

## I. Opportunities

### A. From Preaching

1. Advent - Angels
2. 1 Corinthians - the Holy Spirit
3. The Holy Spirit - the Trinity

### B. Today: 3 Questions

1. What does the Bible tell us about the nature of God's existence?
2. What does God tell us about the relationship between the three Persons?
3. What impact does the doctrine of the Trinity have on the believer?

## II. What does the Bible tell us about the nature of God's existence?

### A. God is One

1. Israelite National Anthem
  - a. US - e pluribus unum ("Out of many, one")
  - b. Israel - "There is only One." **Deuteronomy 6:4**
    - (1) *Shema, yisrael, adonai elohenu, adonai echad*
    - (2) ***Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one.***
2. Interpretations of "One"
  - a. God is singular in number -
    - (1) There exists only one God
    - (2) **Isaiah 45:5-6 (ESV)** *<sup>5</sup>I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, <sup>6</sup>that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other.*
  - b. God is unique in essence -
    - (1) There is no god like the One who exists
    - (2) **1 Ki 8:22-24 (ESV)** *22 Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven, 23 and said, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart; 24 you have kept with your servant David my father what you declared to him. You spoke with your mouth, and with your hand have fulfilled it this day.*
  - c. God is ultimate in position -
    - (1) The God Who exists is first and foremost and pre-eminent.
    - (2) **Isaiah 48:11 (ESV)** *<sup>11</sup>For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.*

### B. God is Three in One

1. God exists as fully integrated, singular Person in three distinct, discernable, discoverable Persons
  - a. Same
    - (1) in essence
    - (2) in attributes
  - b. Differ in activity relative to human experience

- (1) The Father
- (2) The Son
- (3) The Holy Spirit

2. Examples

a. **Genesis 1:1–3 (ESV)** *<sup>1</sup>In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup>The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup>And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.*

- (1) God created
- (2) The Spirit brooded (hovered)
  - (a) Verb occurs only three times in OT, 2x’s in Piel form (as here)
  - (b) **Deuteronomy 32:11 (ESV)** *<sup>1</sup>Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions,*
  - (c) Ready to put into action the plan of God as delivered through the Word of God
- (3) The Word acted
  - (a) And God said . . .
  - (b) **John 1:1-3 (ESV)** *<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.*
    - i) The Word of God embodies the entire Person of God and therefore is personal Himself.
    - ii) John identifies the Word of God as Jesus and tells us (**John 1:14 (ESV)**) *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.*

b. **1 Corinthians 12:4-6 (ESV)** *<sup>4</sup>Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; <sup>5</sup>and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; <sup>6</sup>and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.*

- (1) About this verse
  - (a) “Earliest ‘clear’ Trinitarian language” in the NT
  - (b) “All persons of the holy Trinity participate in a unified activity which may be thought of as the action of the whole Godhead in Trinity
- (2) Fully integrated Trinity
  - (a) God brings about everything
  - (b) The Lord (Jesus, cf. 12:3) is the mediator for all service
  - (c) The Spirit is the power that enables and actuates the gifts of God to accomplish the will of God in the people of God of all gifts

### III. What does God tell us about the relationship between the three Persons?

#### A. God is One God in three distinct Persons whose individual works are unique

1. **When we are speaking in any ultimate essential sense, the Father, Son, and Spirit are all God and may be spoken of interchangeably**
  - a. Jesus: **John 10:30 (ESV)** *<sup>30</sup>I and the Father are one.*
  - b. Jesus: **John 14:16–18 (ESV)** *<sup>16</sup>And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, <sup>17</sup> even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. <sup>18</sup> “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.*
2. **But, when we are speaking of God’s work in the world, God’s work relative to human experience (how we interact and encounter God in the world) we need to retain the distinction the Bible makes between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit**
  - a. Example:
    - (1) It is appropriate to say that the Son died on the cross.
    - (2) It is not appropriate to say the Father or the Spirit died on the cross.
  - b. Example:
    - (1) It is appropriate to say that Jesus was raised from the dead by the Spirit or power of God.
    - (2) It is not appropriate to say that Jesus raised himself from the dead.

#### B. What roles does the Bible reveal for each Person of the Godhead?

1. The Father - The sovereign God with a plan to fill the earth with the knowledge of His glory
2. The Son - Provides the basis for the success of God’s plan through His willing and obedient participation in salvation (especially his sinless life and substitutionary, atoning death)
3. The Spirit - Actuates God’s plan in the realm of creation (spiritual and physical)

#### C. Danger of Sloppy Vocabulary (not maintaining the One in Threeness of God)

1. Could represent either poor understanding or bad theology
2. Could present vulnerability to confusion and rejection in witnessing
3. Could lead to conflict and unnecessary distress among believers

### IV. What impact does the doctrine of the Trinity have on the believer?

#### A. The Call to Faith

1. Mystery does not require resolution; it requires submission.
2. **Hebrews 11:1 (ESV)** *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*
3. Faith bridges the gap between what we know to be true and our ability to understand it.
  - a. Because the world does not have faith they cannot understand the things of God that require faith
  - b. Because you do have faith, you understand and embrace with faith what God reveals about himself, even when you can’t figure it out

#### B. The Opportunity for Faith

1. Faith bridges the gap between divine sovereignty and human free will
2. Faith bridges the gap between death on the cross and a future resurrection

3. Faith bridges the gap between the Son of God and the Son of Man
4. Faith bridges the gap between experience and promise.

**C. The Doctrine of the Trinity and Faith**

1. Embracing the doctrine of the Trinity, as revealed in God's word, takes faith.
2. Logic and reason can travel only so far down the road, and they must stop and give way to faith
3. Faith is how any Christian succeeds at a holy life in this world.
4. The doctrine of the Trinity fosters faith by providing answers
  - a. Answers the question of God's commitment in salvation
    - (1) God is "all in" to save
    - (2) God is "all in" for our good
  - b. Answers the question of Christ's deity and equality with God
  - c. Answers the question of how we are to worship God
  - d. Answers the question of how we are to pray to God
  - e. "The perfect love and unity within the Godhead model for us the oneness and affection that should characterize our relationships within the body of Christ."
    - (1) The point of 1 Corinthians 12-14
    - (2) To which we will turn again next week.