

Doctrine of the Trinity, Part 10

God The Father

We have saved the First for last. The First Person of the Trinity is God the Father. The term “Father” draws on our familiarity with paternal relationships. “Father” also describes the relationship between the First and Second Persons of the Trinity and defines our family bond with Him through regeneration.

Believers are called “sons of God” (Galatians 4:6-7) because through the “new birth” (being born again) and the Spirit-generated human spirit, we become sons (and daughters) of God in the most literal sense. Something inside you, your spirit, was created by God during this regeneration process. That cannot be changed. God can never deny His son or daughter, which means you are His son or daughter forever.

Abba

Mark 14:35 And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

Romans 8:14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but **you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”** ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ... (Emphasis added)

Galatians 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into **our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”** ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. (Emphasis added)

In the garden of Gethsemane, facing the Cross, Jesus prayed to God the Father and cried “Abba” (Mark 14:36). This is one of only three places where “Abba” appears in Scripture. The word is of Aramaic origin, and in all three instances, it is transliterated as “Abba,” with the Greek *patér*

translated as “Father” joined to it. Thus, we have “*Abba, ho patér....*” Yet in the three instances of its use in Scripture, it is not translated but transliterated simply as “Abba.” The reason given is that, because the word is so intimate, translating “Abba” is considered to lack proper respect for the person of God the Father, so it is left transliterated as “Abba.” That argument escapes me. If the translation “Daddy” is too informal to say, then is not “Abba” also?

Tradition has extended that caution to avoiding the use of “Abba” even in prayer, despite Romans 8:15 clearly authorizing it. You have no doubt heard me use “Abba” when addressing the Father in prayer. That may have initially shocked some, but I believe God wants us to have an intimate, personal relationship with Him. “Father,” though appropriate, seems rather formal to me and somewhat distancing rather than drawing us closer to God. The occasion and purpose of the prayer may suggest using one title over the other. In the end, the decision to address our Father in Heaven as “Abba” or “Father” is yours to make.

Language of Accommodation

In like manner, the names “Son” and “Holy Spirit” indicate the roles of the other persons of the Godhead. These terms or titles for the Three Persons of the Godhead are what we call “language of accommodation.” God uses language of accommodation to give us insight into His divine character by drawing analogies to human characteristics and functions that God does not actually possess. This language of accommodation takes two forms: anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms.

An *anthropomorphism* ascribes to God certain human physical characteristics He does not actually possess, so that man may comprehend His divine power, character, and function. We say that Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father. The Father doesn’t need to sit on a throne, nor does He have hands.

An anthropomorphism ascribes to God human emotions and thoughts He does not actually possess, so that man may comprehend His divine policy, acts, and decisions. We say that God is jealous. Jealousy is a sin, and God cannot sin or have anything to do with sin except to judge it. The word really describes how God is “zealous” concerning those who are His own.

Descriptions and Acts of God

In Scripture, the husband (father) is the head of the family.

1 Corinthians 11:3 But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

Likewise, God the Father is the epitome of fatherhood and is supreme over all things.

1 Corinthians 8:6 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.

The title “Father” emphasizes the First Person’s absolute authority and role as the author of the divine plan for humanity.

John 14:24 Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.

Ephesians 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

In eternity past, God the Father planned and designed all that was, is, or ever will be.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Proverbs 8:29 ...he marked out the foundations of the earth

Job 28:25 When he gave to the wind its weight and apportioned the waters by measure, ²⁶ when he made a decree for the rain and a way for the lightning of the thunder, ²⁷ then he saw it and declared it; he established it, and searched it out.

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

And to treat created mankind with grace.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

All planning and production of the Father are manifestations of His essence. Yet He does not surpass the other members of the Trinity in either quality or degree, but is coequal with the Son and the Spirit.

One title of the First Person is “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 1:3; 11:31; Ephesians 1:3; Colossians 1:3; 1 Peter 1:3). Christ is both the revelation of the Father and the focal point of His plan.

John 1:14 And 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.

2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 3:11 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord

Hebrews 1:1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

The terms “Father” and “Son” should not be construed to mean that the former sired the latter at some point in eternity past. The relationship between the Father and the Son has existed from eternity past within the divine decree.

John 17:5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed

John 17:24 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.

Although eternally equal to the Father, the Son fulfilled a subordinate role to accomplish the Father's redemptive will.

Philippians 2:6 ...though he (Christ) was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.

There is, however, one sense in which God is the Father of the Son, and that is limited to the humanity of Jesus Christ. While the Second Person existed in eternity past, the humanity of Jesus Christ did not exist until about 2000 years ago. Phrases such as “His only begotten (uniquely born) Son” (John 3:16) and “the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18) must be understood in the context of the Second Person’s unique mission. Although eternal God, He proceeded from the Father to be manifested in the flesh.

John 1:14 And 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 8:42 Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me.”

God miraculously provided the 23 male chromosomes to match Mary’s 23 female chromosomes, and in that sense, God the Father is the Father of the Second Person through the virgin birth.

Psalms 2:7 I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Matthew 1:22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³ “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel”

And He is the only one qualified to act as a substitute, to be judged for the sins of all mankind.

Isaiah 53:4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Hebrews 9:28 so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many...

Since God the Father is the author of all salvation, all believers are personally and eternally related to Him by the new birth.

Galatians 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”

Ephesians 1:5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.

Ephesians 4:6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

However, contrary to the popular notion of the universal fatherhood of God, **with respect to the “new birth,”** He is not the father of all mankind.

John 8:42 Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me.”

John 8:44 “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires.”

But God is the father of all believers. Membership in the family of God is not automatic but the result of a simple act of faith in Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

As members of the family, we may address God as “Abba Father.”

Romans 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”

Like all loving fathers in the human realm, God, the Heavenly Father, provides what is best for His children.

Matthew 7:11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

All our needs in time and eternity are met and supplied in abundance by the divine decree in eternity past. These grace blessings include all the gifts bestowed on the believer at salvation for use in time and stored in Heaven for eternity.

1 Peter 1:4 To an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.

Like all children, we will sin and disappoint our Heavenly Father. We must be disciplined for our own good.

Hebrews 12:5 And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. ⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one

he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” ⁷ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸ If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Yet our Father is always ready to receive His children back into fellowship as soon as they return to His plan through private, direct confession of our sins to Him.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

It is truly marvelous that we believers have a Father in Heaven who watches over our well-being and considers us His own children.

The Trinity is often misunderstood as referring to three distinct individuals, and in one sense they are. But we must always remember that these Three Persons, while distinct in person, share a common essence and are thus really one person at the same time.

The essence of God is comprised of the following attributes:

- Sovereignty
- Righteousness
- Justice
- Love
- Eternal Life
- Omniscience
- Omnipotence
- Omnipresence
- Immutability
- Veracity

What these Three Persons represent for us are three distinct ministries. A very oversimplified way of expressing this concept is to say, “the Father wrote the plan, the Son executes the plan, and the Spirit reveals the plan to man.”

The Trinity – Summation

Ten lessons ago, we began our study of this fascinating subject. In this lesson, we wrap it all up for you.

The doctrine of the Trinity can be a troubling subject for some, especially because, on the surface, it appears to be a form of idolatry, something the Bible very clearly warns us against. Anytime you are praying to anyone but God Himself or worshiping anyone other than God, you are indeed involved in idolatry. By that definition, the concept of the Trinity appears to be idolatry. But as we have seen, while the Three Persons of the Trinity are indeed separate persons, they are at the same time of one essence and thus one God.

All three persons are coequal in that they enjoy the exact same power and authority because they share the same essence.

All Three Persons are co-eternal, meaning none preceded the other in existence. God has always existed as Three Persons with one essence and will always exist as Three Persons in one essence.

While the Three Persons are distinct, They are not three manifestations of one God. Each is unique in Themselves and has a unique ministry, but because they share the same essence, they are One.

God the Father is the author of the Plan of God and the central being from whom the plan radiates.

Jesus Christ is the executor of the Plan of God. As God, He existed in eternity past, like the other Two Persons. As man, He came in the flesh, setting aside His deity and taking on a form “a little lower than the angels.” In that form, the Second Person experienced life from our perspective. He did not do so to understand what we go through or how we live and think. That was unnecessary, because as God, in His omniscience, He already knew that. The Second Person of the Trinity, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, came to do two things for man.

The first was to demonstrate the Spiritual Life. We call this the period of the hypostatic union, when Jesus was both fully human and undiminished deity. Jesus was in every way a man, yet He was also God among us. Though He voluntarily set His deity aside, He was no less God. He set His deity aside to demonstrate the Spiritual Life and to show that it worked exactly as designed. Jesus demonstrated this by depending entirely on the power of the Spirit for everything He did while here on earth.

And that is exactly what we are supposed to do. Jesus proved that the spiritual life would work, and He left it for our use through the *paraklete*, the Holy Spirit, the same power source He used. We have no excuse for not having victory over sin, just as Jesus did. That is through submitting our wills to the will of God and trusting in the guiding, sustaining, and enabling power of the indwelling Holy Spirit to “walk with God” and “have Christ formed in us.” In that process, the Spirit reveals God’s Plan to those of us who are saved through faith.

The second thing the Second Person came to do was to become our substitute and be judged in our place for our sins. No mere man could ever meet God’s perfect standard, and certainly no sacrificial animal could ever satisfy God’s justice. The sacrifice had to be perfect to be acceptable to God. Only One such as Jesus the Christ, perfect in His humanity, was qualified to go to the Cross.

The animal sacrifices of the Mosaic System were a type of what was to come, a shadow of what was needed to satisfy God’s perfect righteousness. The animal blood of the Levitical offerings was merely an atonement or a “covering” that “hid” man’s sins until the next year, when the sacrifice would have to be repeated. This merely hid these terrible sins from God’s sight under the blood of the innocent animals. Never did the blood of bulls and goats satisfy God’s perfect righteousness.

The animal sacrifices and the Mosaic System were designed to point to the need for a Savior. That Savior was Jesus the Messiah. A careful study of the Old Testament will demonstrate to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear that this fact was clearly revealed and foretold in great detail.

The Second Person came in obedience to the Father's will, and Jesus went to the Cross as the only acceptable sacrifice to atone for us. A passage in the Book of Hebrews says it all.

Hebrews 10:7 Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.' ” ⁸ When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), ⁹ then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰ And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ¹¹ And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified

The law could not save; it could only point to the way of salvation. Once that offering was made, there is no longer any need for animal sacrifices or sacrifices of any kind for sin. Verse 14: “For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”

That sacrifice and our faith in the person and power of Christ are all we need to find forgiveness in God's eyes. It is all about faith, not about human works. We can never add to what Christ has done on the Cross. To suggest we can is to imply that what He did was somehow insufficient.

Galatians 2:21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

Once we have placed faith in that perfect sacrifice and are born again, we have the indwelling power of the Spirit to meet God's perfect standard in our daily lives. By human effort alone, we could not meet the Law's perfect standard, but enabled by the Spirit and with our will in submission to God's, we can.

Romans 8:3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

God is One in Three Persons, each with His own ministry, each playing His role in the Plan of God. God the Father is the author of the Plan. God the Son is the executor of the Plan, and God the Holy Spirit reveals the Plan to us. Three Persons, sharing one essence.