

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

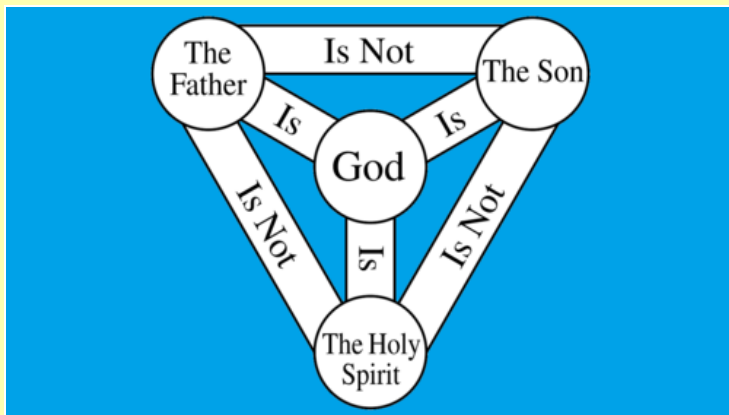


John 8:32
And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

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“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 vitally 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).

Bread And Enough

Rickie Jenkins

The story of the prodigal son intrigues us all. Perhaps we see ourselves in its timelessness. Maybe it speaks to our great need to be with the Father. Perhaps we only realize how great things are at home when we, like the prodigal, find ourselves in want. When the prodigal asks for his inheritance, it was the same as saying, “I wish you were dead” to his father. Prodigally he wastes all his inheritance and finds himself in great want. Not until this moment of need does he come to himself.

When the prodigal comes to himself, he realizes that he is needlessly starving to death. He asks himself, “*How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish?*” “Give me” was his language in the beginning; now he begs, “Please take

me.” New thoughts stir within his soul. Blind before, now the lost boy can see. He begins to see what was before him all along, all that was good in his father’s house. Graciously, his father provides for him, not just a little bit but in abundance. The wonder of it all is that this lost boy never saw the blessings of his father before. Now he can see the greatness of his father’s goodness.

What was there about the father’s goodness that would have caused the boy to want to return to him? He had to know his father was a man of compassion. But, now that he is at the cellar of his soul-house, he realizes it personally. Nobody else wants him. The father welcomes him home with joy, “... *this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.*” He has compassion on him and receives him.

Furthermore, the father’s compassion never gave in to despair. Compassion kept the father from becoming bitter. It kept his hope alive. His father saw him when he was a great way off. He longs for the lost boy to come home. He waits longingly for the time when the lost boy comes to realize his father is the only one to whom he can go. The father did not just prepare the feast, all things were ready. The only thing missing is the lost boy

When the lost boy comes home, the father’s compassion is gracious. He welcomes and restores when it is not deserved. His father “*fell on his neck and kissed him.*” No probation. No equivocating. No endless reminding of how badly the father had been hurt. He simply accepts the boy back when the boy says, “*I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.*” The boy was right; he had forfeited the privilege to be called his son, but the father accepted him as his son. He could never repay what was lost. He has no right to be accepted back home. His solution was to return as a hired servant. Hired servants were from the outside; they did not belong to the estate. The boy thought that working as a hired servant he could eventually pay what was due his father. Only compassion removes the debt owed.

Further, the father’s warm compassion led him to rejoice. “*Bring the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry.*” The joy of the father is unimaginable. His heart-ache and grief were surely great. Now the boy has returned home. All is forgotten. All is set right. The feast is prepared as a time of joy. The years that have been added to his life, vanish. Joy replaces his heavy heart. Now there is a euphoria that swells from within knowing his lost boy is home. Joy, what joy, inexpressible joy!

Finally, the compassion of the father compelled him to offer the best for this boy that was “*lost and is now alive.*” “*Bring the best robe...and bring the fatted calf.*” No half-hearted celebration. No begrudging sacrifice. Likewise, our heavenly Father offers to us the best heaven has to give. The sacrifice of His only Son shouts of love. No other sacrifice was or could be sufficient to

take away sins. No other sacrifice could adequately express the Father’s love for us. That sacrifice of love is what compels us to come home when we have been in the far country.

Going home, what a sweet thought. When we have tried everything else and failed, we can always go home. We always know that there is one place we can go where we will be loved – home. However, there is really only one home. That is where God is. That is where our hearts are. With our Father there is “*bread and enough.*” “*For the Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy*” (**Psa. 145: 8**).

Remember! There Are Different Kinds of Writing in Scripture

Not every book that you read is written the same way.

For example, if you read Shakespeare’s 116th sonnet and an academic discussion of marriage and they will both point out some of the same things about love, but boy are they worded differently! In just the same way if you take the **twenty-third Psalm** and the last portion of **Romans 8** they both address God’s provision for the believer but they are written in different manners and the reader must understand this difference to get the full benefit of each passage. **Romans 8** is a rather literal statement of the fact while **Psalms 23** is a poetic description of the same dependable characteristic of God.

This is especially important when approaching the **Revelation** which is generally written in “apocalyptic” manner and is dramatically different from most other portions of scripture. It includes vast sweeps of events and even the colors mentioned are significant, red for sinfulness and white for purity, for example. There is no possible way any reasonable person could take the book “Literally” and rightly understand the message intended by its author.

In the same manner we must understand that, just because the authors of the Bible, and the Holy Spirit who guided them (**2 Tim. 3:16f and 2 Pet. 1:20, 21**) did not use our modern terminology to denote something does not mean they didn’t mention it. Take the hot button for today, homosexuality. The modern word is not found in many standard translations (except for the NAS95 in **1 Corinthians 6:9**) but the concept is thoroughly defined in **Romans 1:25-27**. Actually there is little left to the imagination there.

Understanding the differing styles of writing is crucial to properly interpreting Scripture.

Cleveland Reddinger

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

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THE BOOK OF JOB

TEACHER - JIM STAUFFER

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WITH OUR THINKING TODAY?



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

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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