

The Doctrine of The Trinity

Ephesians 2:14-18

June 16, 2002 - Brett Baker

Introduction

When faced with the task of studying the attributes of God, it is a common occurrence where we reach some point of understanding and yet can go no further. Christianity is not a simple religion; although it takes the faith of a child to believe, within the whole counsel of God are things that go well beyond us. Even Peter shows us this truth in 2 Peter 3:14 where some things are hard to understand and call for much wisdom, study and faith. And yet, we also see that the example of the early church was one of faith and simplicity. One thing we can learn from this is that as we come to learn and comprehend more of the revealed, complex, attributes of God it should not produce complicated lives but should produce a love for the simple things. It is quite interesting to note what the author of Hebrews thought were the “elementary” points of the Christian faith in Hebrews 6:1-3.

The Text

Our struggle to comprehend our God is especially visible when we consider His triune nature. Just like the incarnation, it is a difficult concept to understand. This is not because the doctrine of the trinity is *against* reason, but it is very much *beyond* reason. Here in the epistle of Ephesians, Paul is teaching about the unifying work of Christ on the cross.

- “ By means of His death, burial and resurrection, Christ abolished the ordinances and commandments that created a barrier between Jew and Gentile. With the abolition of the ordinances, so too the barrier was eliminated making the two (Jew and Gentile) now one in Christ. There is now no distinction (in Christ) for the two have been made one.
- “ We can plainly see the reference to the Trinity in verse 18 where we both, that is, Jew and Gentile, through Jesus Christ have access by the Spirit to the Father. This seems like a very simple idea but it is much easier to state who the Trinity is than it is to understand it.
- “ When attempting to understand the Triune nature of our God, we have been tempted to use analogies to make it easier to comprehend. But we must be very careful with analogies (e.g. water, pie or eggs) because at the same time that we think it makes it easier to understand we also realize that the analogy teaches things that are not true. But it is not our goal is to only believe only those things that we understand. Our comprehension is not the basis upon which we are called to believe —faith is.

Defining Terms

- “ A summary definition of the Trinity can be stated as: *There is one living and true God Who consists of three eternal Persons—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each of whom is fully God, and each of whom is not to be confused or confounded with the other two Persons.*
- “ In theological circles (and every Christian is in one) there has been a distinction made between the *ontological* nature of the Trinity and the *economical* nature of the Trinity. This does not mean that there are two Trinities, but that from our perspective there are two ways to consider the Trinity.
 - The *ontological* Trinity refers to God as we think of Him in His essence or His nature or attributes.
 - The *economical* Trinity refers to God as we think of the roles or functions performed by each of the persons of the Trinity.

Our Destination: The Father

- “ *Matthew 6:8-9* - Jesus teaches us to pray to the Father
- “ *John 14:6* - Jesus is the way to the Father
- “ *John 20:17* - The reason we come to the Father is because Jesus came to the Father

Our Way To The Father: The Son

- “ *Colossians 3:17; Eph. 5:20* - Our authority for coming to the Father is because we do everything in the name of Jesus.
- “ *Matthew 7:24-29* - Jesus is obeyed as God for He speaks with authority
- “ *Revelation 5:9-10* - As High Priest, the Son is worshipped for He has redeemed us to God

Our Access To The Father: The Holy Spirit

- “ *Ephesians 4:30* - the Holy Spirit is a person who dwells in us and is grieved by our sin.
- “ *Galatians 4:6* - The Spirit compels us cry out in prayer
- “ *Romans 8:26; John 14:16* - The Spirit comforts us, teaches us and helps in our weaknesses.

All Purposes are to Glorify God

- “ The three persons of the Trinity glorify each other for there is complete peace and unity among the three. The Spirit glorifies the Son (John 16:13-14) the Son glorifies the Father and the Father glorifies the Son (John 17:1). We all must glorify God and worship Him by understanding the means by which He has called us to Himself.