

Understanding the Trinity, part Two, The One Substance of the Trinity

Your Notes

Review—this lesson is part of a series on the Trinity

- **Understanding the Trinity, part One, The Three Persons of the Trinity**, how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are uncreated, co-equal, and eternal persons.
- **Understanding the Trinity, part Two, The One Substance of the Trinity**, the attributes shared by the members of the Trinity and what that means to us.
- **Understanding the Trinity, part Three, The Trinity Throughout the Bible**, descriptions of the Trinity and roles of each member in the Old and New Testaments.
- Notes, videos, podcasts, charts, and associated resource links are all available on www.Bible805.com

We are again going to use Tertullian's explanation of the Trinity

- To review, he was a Roman lawyer, and in the early days of the church, he came up with the word, **Trinity**, which he defined as
- **una substantia, tres personae**
- Meaning **God is one substance in three persons**.

In the previous lesson we looked at the meaning of Personhood of the Trinity

In addition to looking at what the characteristics mean to us

- I will point out how we ought to live in response to the various characteristics.
- Which means as much as is possible, we need imitate, we need to work to make these characteristics part of our lives.
- Of course, some only are possible for God, such as his omnipotence (all power), but many we can imitate.
- As I go through them, don't stop at mentally understanding them only, but consider and be in prayer about how you can COPY the characteristics of your God into your life as you strive to become more and more like Jesus.

God is Holy

- **Definition:** "The word holiness refers to His separateness, His otherness, the fact that He is unlike any other being. It indicates His complete and infinite perfection.." John MacArthur
- *"There is none holy like the Lord; there is none besides you."* **1 Samuel 2:2**
- *"Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord Almighty."* **Revelation 4:8**
- *And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"* **Isaiah 6:3**
- *Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?* **Exodus 15:11**
- **Good summary** "The holiness of God stands at the center of Christian thought and informs our understanding of the divine nature, redemption, and moral living. From the act of creation itself, which displays His glorious distinction, to the calling of every believer to live a life reflecting God's pure character, holiness remains a defining pillar of biblical theology."
https://biblehub.com/q/what_defines_the_holiness_of_god.htm

God is Just

- As God is set apart with His holiness, He is totally different than us in that He is JUST in a perfect degree. He defines what is just and never waivers from it. He always does what is truly fair/just in line with His holiness.
- *"The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He."* **Deut. 32:4**
- *Thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly.* **Nehemiah 9:33**

- *“Surely, God will not act wickedly, And the Almighty **will not pervert justice.***

Job 34:12

These two characteristics were put first and go together because

What this means

to us

- As the holy and eternal God, He has the right and power to set the rules—that even God Himself is subject to.
- And in ways we do not understand, our turning away from the holiness of God had consequences that the justice of God could not ignore. It created a debt of death and only the shedding of blood could cancel the consequences of our sins and make it possible for us to again walk with God, the source of eternal life.
- Not only was a death required, but it had to be the death of a sinless sacrifice.
- We have a problem because in Adam and Eve and their descendants down to us, we can’t stop sinning and because of that, none of us can pay that debt, can never offer an adequate sacrifice.
- But Jesus (the sinless, second Person of the Trinity) came to earth and both fully human and fully God lived the life we could not live and then died the death we could not die to cancel the debt against us.
- And when we accept Him as Savior, He gives us God’s very life in us, so that instead of His Holiness being something that separates us from God, ***it can become a characteristic of our lives that reflects our relationship with God.***

God’s Holiness—from the source of condemnation to a call to participation

in it

- **1 Peter 1:15-16**
But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct. Since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”
- **1 Thessalonians 4:7**
For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.
- **1 Peter 2:9**
But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
- Since we have a hard time doing this, the next characteristic is important....

God is Merciful

And we are to be like Him in showing undeserved mercy to others

- **Matthew 9: 13** *But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”*
- **James 2:12-13 LB** *You will be judged on whether or not you are doing what Christ wants you to. So watch what you do and what you think; ¹³for there will be no mercy to those who have shown no mercy. But if you have been merciful, then God’s mercy toward you will win out over his judgment against you.*
- **Micah 6:8** *He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? **To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.***
- Mercy often translated “Kindness.”

APPLICATIONS for us—

Always come down on the side of kindness and mercy

- We are so easy to take offense.
- Don’t assume a negative about others (why is it, we never assume good things?)
- Great advice by I’ve forgotten who, when they said, ***“I don’t know why I do what I do, how can I assume to judge why another person does what they do?”***
- Remember Satan is the “accuser of the brethren.”
- Don’t do his job.
- We can kindly critique or challenge actions, we cannot NEVER ascribe motives or

label a person or judge them— just as we expect mercy from God when we mess up.

- **Finally, simply, BE KIND. Always, in situations large and small. Always be kind. If we think others deserve it or not, be kind.**

Moving along in God's Characteristics—

God is Love

What this means for us—

in I Cor 13, put in God for the word love

- **As a reminder, this is what love is—**
- *¹ Cor 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails.*
- **Put God in for the word LOVE because all these characteristics describe what God is to us.**
- *"God is patient; God is kind.... God does not dishonor others, God is not easily angered, God keeps no record of wrongs. God does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth. God always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. God never fails."*
- **This is how He acts toward YOU.**

Like many of God's attributes, it is difficult to truly understand God's love—Paul prayed for his people that they might be able to understand it

- *Eph. 3:17 I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, **to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,** ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*
- **We need to pray for that understanding also—I think many of our questions and fears would be solved if we truly understood and grasped to the core of our minds and hearts the depths of God's love to us.**
- Many of the "whys" would turn into "thank-yous" for all He protects us from, guides us into, redirects us toward.

God is Truth

In contrast, Satan is the father of lies

- **John 8: 44** *You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*
- **This is why untruth in ANY FORM is so horrible for a Christian.**
- Whenever we are not honest, we reflect the enemy, not our Lord.
- Little lies grow into a lifestyle of deceit—*simply never deceive in any way, ever.*

How to discern the source of problems in your life

- **The options for the source of problems are: God, Satan, my own desires, which is it?**
- **To determine—first KNOW the BIBLE and measure all that happens up against it.**
- You've got to know how God wants you to live—God's standards are very different than the standards of our world today and sadly much of what you hear even from some Christian sources.
- You've got to have the correct standard to know if you deviate from it.
- One example—IT IS NEVER OK to SLANDER—no what your political affiliation or position, no matter how much social media encourages it.
- God cannot ignore vile behavior, no matter how currently acceptable it is. You will need to be disciplined for it.

- The more time you spend in God's Word, the more you'll learn how He wants you to live, and you'll understand why you have problems when you deviate from His LOVING best for you.

After you look at God's Word

- Make a correct diagnosis based on that. Depending on the area you have strayed in, God's Word may be quite clear on what you need to do next.
- Be honest, be truthful with God if you've sinned—remembering always, we are assured in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
- We've got to honestly name the sin before we get the bath of forgiveness.
- Ask for strength, wisdom, help to do what you need to do.
- Talk to a wise person, ask others for prayers and help.
- "Get up off your face" and do what needs to be done.

All-knowing, Omniscient

What this means to us

- He knows all about us **and yet—**
- HE understands AND He still loves us.
- He doesn't get tired of us, of dealing with us.
- His acceptance of us is a wonderful example for us to follow.....so often we might say or think, "oh if you really knew that about this person. . . Or really knew me you wouldn't like me or think well of me or them."
- **God already does** and He loves and accepts you and them—
- Also, we might get tired of someone we love or ourselves, messing up in the same ways again and again—but God doesn't!
- 7x70 in forgiveness isn't just what we are supposed to do for others, **it is how God treats us.**
- We cannot do less in our forgiveness of others.

God is Everywhere, Omnipresent

Combining His Love and Omnipresence—remember these verses...

- It isn't just that He sees everything, everywhere—His love is filling it all, as this passage reminds us.
- *Romans 8: 38 For I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels won't, and all the powers of hell itself cannot keep God's love away. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, ³⁹ or where we are—high above the sky, or in the deepest ocean—nothing will ever be able to separate us from the love of God.*
- WE NEVER need feel abandoned or afraid because we will never be alone—God's loving presence is everywhere with us forever.

God is All Powerful, Omnipotent

What it means to us—God's omnipotence isn't a magic power we can control

- Recognize that just because God CAN do all things, doesn't mean He will do them. Or do them in the ways we think are best....
- Or in the timing we want—that's often the key issue.
- REMEMBER God sees the BIG PICTURE of the timing of your life, past, present, future.
- He sees His plans for us, what He wants you to become and in that what you need protection from, guidance in, testing, or joy and ALL in His time.
- In that, we need to remember, like the old hymn says, "Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, than to trust and obey."

God is Immutable, Unchangeable

What this means to us

- Few things are worse in human relationships than being around someone who is always changing in their emotions or actions—that will NEVER happen with our

God—what a relief that is!

- Nothing we do can change how He feels about us, He will never not love us or stop being merciful to us.
- Nothing can change His promises to us—though again, timing and methods under His discretion.
- Or on the other side—His expectations, commands, rules and guidelines, His justice—
- ***They are timeless also.***
- At the same time, we must take into consideration cultural, historical, and application context as we understand his Word and promises in it.
- This involves the study of ***Hermeneutics, how to correctly interpret the Bible.***
- Studies on Bible805.com and more coming on this topic.

God is Eternal

What it means to us

- We can't truly or comprehend conceive what this really means, what eternity is.
- This characteristic is listed last on this chart to remind us that all the extraordinary, previously mentioned attributes of our God ***will never end.***
- And our God wants to share this eternal relationship of love and all He can give us with us. *"God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."* 1 John 5:11–12
- Once you become a Christian, you don't get to experience God's love and forgiveness temporarily, but forever.

Final application, strive to be like your God

- We cannot imitate the "omni" characteristics but many of God's characteristics we can and are commanded to.
- WWJD, "What would Jesus do?" is not just a saying but an excellent question to ask ourselves continuously as we think about the character of our God.
- Remember the #1 goal of a disciple, by its very definition, is to become like the one we follow.
- We should always and in every way strive to become like our God, like Jesus.
- It is an overwhelming goal, but let's try our best to do justly, love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Trinity, part Three, *The Trinity Throughout the Bible*

Ice-breaker--go around the group, give your name and share what your favorite job you've ever had and briefly why you liked it.

1. Review briefly who is Tertullian and how does he describe the Trinity? How have the first two lessons helped you understand this?
2. How can you answer people who ask why God makes it so hard to understand things like the Trinity?
3. Why is the word "elohim" important in Genesis 1:1 and how does it help us see the Trinity in the Old Testament?
4. How can you answer people who argue against the Trinity in the Old Testament by quoting the Shema that says our God is ONE?
5. How do you solve the seeming contradiction in the Old Testament that both says God can't be seen and then talks about times people saw God? Along with this, who is the Angel of the Lord referred to in the Old Testament?
6. How has the role of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life today changed from Old Testament times?
7. Are there any other questions you have about the Trinity you'd like to discuss in your group?

Biblical View of the Trinity

ONE GOD

ONE SUBSTANCE

All share in the same attributes,
equally and eternally

THREE PERSONS

Distinct persons eternally co-existing
Eternally sharing the same attributes

Holy

1 Samuel 2:2 There is none holy like the Lord;
there is none besides you; 1 Samuel 2:2
"Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord Almighty" – Revelation 4:8

Just

"The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just;
A God of faithfulness and without injustice,
Righteous and upright is He." Deut. 32:4

Merciful

*"The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and
great in mercy. The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are
over all His works."* Psalm 145:8-9

Love

"Love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God
and knows God. . . God is love." 1 John 4:7-8

Truth

"God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago," Titus 1:2
"And we know that the Son of God has come . . . This is the true
God and eternal life." 1 John 5:20

All-knowing, Omniscient

"You have searched me, LORD, and you know me.
You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts
from afar. . . Before a word is on my tongue you,
LORD, know it completely." Psalms 139:1-6

Everywhere, Omnipresent

"Can anyone hide himself in secret places, So I shall
not see him?" says the LORD; "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" says
the LORD. Jeremiah 23:24

All-powerful, Omnipotent

"Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by
your great power and outstretched arm.
Nothing is too hard for you." Jeremiah 32:17-18

Immutable, Unchangeable

"I the Lord do not change. So you, the descendants
of Jacob, are not destroyed." Malachi 3:6

Eternal

"For thus says the One who is high and
lifted up, who inhabits eternity..." Isaiah 57:15
"To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor
and glory forever and ever. Amen." 1 Timothy 1:17

God,
The Father

God,
The Son

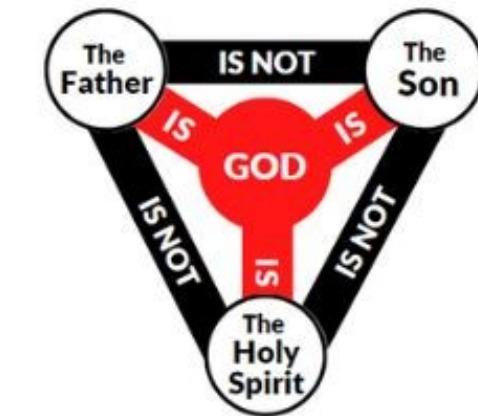
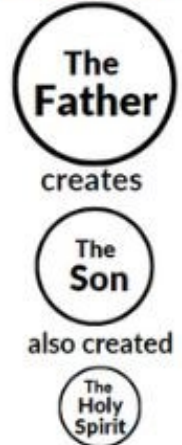
God,
The Holy Spirit

Views of the Trinity

**MODALISM
WRONG**



**ARIANISM
WRONG**



**CORRECT TRINITARIAN
Three persons, eternally co-existing**

The correct view of the Trinity illustrates three eternally co-existing persons as the center image shows.

Modalism wrongly teaches the Creator as the Father, becomes the Son, as the Savior, who then becomes the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier in the same way that water, as one substance can progressively be solid, liquid, and steam--correct regarding water, wrong regarding our Triune God.

A modern-day expression of Modalism leads to Oneness theology, a false belief held by United Pentecostal and United Apostolic Churches that believes the Father in the Old Testament became the Son in the New Testament who then became the Holy Spirit today. This false belief is easily refuted when we look at the Baptism of Jesus when all three members of the Trinity were present and many other passages in the Bible.

Arianism wrongly teaches that the Father created both the Son and Holy Spirit and incorrectly makes them noneternal lesser creations.

Modern-day beliefs influenced by Arianism include the Mormon religion and the Muslim religion in that both believe that both Jesus and the Holy Spirit are not co-eternal with God the Father.

There are many other false views of the Trinity, but rather than focus on them, the best thing to do is focus on the truth of the Trinity, one God, One Substance, Three Persons, eternally co-existing.