

Rom. 14:19  
So then let  
us follow  
after things  
which make  
for peace,  
and things  
whereby we  
may edify  
one another.



John 8:32  
And ye shall  
know the  
truth and the  
truth shall  
make you  
free.

**November  
18  
2018**

## **THE PROMISE IS CONTINGENT (and for all)**

*by Jim Stauffer*

The promise that all would be blessed through the seed of Abraham (**Gen. 12:1-3; 22:18**), was not, as some believe, directed toward Israel and his descendants only (**see Gal. 3:17**).

Rather as Paul says this promise was to people of faith in every age, *"For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,"* (**Romans 4:16**).

The Bible connects both faith and the promise to our hope. **Rom. 5:1,2** tells us people of faith have peace with God through Christ who has justified them. It further states this peace is a result of His grace and as a result we have the hope of glory. This faith is, of course, that same faith Abraham exhibited. Therefore, Paul says, *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise."* (**Galatians 3:28-29**) Then Paul explains to us in the Roman epistle the beauties of being an heir according to the promise. *"For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'"* The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him." (**Romans 8:15-17**)

Then we understand we must have the faith of Abraham to become an heir of the promise. Much like John explains what it means to be a believer in Christ when he compares it to the Israelites of old, whose lives were spared when they looked on the brazen serpent Moses made. He says Jesus must also be lifted up on the cross so men can look up to Him, that is believe in

Him as Abraham believed, and have eternal life. (**John 3:14-16**)

Remember, Abraham's faith led to obedience, *"By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going."* (**Hebrews 11:8**)

## **GOD IN THREE PERSONS, BLESSED TRINITY**

*By Shane Scott*

The foundational doctrine of the Bible is that there is one true and living God. *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one"* (**Deuteronomy 6:4**). This prayer, called the *Shema* (from the Hebrew word for "hear"), was the central confession of Israel.

But just as surely as the Bible teaches there is one God, it also teaches that there is a three-ness to God – that God is the Father, Son, and Spirit. Astonishingly, one of the primary proof texts for this claim is Israel's ancient creed in **Deuteronomy 6:4**. In **1 Corinthians 8:4-6**, the apostle Paul says: *Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one." For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.*

According to Paul, the "LORD our God" refers to the Father ("one God") and also to Jesus Christ ("one LORD"). This elaboration of the *Shema* is profound. It says that the one LORD who is God that Israel has always worshiped is the Father and the Son.

And just a few verses earlier in **1 Corinthians**, Paul asks, *"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of*

*the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?” (1 Corinthians 6:19).* Temples were dwelling places of gods in the ancient world. By describing the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, Paul is clearly identifying the Holy Spirit as God. Putting the two passages together, Paul is saying that the Lord God is the Father, Son, and Spirit.

What is so striking about this is that the context of these passages is pagan worship – temple prostitution in **chapter six**, and idolatry in **chapter eight**. Yet within a context in which Paul is determined to reject the idolatrous practices of ancient polytheism and assert the primacy of the one true God, he at the same time identifies that God is Father, Son, and Spirit. For the apostle Paul, jealousy for the oneness of God and adoration of the Father, Son, and Spirit as God were not mutually exclusive, but necessarily inclusive.

So what word can we use to describe this one God who exists as Father, Son, and Spirit? How can we encapsulate this threefold nature of the Lord God? If only we have a word that meant something like “three-ness”! Well, we do – it is the word *Trinity* (from the Latin *trinitas*, “state of being threefold”).

I have sometimes heard well-meaning Christians express skepticism about using the term *Trinity*. After all, the word is not found in the Bible, and we should “speak as the Bible speaks.” I’ve even seen editions of the hymn *Holy, Holy, Holy* that remove the phrase “God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity.”

But these same earnest believers frequently use terms and phrases that are not explicitly found in Scripture (like “speak as the Bible speaks”) because they believe such terminology expresses biblical teaching. So the real issue is, does the biblical teaching about God reveal a three-ness about Him? And the answer to that question is clearly affirmative. And since that is the case, *Trinity* is as good a word as any to convey a richly biblical idea.

When I was younger, I used to think of the doctrine of the Trinity as a riddle to be solved. “Okay Shane, here’s a doctrine – there is one God in three persons. Now, go find a proof-text to demonstrate it!” But that is not at all how the subject should be approached. Instead, the doctrine of the Trinity is itself the solution to a biblical riddle. How can God work “*through*” God, as Paul says in **1 Corinthians 8:6**? How can God be sent “*from God*”, as Paul says in **1 Corinthians 6:19**? The only way to make sense of these passages (and many others) is that within the life of the one God there is a three-ness, Father, Son, and Spirit.

To a lot of people, the very term, *Trinity*, evokes images of medieval monks chanting in Latin. Perhaps it doesn’t seem like a very practical subject to spend much time thinking about. But I believe the biblical teaching that God is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is

vitaly important. And here are three simple reasons why:

### **1. The Trinity is important because Jesus is important.**

**John 1:1** says, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*” Just a few verses later we are told that “*the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth*” (**John 1:14**). This is an amazing claim! Jesus of Nazareth was more than just a man – He was the “*Son from the Father*” who existed with God in the beginning and through whom God made the world. But John also says, “*the Word was God.*” Wait – I thought he said the Word was “*with God.*” So how can the Word be *with* God, and at the same time *be* God? This is not how relationships work with human beings. I am with my wife, but I am not my wife. Yet somehow, the Word can stand in relation to God while at the same time being identified as God.

The doctrine of the Trinity solves this riddle by explaining that within the life of the one God there are relationships such as Father and Son. And thus the Son can be “*with God*” and yet also be God. This is the inevitable conclusion we must reach because of the New Testament witness to the identity of Jesus. And so, the Trinity matters because Jesus matters.

### **2. The Trinity is important because the love of God is important.**

**First John 4:8** says that “*God is love.*” But before creation, who was God loving? If God was just the Father, without the Son and the Spirit, could He rightly be said to love anyone? Or for that matter, without the Son, could He even be properly called “Father”? But Jesus tells us that before there was a world, He shared in a loving relationship with the Father. “*Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*” (**John 17:24**). God did not suddenly start loving when He created the world. Because God is Father, Son, and Spirit, God dwelled in mutual, eternal, indescribable love before there was a universe. It is inherent in the very nature of God to love. And God invites us into that eternal love story.

So the Trinity matters because the love of God matters.

### **3. The Trinity is important because the Gospel is important.**

The gospel is the proclamation that Jesus is King, the Savior sent by God to free us from our sins and redeem us into new life in the Spirit (**Romans 1:1-4**). It is hard to find any summary of the gospel that does not mention the Father, Son, and Spirit together. Consider this passage: “*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that*



*we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" (Galatians 4:4-6).*

There is a good reason for this trinitarian shape to the gospel. After all, the reason we need a savior is because we have sinned. We have ruptured our relationship with God. So we stand in need of someone who can reconcile us to God. That's what the Bible teaches Jesus did for us on the cross. But who is able to make things right with God? Only God is! God came to reconcile us to God (**2 Corinthians 5:18**). How is that possible? Because God is Father, Son, and Spirit. So the Trinity matters because the gospel matters. The biblical teaching regarding the Trinity is the doctrinal glue that holds together the most basic elements of Christianity, such as the incarnation and the atonement. It is what distinguishes the Christian concept of God from other world religions, including Judaism and Islam. And it is the very essence of the gospel itself. It is the "revelation of God's own heart" (Fred Sanders, *The Triune God*, p. 240).

## THE CHURCH AND SALVATION

In Paul's great treatise on the church, we are told that the church of our Lord is a reflection of divine wisdom (**Eph. 3:10**). While men denigrate the Lord's church, we must still recognize the significance of the church in God's eternal plan for man's salvation. Yes, we need to understand that Christ is our Savior. We need to understand that the church of Christ refers to that saved relationship made possible by Christ's death on the cross. At the same time, we need to appreciate the fact that when we obey Christ's will, He adds us to His spiritual body (**Acts 2:47**). We don't join the church. Rather, we are the church. We need to properly define and understand what we mean by the phrase "church membership," but when we do so, we can say that "church membership" is important. It is important to be in Christ and Christ collates His people together in His church (**Eph. 1:3; 5:23**).

In **Ephesians 5:32**, Paul says: *"This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church."* The word mystery refers not to something that is deep, dark, and mysterious, or to something that cannot be understood. The word mystery denotes a *scheme, or strategy, or plan*. This helps us understand that the Lord has a plan for our salvation. Men scoff at "a plan of salvation." We are saved "by the man, not a plan" they say. They need to take that up with the Lord.

Paul spoke to the Romans about the plan (**Rom. 16:25**). That which is beyond the natural range of man's comprehension must be made known by divine revelation. God's plan for a time was kept secret or had yet to be revealed. Throughout the Old Testament we are given glimpses of that plan in type and prophecy. But, when the time was right, God revealed fully His plan for

our salvation (**Gal. 4:4**). Paul told the Corinthians about how God's mind is revealed i.e., by the Spirit of God. The plan of God for our salvation is not dependent upon what we see, hear or think. It comes to us from God (**1 Cor. 2:9-12**). We can rightly say that God the Father is the primary cause of our salvation in that He willed it. Christ is the sacrificial cause in that He purchased our salvation with His death on the cross. The Holy Spirit is the revealing cause of our salvation as He revealed "all truth" concerning this great mystery.

When people say that "the church is not essential" or that "one church is as good as another" or "that good people can be saved without the church," they are demonstrating either ignorance or prejudice, and possibly both, about God's will for man's salvation. Yes, Christ is our Savior. Yet, the church is the fullness of Christ; one cannot have anything in Christ if he is out of Christ's church (**Eph. 1:21-23**). Are we thankful for the church, the beautiful bride of Christ? Have you obeyed Christ's will that you might be free from sin and thus be added to His spiritual family? The Savior bids you come.

**Randy Harshbarger**

## Making Good Choices

Here we are in the Christmas-gift list making season, again! This is when we all let others know what we would like to receive for Christmas. It's also the time when we think of things we would never ask others to buy for us, things we should provide for ourselves. This is where we don't want the good to be the enemy of the best. There are cheap options for everything and there may be times when that is your best option, all things considered. More often than not, however, we have the ability to do better and I can tell you from happy experience that it pays back dividends many times the cost difference. I got tired of replacing non-stick cookware every two years the first fifteen years of our marriage and bought a quality stainless steel cook set. My wife was ecstatic about the gift and has enjoyed them for twenty years, and yes, I like cooking with them too!

But then this article is not about making good Christmas gift choices, is it? It's about making good spiritually sound life choices. In this realm as well as in the physical realm there are always choices to be made. There are popular and unpopular choices. There is worldly acclaim (**Matthew 6:1f**) and godly acclaim (**Matthew 6:6**). Do you want a religion (and YES! contrary to some popular memes on Facebook Christianity is a religion according to **James 1:26f**) that is popular and thus EASY to follow, or, do you want one that WORKS, meaning it gets you to heaven when you die, though the road be rough, **Matthew 7:14**? Paul said, *"If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable."* (**1 Corinthians 15:19**)

**Cleveland R. Reddinger Jr.**

Let us be reminded to pray for those we support who are preaching in other areas of this country and also of the world. Remember to pray for Kyle Bennett in Boston Ma., Matt Hodge in Marshfield, Mo. and Cleveland Reddinger in El Dorado, Ks. Overseas we need to remember, Wilfredo Pelino and Jonathan Sapitula in the Philippines as well as Arao Uchaio, Francisco Vascob in Mozambique.

## **HOURS OF WORSHIP**

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study

Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

***Visitors welcome***

***We conduct in home Bible Studies***

***We offer Correspondence Courses***

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### **NEWS AND NOTES:**

PLEASE REMEMBER JAN  
PATRICK, STEPHEN KIMKER,  
STEVE AND SUZANNE WIMP,  
ALMA BAUMGARTNER, AND  
GEORGE ROOT.

### **BIBLE CLASSES**

SUNDAY MORNING - FOLLOWING  
THE MESSIAH - RON PECK -  
TEACHER

WEDNESDAY EVENING  
CHRIST IN YOU

JIM STAUFFER - TEACHER

**SUNDAY SERMON:** WILL YOU  
TRUST YOUR GOD, JEHOVAH?



## ***What Must I Do To Be Saved?***

**Hear** the gospel - Romans 10:17

**Believe** in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

**Repent** of sins - Acts 17:30

**Confess** Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

**Be Baptized** for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

**Be Faithful** unto death - Revelation 2:10