, as some have said, God was the Father in the Old Testament, He was the Son in the New Testament and He's the Spirit in this age. That's one God wearing different hats.

Matthew 28:19 *Go therefore, make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.* I want you to note in that verse the word “name” is singular

– one God, **the** name of the God Who is one as to essence, but then you have three persons. Remember God is one in essence, three as to person and an indication of that is in verse 19 we have the Greek definite article before each of the persons listed which indicates a distinction of persons. The definite article in the English is the word “the”. Baptize them in the name of **the** Father, **the** Son and **the** Holy Spirit, again, implying a distinction of persons.

You see the same thing in 1 Corinthians, chapter 13, verse 14. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.* Another one is found in Psalm 110, verse 1. This is a Messianic Psalm. *The LORD says to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.”* Now you might remember that Jesus asked the Pharisees about the ramification of that Psalm in Matthew, chapter 22. In fact, Jesus asked them, He said, “What do you think about the Christ, Messiah? What do you think about the Messiah, Who’s Son is He?” And what did they say? They said, “Well, He’s the son of David.” And the Scriptures taught that the Messiah would be the son of David which simply means the Messiah would be of Davidic ancestry. That’s true. Jesus fulfilled that. He was of Davidic ancestry. But the Jews expected the Messiah to be a mere man – a superman of sorts. He would be a great deliverer, but a mere man nonetheless, certainly not God. And so Jesus asked them another question. He says,

“Then how does David in the spirit call Him” (that is the Messiah) “Lord, saying, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand until I make Thine enemies beneath Thy feet”’? If David then calls Him Lord, how then is He David’s son?”

In other words, if the Messiah is no more than the human son of David, why would David use a divine name in referring to Him as “My Lord”? That wouldn’t make any sense. And the Jews certainly got the implication of that because Matthew concludes the story by saying that no one was able to answer Him nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question. And Wayne Grudem notes that Jewish interpreters to this day will have no more satisfactory explanation of Psalm 110, verse 1 than they did in Jesus’ day. But the point is, you have two persons here. The Lord said to my Lord, or we could paraphrase the thought as, God, the Father said to God, the Son, sit at My right hand until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.

Now another topic that I wanted to look at (and we’re just not going to have time) is the whole issue of the Angel of the Lord, because I believe the Angel of the Lord, as he appears in the Old Testament is a pre-incarnate visitation of Jesus Christ. In other words, the Angel of the Lord was Jesus manifested before He ever came to earth incarnate. Jesus appearing in a tangible form as an angel before He ever came to take on human flesh. And I say that because whenever you see the Angel of the Lord, specifically the Angel of Yahweh – he speaks on behalf of God, he speaks as God, he receives worship as God and people called him God – and so it’s pretty much a unanimous sort of thing among scholars that the Angel of the Lord is a theophany or a christophany, that is an appearance of God or an appearance of Christ in the Old Testament. Plus you have the fact that after the incarnation there are no more appearances of the Angel of the Lord which would also add credence to the fact that it was Jesus Christ.

We see that in Genesis 16 with Hagar. Following her banishment from the presence of Sarah, the Angel of the Lord appeared to her, and she calls him "God." It was the Angel of the Lord who stopped Abraham from offering up his son Isaac in Genesis 22. There the Angel of the Lord is identified as Yahweh, or Jehovah. It was the angel of the Lord who appeared to Moses in the burning bush in Exodus 3, there identified as Yahweh, or Jehovah. So clearly this is God we're talking about. Yet sometimes the Angel of the Lord is distinguished from the Lord as two people, such as in Zechariah, chapter 3, verses 1 and 2.

Now, let me skip ahead a little bit. Let me go to Psalm 45, verses 6 and 7. Listen to this, Psalm 45, verses 6 and 7, this is another Messianic Psalm: *Thy throne O God is forever and ever, a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom, Thou has loved righteousness and hated wickedness, therefore (note this) therefore God, Thy God has anointed Thee.* Okay, who's being referred to here? *Your throne, O God, is forever therefore God, Your God, has anointed You,* shows a distinction of persons of some sort. We say, Okay, who is being referred to here in Psalm 45, verses 6 and 7? Well, no speculation because the writer to the Hebrews tells us in Hebrews, chapter 1, verses 8 and 9: *But of the Son He says, "Thy throne O God is forever and ever and the righteousness scepter is the scepter of Your kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness, therefore God, Thy God has anointed You.* Okay, not only do we see that the Son is eternal, but also that He is God, the Son who is a distinct person from God, the Father. We can go to Isaiah, chapter 48, verse 16 and see all three persons of the Trinity in that one Old Testament passage. You see, I believe that Jesus in Isaiah 48:16 is speaking here in the first person. *Come near to Me, listen to this, from the first I have not spoken in secret, from the time it took place I was there, and now the Lord God has sent Me and His Spirit.* The Lord God has sent Me and His Spirit, a reference to the Trinity of God in Isaiah, chapter 48.

We see a full-flowering of this sort of thing in the New Testament – a distinction of three persons. It's evident in Matthew, chapter 3, verses 16 and 17: *After being baptized Jesus went up immediately from the water. Behold the heavens were opened and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove coming upon Him and behold, a voice out of the heavens saying, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."* You see, that's why back in the days of Arius, in the fourth century, it was often said, "Arius, go to the Jordan and you'll see the Trinity" because you have Jesus Christ, you have the Holy Spirit descending as a dove and you have God, the Father speaking from heaven; all three persons, a distinction of persons. The transfiguration of Jesus in Matthew 17, another example, God, the Father, speaking from heaven, "This is My beloved Son with Whom I'm well pleased." John, chapter 14, verse 16: *I will ask the Father - Jesus speaking - I will ask the Father, He will give you another Helper that He may be with you forever.* This is not Jesus talking to Himself. This is not God talking in riddles. There are three distinct persons within the triunity of God. John 15, verse 26: *When the Helper comes Whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me.* John 16, verses 13 through 15 is another example. John 17, verses 1 through 26 which is the **real** Lord's prayer - this is Jesus' High Priestly prayer, and it makes absolutely no sense if you say that Jesus was praying in His humanity to His Deity. No, who was Jesus praying to? Jesus, God the Son, was praying to God the Father. At the Garden of Gethsemane, Matthew 26, verse 39, *He fell on His face and prayed, "My Father, if it is*

possible, let this cup pass from Me, yet not as I will, but as Thy will.” Jesus cried on the cross, *”My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”* Well, to whom was Jesus speaking? And when cultists ask you, “Well, if you believe Jesus is God then Who is He praying to? Who is He talking to on earth? Was He the Father talking to the Father?” “No,” you say, “No, He wasn’t the Father talking to the Father, God is one as to essence, but He’s three as to person. He was the **Son** talking to the Father, praying to the Father. That’s the answer. You see, this is the confusion that is avoided when you grasp the three necessary pillars of truth as it relates to God in His Triunity. Remember, God is one as to essence. I’m not going to pull that out. God is three as to person. I’m not going to pull **that** out.

Pillar Number Three: Each Person is Fully God

And we didn’t get there this morning, but the third pillar is, each of the persons is fully God. God is complete in each person. It isn’t that Jesus is a third God, the Holy Spirit is a third God and the Father is a third God. That’s nonsense. No orthodox theologian believes that. Each person is fully God. Now, I hope you’ll stay with me on this. I hate having to cut things short on the fly because it’s always hard to edit while you’re speaking. But I hope you’ll stay with me on this. You know, my approach is often what I call smoothing out the wrinkles, and I’m pretty patient when it comes to things like this. You know, I’ll often give you a lot of information, maybe overwhelm you a little bit, but over the next week or two we’re going to spend time kind of going over it and smoothing out this wrinkle and that wrinkle and hopefully, if you stay with me, and if you’re committed to learning, this is all going to sort of come together and give you a good grasp of what it means and why it’s essential that we believe in God’s Triunity. We’ve said it, you know, many times, this is the heart of orthodoxy, and if you’re wrong or mistaken here, it’s going to leak out into many other areas. That’s why I love theology so much, because issues like these are not isolated. Sometimes we think, “Oh, well, you can be a little off over here on this major issue, but that’ll just affect that issue.” That’s not true when we’re talking about central issues of the faith. It ends up affecting lots of other sorts of things and we’re going to see that. To be wrong on some of these things means you’ll find yourself digressing into a maize of unraveling doctrines that will affect the essential nature of God and even the atonement (and we’ll see that in the next week or two).

Concluding Thoughts

Let me just say this: maybe you’re listening this morning and your greatest need is to discover what Jesus said in John, chapter 17, verse 3 – I quoted it earlier – *Eternal life is to know the true God and Jesus Christ Whom You have sent.* And let me remind you, God is always a prayer away. And I would like to believe that everyone that’s here this morning (and even everyone who listens by way of radio or tape or what-not) is a believer, but I know that Jesus said the way is narrow that leads to true life, the way that leads to destruction is very wide and many people go that way. Our mission is to try to reach those whom God is pleased to save. So if you don’t know Him and the joy that comes from having a transforming relationship with the Triune God of the universe, I just ask that you take the time even now to call out to Him; agree with Him that He is perfectly holy and that you are not; that is what we call “sin”. Most problems with understanding the nature of salvation, as the

world goes, have to do with not understanding how holy God is. He can't look past any sin, so agree with Him that He is holy, that you're not, that you're sinful, that you can't rectify yourself from your sinful condition. You're separated from God, then turn from your sin, your disbelief, everything that you feel might save you and your mistaken ideas of what it means to be right with God and believe in Jesus Christ alone to forgive you, believe that He is God, that He died for your sin, that He was resurrected from the dead, and that He lives to be your Righteousness. Not in me, *nothing in my hands I bring, only to the cross of Christ do I cling.*

Let's pray.

Father, again, we thank You for Your goodness, we thank You for Your mercy, and the time has been a little long this morning, but Lord, I pray that, though there's a lot to digest, that You will, Lord, sort of be the Agent that helps us to digest these things and, Lord, I pray that You'll just continue to equip us as a church, equip us to be passionate about the truth, and not to do so for the sake of truth, but to be passionate about our worship, to be humble and to be loving, and to be reflecting all that you would have us to be. In Jesus' precious name we pray, Amen.