

Institutes of Theology | Session 26
Exploring the Depths of the Trinity
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Well, tonight, men, we are going to explore the depths of the Trinity. We're going to explore the depths of the Trinity.

Well, it was the notable early church father, Augustine, who once said the following as he was about to participate in a discussion about the Trinity. He said these words, "I will be attempting to say things that I cannot altogether be said as they are thought by a man, or at least as they are thought by me. In any case, when we think about God, the Trinity, we are aware that our thoughts are quite inadequate to their object and incapable of grasping God as He is." So I think Augustine's words really capture the heart and the breadth and the depth that is the triune God.

And we understand this. And we even understand the challenge and even the difficulty of attempting to explain who God is. So Augustine's words really strike at the core of what it means for us to feebly attempt to explain God. But even though Augustine found it difficult to articulate the Trinity, and then we'll come across some of those difficult concepts and realities tonight. So even though he found it difficult to articulate the Trinity, he later said that we cannot keep silent on a matter so central to the faith. And Augustine is right. As Christians, we must endeavor to explain God and to explain God as He has been revealed in his Word. And because of this, we are left with one option. And that option is to know, understand, and explain God as Trinity.

Now, we'll come to find out that the Trinity is at the foundation for all that is in God, and all that He has determined to accomplish in his great plan of redemption. The Bible isn't just about God's saving purposes, although it certainly is about that. But the Bible is about revealing who God is, so his glory can be made known, and so that his people, like us tonight, men, so that his people, like us, would glorify and honor Him.

So God as Trinity, God is Trinity, and that's at the heart of the Christian faith. And at the heart of the Christian faith is to worship God as Trinity. And let me ask you, as we've done this semester,

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to consider your own mind and your own thoughts. What are the first thoughts that come to your mind when we talk about God? Now, of course, that's A.W. Tozer's sort of classic introductory question to his work, *The Knowledge of the Holy*. But let me ask you, what comes into your mind when you think about God? Maybe more specifically, tonight, let me ask you. What does it mean or what comes to your mind when you think about knowing and worshiping the triune God? When you are participating in corporate worship on the Lord's Day with God's people, what are your thoughts about God? Tell me or think about your holy affections towards Him. Do you have affections for the one true God? When you are reading and studying and meditating on Scripture, what is your perception of God? What do you think about God? When you are meditating on Scripture, what are you meditating about?

Now, in his book, *The Holy Trinity*, and Robert Lethem, who wrote this work, is actually one of the articles that I'm having you read this month. But in his book, *The Holy Trinity*, Robert Lethem argues that most Western Christians are practical Modalists. Now, what do we mean by that? Well, when we talk about being a practical Modalist, or when Lethem talks about it, then he puts it this way. "In other words," and I'm summarizing, "When asked about God, most Christians in America don't think of God in terms of Trinity but tend to isolate God's three persons. The Father does this, the Son does that, and then the Spirit just somehow gets in on the fun. So, if I was to ask you, who created the world? What would your answer be? Some would answer, God the Father. But in reality, God created the world. The triune God, that is. Because according to Genesis 1:1, Genesis 1:2, and Colossians chapter 1, we are told that the Father, Son, and the Spirit created the world."

If I was to ask you, who is in charge of the plan of redemption, or who redeemed you? Most would say Christ, and that is true. But Scripture teaches that the Father decreed redemption, the Son accomplished redemption, and the Holy Spirit applied redemption. Let me ask you this one. If I asked you, who resurrected Jesus Christ? What would your response be? Most would say God. But Scripture teaches that the Father raised Christ, that Christ raised Christ, and even the Spirit of God raised Christ.

So let me frame it this way. When you sing, do you only sing to God the Father? I'm asking what's ruminating in your mind when you're singing. Are you only singing to God the Father?

When you pray, do you pray to God the Father and never mention the Son or Spirit? Think about your own prayers. When you pray, do you simply only mention the Father? Or let me ask you, when you read your Bible, do you read it as if it were only God the Father's Word, or do you read it as the Triune God's Word? Then you can see where I'm going with this. The fact is we've been created and redeemed by the Triune God. We are sons of the Triune God. We commune because of and with the Triune God. We sing to the Trinity. We pray to the Triune God. And we read and study Scripture as a product of the Triune God. Men, God is Trinity. That is his essence. That is his being. Therefore, Christianity is fundamentally Trinity.

Now tonight, as I mentioned, I want to explore the depths of the Trinity, and I want us to walk away tonight understanding better that our God is worthy to be worshiped, and we have the unfathomable privilege as his adopted sons to joyfully serve Him. Right? It could be real easy for us to gather together tonight and to simply walk away with more head knowledge of the Trinity. I think we will do that, and we should. We want to learn, myself included. But tonight, I want us to walk away with a bigger view of God, understanding better and more deeply that we must worship Him as the triune God, and as his adopted sons, to joyfully serve Him. That's the goal, men. Remember, we've said off and on throughout Institutes that the theology that isn't applied is theology that is aborted. We have to apply the doctrine of the Trinity to our lives tonight.

So let's begin by starting with a biblical case for the Trinity, a biblical case for the Trinity. Now, this won't be anything new for you guys. Pastor Tom walked through several arguments for the Trinity back in January, but I do feel that it is fitting for us tonight to dive back into the arguments for the Trinity, just sort of to set up the context for our study tonight.

Now, the Bible never, in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek, never uses the word Trinity in reference to the Trinity. You know this, and that's okay. The Bible never explicitly says, in one succinct statement, that there is one God in three persons. Okay, so the Bible doesn't use the word Trinity, and the Bible never explicitly says, in one single verse, that there is one God in three persons. Now, 1 John 5:6-8 is the closest we get. But understand, the Bible presents many arguments for the doctrine of the Trinity. So our goal is to grab on to the pertinent biblical texts, and then try to express, in human words, what is clearly revealed in the Bible about the triune God. Remember, this is a crucial aspect of doing systematic theology, or really any type of theological discipline.

You start with the biblical text. You do the exegesis with the text that are in relationship to the topic at hand. And then after you do the exegesis, you begin to work together and synthesize those biblical texts, either using biblical language that has been provided in the Scripture or going outside Scripture and using extra biblical language to identify the biblical concepts. Okay, so that's really what we're doing tonight.

So as we begin to move through exploring the doctrine of the Trinity tonight, I want to give you six biblical arguments for the Trinity. And let's walk through these together. Number one, the Bible records God using plural pronouns to refer to his triune self. So the Bible records God using plural pronouns when He refers to Himself. Now, we've seen this before, and you're familiar with this particular argument. But in the early chapters of Genesis, four times we come across plural pronouns where God Himself is speaking, and He makes reference to Himself with these plural pronouns. For example, Genesis 1:26, "Then God said, Let us make man in our image according to our likeness." Now, Joel Beeke says that this phrase implies council shared among distinct persons. So from the opening chapters of Genesis, we are introduced to God as creator, but we are also introduced to God in a unique way. "Let us make man in our image according to our likeness." Genesis 3:22, "Then the Lord God said, Behold, the man has become like one of us." And then later on in Genesis 11, in the context of the Tower of Babel, God says, "Come, let us go down there and confuse their language."

So again, before you get to Genesis 12, so in Genesis 1 through 11, we come across this language of plural pronouns, God referring to Himself in that way. Now you jump forward to the prophet Isaiah. In Isaiah 6:8, and the text says, "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then of course, we know Isaiah's response. He says, "Here I am, send me." So God has no problem referring to Himself as Us or Our. So that's one argument that we looked at briefly.

A second argument is the Bible attributes the divine perfections to all three persons of the Trinity. So we've been studying the divine attributes of God or the divine perfections of God, specifically the incommunicable attributes of God. Those attributes are all attributed to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. So if God the Father is God, and if God the Son is God, if the Spirit is God, they should have all of the same attributes or perfections, the same works, the same

prerogatives. In other words, if they are God, all three persons, they will be described as being God, specifically acting or working like God. So the New Testament teaches of God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit that they are eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, immutable, holy, loving, truthful, et cetera. The New Testament teaches that they have divine names, divine attributes, divine works, and are worthy of receiving worship.

A third argument, as we make our case for the Trinity, the Bible attributes divine works to all three persons of the Trinity. So, not only does the Bible attribute all of the divine perfections to each person of the Trinity, all of the divine works are attributed to all three persons of the Trinity. The very first Scripture reveals that God acts. God created the heavens and the earth. So, we are told in that one act that God created the world in six days, and then on the seventh day, He rested. God created ex nihilo, out of nothing. And then He rested on the seventh day.

Now, I want us to turn to the Gospel of John. So, take your copy of God's Word and turn to John chapter 5. Turn to John chapter 5, and I want to give you and show you an example of divine works being attributed to the persons of the Trinity. Again, God working begins in Genesis 1:1, and we see God working through the rest of redemptive history. Look at John chapter 5, go down to verses 16 and 17. "For this reason, the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath." Jesus had just healed the man. Verse 17, "but Jesus answered them, 'My Father is working until now, and I myself am working.'" So Jesus is making a clear statement here, that his Father is working, and He is also working. Now look at verse 17. Look at it with me again, "but He answered them." The Greek word Jesus uses for answered, carries the idea of a legal defense or an utterance. At the same time, this word involves a vested interest. So you can see what Jesus is doing here in these two verses. Jesus is personally invested in defending the work-ness of God, because He Himself is God and He Himself always works. Now watch what happens here after Jesus establishes that not only is the Father working, but the Son is working, which is telling us that the Father is God and the Son is God.

Watch what happens here in verse 18. Notice the response of the Jewish leaders. "For this reason, therefore, the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him." Now why? Why did they want to put Him to death? Well, look how verse 18 continues, "because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, [okay, that's a big deal, to them, right? And in actuality, was He really breaking the

Sabbath here? Well, of course not. But they wanted to kill Him because in their mind, He was breaking the Sabbath. But more than that, watch, verse 18] but also was calling God his own Father.” Okay, what's the big deal with that? Well, look at the next part, “making Himself equal with God.” So the religious leaders of the day understood what Jesus was claiming. Jesus was claiming to be working like his Father, which was Jesus essentially saying, I am God.

And notice, they didn't think that He really was God. They thought that He was attempting to be God. Look at the end of verse 18 again. Jesus “was making Himself equal with God.” You see the language there? Now, was Jesus making Himself equal with God? Well, absolutely not. Jesus was not making Himself out to be God. Jesus was simply demonstrating that He is God based on their works. The Father works, I work. They both do the same works, and we'll talk about this—this is called inseparable operations. They do the same works. But if you have some time this week, go read through the rest of John chapter 5, because in verse 19, Jesus says, “I only do what the Father does.” In verse 21, Jesus says, I give life like the Father. Verse 22, I judge like the Father. And then in verse 23, I deserve honor and worship like the Father. I mean, Jesus' case in front of that entire crowd, particularly the Pharisees, couldn't be more clear. He is saying, I am God. So men, the triune God is a working God. He's a working God. And we see this all throughout the New Testament.

Biblical argument number four, the Bible explicitly states that all three persons of the Trinity are God. Now, there are many texts that we could look at for this particular argument but let me just give you one for each. So speaking specifically of the Father, the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 15:6, “so that with one accord you may with one voice, glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” So the Bible explicitly states that the Father is God. In Luke 22, we are told specifically that the Son is God. Jesus says, quoting from the Old Testament, that “the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” And then all of the crowd, or religious leaders, they respond, “Are you the Son of God then?” So not only do we see the Father and the Son called God in the New Testament, but Romans 8:11 tells us that the Holy Spirit is God.

A fifth argument for the Trinity is that the Bible records God's own testimony of His triunity. The Bible records God's own testimony of His triunity. We see this all throughout the Gospel of John. I'm going to reference the Gospel of John a number of times tonight. But when you consider

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, John is the most theological of all four Gospels. John's Gospel is the most theological of all four Gospels. In fact, 90% of the material in the Gospel of John is not found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, okay? So, of course, the Gospel of John is about demonstrating that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and if you believe in Him, you have eternal life. But John also has a unique way of being theologically rich, giving us extreme insight into the Trinity. And that's why we will look at the Gospel of John several times this evening.

A final argument is that the Bible depicts the worship of all three persons of the Trinity. The Bible depicts the worship of all three persons of the Trinity. So not only is this the biblical teaching, and plenty of references in the New Testament that affirm this reality, that all three persons should be worshiped, but church history has documented this reality for centuries. And in other words, it's been understood since the church's inception in Acts 2, that all three members of the Trinity ought to be worshiped. In fact, it was Gregory of Nazianzus in the 4th century who wrote these words, "When we look at the Godhead, that which we conceive is one, but when we look at the persons in whom the Godhead dwells, there are three whom we worship. This is what the Bible teaches because God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit are all God. Therefore, to worship God, we must worship the persons of God." Men, this is what we do as Christ followers. We worship the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. This is the New Testament pattern. So that's a brief biblical case for the Trinity.

But I want to spend most of our time tonight studying the key concepts of the Trinity. The key concepts of the Trinity. So the first concept that I want us to consider tonight, and this is really by way of review, but so helpful for us to see in the context of our study of the Trinity. The first concept I want us to review is Divine Simplicity. Divine simplicity.

There is one God. So men, when we think of God, when we evangelize the lost, and we talk about God, and we communicate to them from the biblical text about God, at some point in that conversation, we need to tell people that there is one true God. There is only one God. And this is born out of really two theological principles, consubstantiality, which we'll talk about in a little bit, but also Divine Simplicity. Now, this is nothing new for us because we understand the biblical teaching. There is only one true God.

Turn to Isaiah chapter 44. Turn to Isaiah chapter 44. I want your eyes to be on two important texts from the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah 44 will be the first one we look at. Isaiah 44:6. “Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts, I am the first and I am the last.” And notice, Yahweh goes on to say, “and there is no god besides me.” Turn over one chapter to Isaiah 45:5-6. Very clear statements from God Himself about his oneness. Verse five, “I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides me there is no god. I will gird you, though you have not known me, that men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun, that there is no one besides me. I am Yahweh, and there is no other.”

Now, we've discussed this before, but the oneness of God was the most basic confessional language of the nation of Israel. Remember Deuteronomy 6:4, God Himself states that He is one. “The Lord is our God, and the Lord is one.” Remember, that was God describing and explaining Himself to the nation of Israel. And then God laying down a confession, a basic confession, that this is what the people of God must believe. You must believe that I am one. Now again, the nation of Israel had just come out of slavery in Egypt for over 400 years. So they had been immersed in polytheistic worship.

So God redeems the people. He takes them to Mount Sinai. He travels with them for 40 years, leading them into the promised land. He says, look, you must confess among the pagan nations that I am one. That was a basic confession that had to be made by the nation of Israel. But not only did the nation of Israel confess God as one, it was foundational to the first century church. The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 8:6, listen to this, 1 Corinthians 8:6, “there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him.” So the same confession of Deuteronomy 6, Paul's telling the Corinthians, that you need to be making that same confession, because our God is one. And then Paul, rather, not Jesus, but Paul goes on in that same verse to then say, “and one Lord, Jesus Christ.” Now, notice, in that text, and this is key, in that text, the Apostle Paul is talking about the Father, and he's talking about the Son, but he continues to use the singular God. Right? He's not saying, look, the Father is one God, and the Son is another God, being two Gods. No, he says, there's one God, the Father, and there's one God, the Son. Now, several years before Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, James, he says in James 2:19, “You believe that God is one.” So you can see both the nation of Israel and the New Testament Church is claiming that God is one.

Now, if that isn't enough, which it is, in addition to those two realities, Jesus Himself affirms the oneness of God. If there was ever a time for Jesus to demonstrate that He was another God, during his life in ministry would be a good time to do that. But He doesn't. Instead, He just affirms the oneness of God. Matthew 23:9, "Do not call anyone on earth your father, for One is your Father, He who is in heaven." And Jesus Himself says in John 17:3, "This is eternal life, that they may know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." So you can see how this Trinitarian language begins to develop once you begin examining and synthesizing the biblical texts. So the fundamental teaching of the Bible is that there is no other God except the true and living God. And this true God is a simple God. Remember, we said that God is not composed of parts. He is unified. He is a simple God.

Now, Stephen Holmes and his work on the Attributes of God, he writes, and I want you to see this statement in its context. He writes, "From Gregory of Nyssa [fourth century] to Francis Turretin [seventeenth century] there was an assumption on all sides that to believe in Divine Simplicity was to be an orthodox Trinitarian, and to deny simplicity was to attack the doctrine of the Trinity. This is crucial, men. We must affirm that God is a simple God. He is not composed of parts. His essence, His being, His nature is simple. He is one.

Now, if that's all we said about God, we would be leaving something out, right? So after we've considered Divine Simplicity, we now need to consider another theological concept that we will call Divine Processions. What do we mean by the Divine Processions? Well, we've already affirmed that there is one God, Divine Simplicity. Now we need to understand that there is one God who exists in three persons. The theological term for this is Divine Processions, or we could say the *opera ad intra*, or the internal works of God. So this is where we're starting to wade into the waters of using and identifying different theological terms to help us understand these most basic realities. If all you were to know is that God is one God that exists in three persons, that's fantastic. That's basic Trinitarian language. You must know and understand that to be a Christian. But thankfully, we have the entire Word of God, Genesis to Revelation, and we have 2,000 years of church history, which over those 2,000 years, men have grappled with all of the biblical texts that talk about the Trinity, have synthesized those biblical texts, and given us specific language and categories to think through. And that's what we're doing here, as we look at the Divine Processions.

The Divine Processions are also called the eternal relations of origin. The Divine Processions, the internal works of God, or even the Eternal Relations of Origin. So you'll see, if you read a systematic, then maybe you have a few systematics, and you're working your way through maybe the theology proper section, as we're studying this together. If you have these systematics, they will use this type of language, these different terms to describe the Trinity. So we're going to use Divine Processions tonight.

Now, what in the world are the Divine Processions? What do we mean by that? When we use this terminology, we are saying that this doctrine describes the eternal, everlasting distinctions between the three divine persons that exist as God. Let me say that again. We are describing, when we say Divine Processions, the eternal, everlasting distinctions between the three divine persons of God. In other words, these relations have always been and will always be because there is no change in God, right? Remember the attribute of immutability. God cannot change. So when we talk about the Father being the Father, and the Son being the Son, and the Spirit being the Spirit, these are the eternal relations of origins, or the Divine Processions. This is how God has always been. So we could put it this way. How do we know that the one God exists in three persons? Well, the Divine Processions will help us understand this reality.

So let's begin looking at each person and how we would categorize them within the Divine Processions. So the first person of the Trinity we need to consider is the Father. And Scripture refers to the Father as the unbegotten one, as the unbegotten one. You probably haven't used this word a lot recently, okay? But this is a biblical term that will help us see the oneness of God, but how the oneness of God is distinct in three persons. So, the Bible teaches and church history affirms that the person of the Trinity, the first person of the Trinity, is God the Father or the unbegotten one. Now, Jesus Himself affirms God the Father in that particular title. Listen to just a couple of references here. John 8:42, Jesus says, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God." So, in John 8:42, Jesus refers to God as the Father. In John 15:26, Jesus says, "When the helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is, the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about me." Now, it's important in these verses and many others that we understand what Christ is teaching here.

It is important to note that Christ's very words reveal his consubstantiality with the Father. In other words, when Jesus is claiming that God is his Father, He's claiming that God, that He and God, that He as the Son and God as the Father are the same essence. They are of the same nature. They are of the same being. The theological term we get from the 4th century is consubstantiality. That's what Jesus is claiming. But when He refers to God as Father, not only is He claiming to be of the same essence, He's also demonstrating a clear distinction. He is saying, I am God, but I am not the Father. He's saying, I am the stuff of God. I have the same stuff, the same essence. And when we think God really doesn't have stuff, right? He doesn't have a body. He doesn't take up matter. So again, I'm just trying to just grab some human words here to describe God. Jesus is saying, look, I'm of the same stuff as the Father, but I'm also distinct from the Father. I'm not divided from Him because we are one, divine simplicity. But I am distinct from God, the Father. And since Scripture refers to God, the Son, Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of the Father, theologians have identified God the Father as the unbegotten one. So the Father gives His only begotten Son. That means that the Father is the unbegotten one.

Now, what does begotten mean? What does begotten mean? Well, the Greek word, it means one and only offspring, or one birth, or one begetting. The idea behind the word begotten has to do with a descendant. This word is sometimes used in Scripture to refer to genealogies, right? A genealogy, a family tree, a descendant line. But since Scripture reveals that God the Father is the unbegotten one, we should understand that as He is the unbegotten one. He is not a descendant. In other words, the Father is always the Father. Now, we're talking about descendants and the begotten one and all of those realities. Don't think of that in human terms. You still have to think about this in God terms because there was no beginning with God. Like, if you were married and you beget a son, there was a moment in time where you conceived a child and that child was born, you beget a child. That child's life started. Not so with God.

So when we talk about God being the unbegotten one, there was no start to his eternity. He just is the Father. He is the begotten one. That's the point of this language. Now, consider the following scriptures that refer to God as Father. In Isaiah 63:16, the text says, "For you are our Father. You, O Lord, are our Father." And there are a host of other Old Testament texts and New Testament texts that refer to God as Father. So let me summarize here.

So the first person of the Trinity, the Father is the unbegotten one. Now, you might still be scratching your head here, wondering, okay, what in the world does it mean that God is the unbegotten one? What does this matter? Well, let's next consider the Son who is the begotten one. And I trust as we continue to work our way through these concepts, that these realities will hopefully become a little more clear as we continue to discuss these things. So we've looked at the Father, the unbegotten one.

Let's now look at the Son who is called the begotten one. So Scripture refers, and this is so important, Scripture refers to the Son as the Son, not because of his incarnation. Christ did not become a Son. He's always eternally been the Son, because it is said in the New Testament that He is begotten of the Father. So Christ did not become the eternal Son. Now, let me just set before you a couple texts here that will give us this language of begotten. Psalm 2:7, "I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord. He said to me, you are My Son. Today, I have begotten you." So the Hebrew word for begotten, it signifies begetting or generating. And we know that this was referring to Christ being the begotten one because in Hebrews 1 and in Hebrews 5, the author of Hebrews quotes Psalm 2 and says that is Jesus Christ, the begotten one. And you can go back and rehearse those texts, Hebrews 1:5 and Hebrews 5:5.

Now, I don't want us to get lost in the weeds here. I'm simply trying to show you that the Bible teaches there is one God, but the same Bible also teaches there are three persons in the Godhead. And one of the ways the Bible teaches this reality is through the Divine Processions. God, the Father, is unbegotten, and the Son is begotten.

Now, I told you we're going to the Gospel of John a lot tonight, so let's get back to the Gospel of John. Turn to John chapter 20. Turn to John 20. Now, I want to show you the summary statement of the Gospel of John, and then I want us to go back to the prologue of the Gospel of John to look at a couple different scriptures that will help us with this idea of begotten. So in John 20:30-31, we've got the summary statement of John's Gospel. Now, I want you to see the language here. "Therefore, many other signs, Jesus also performed in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ." What's the next expression or title we get here? "The Son of God." So the entire Gospel of John is written to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is equal to the Father, that Jesus Christ is also

the Son of the Father, and that if you believe in that Son, you will be saved. So you see how the Gospel of John is really Trinitarian to the core. You have to believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Okay, now turn back to John 1. Turn back to John 1. So not only does the Gospel of John prove that He is the Son of God through the miracles He performs, right? We see specific miracles recorded in the Gospel of John. We see the I AM statements in the Gospel of John. All of that is demonstrating that He is God. But we are specifically told in several ways, specifically the word begotten, that demonstrate to us that Jesus is God. So in John 1:18, look at the language here.

John 1:18, "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." Okay, so you see the word begotten. So now you know I'm not making that up. The word begotten is there. Again, the Greek word there means one and only offspring, one birth, one begetting. Again, the idea is descendant. This verse does not teach that Jesus Christ the Son is a created offspring or created descendant of God the Father. No, that's not what this verse is teaching because John 1:1-5 just demonstrated, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." So that's not what John 1:18 is teaching us. But the begotten language here is telling us that the Son is from and of the essence of the Father. That that's the idea behind it. In other words, Jesus is of the substance of the same stuff as the Father. To use that 4th century theological term, consubstantiality. Jesus, the Son, God, the Father, they are of the same essence.

But the fact that He is described as begotten tells us two realities. One, we've already noted that He is God, and two, He is not divided but distinct from the Father. And by the way, look back at verse 18 in the expression, who is in the bosom of the Father.

Not only does begotten tell us that Jesus is God, but the expression who is in the bosom of the Father also reveals that the Son, Jesus Christ, is of the same essence of the Father. So if you need a verse that explicitly demonstrates that the Son is of the same essence as the Father, go to John 1:18. We are told He's the begotten one, and we are told that He is in the bosom of the Father. Men, the only way that you can be in the bosom of the Father is if you are of the same essence of the Father. This is amazing. So in verse 18, multiple gods are not in view, but a singular, simple God. Gregory of Nyssa writes, the Father is God, the Son is God, and yet by the same

proclamation, God is one, because no difference either of nature or of expiration is contemplated in the Godhead.

Now let's turn over to John 3:16. Let's turn over to John 3:16. You're going to see the most famous verse in the Bible in a different light tonight. I hope—that's my goal at least. John 3:16, you know this verse but now think of it in terms of Divine Procession. Think of it in terms of the Son's equality with the Father. John 3:16, "For God [that's the Father] so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son." There's our Word, there's that language, "That whoever believes in [the only begotten Son] shall not perish but have eternal life." So in the most famous verse of the Bible, we have this begotten language. Now what is this verse teaching? Well, the Father who is God, He sent his only begotten Son, who is God, into the world. In other words, the different language here helps us understand that it wasn't God the Father who came into the world, but it was God the Son. See, this is how we begin to develop the idea that God is one, because we've seen it repeatedly now that the Father and the Son are of the same essence.

But we also begin to develop how even though that our God is one, that there are three distinct persons in God, because it's the Father who sends the Son, the begotten one. Look at verse 18. "He who believes in Him is not judged. He who does not believe has been judged already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son." Well, Helmus Brackle, he writes, "We must therefore remove any notion of human generation from our minds as we ascend to the divine generation, for we are conveying spiritual matters by using vocabulary relating to aspects of human existence." So listen to me carefully, men, right here. When we consider God the Father begetting God the Son, this does not mean that there was a time in which the Father gave his "godness" to the Son, and then the Son received that "godness" and became God. There was never a time when that happened.

When human generation happens, this is exactly what happens. Me and my wife communicate our nature to our kids at conception. There was a moment in time when that happened. Then they are born into this world and divided and separated from us. But with the Son of God, there was never a time when He was not the Son because He is eternal. And there was never a time when He was not God because God is simple and God has always been Father, Son, and Spirit.

So we've considered the unbegotten one, the Father. We also have considered the begotten one, the Son. Let's third and finally consider, before we take a break here, the Holy Spirit, who is referred to as the "spirated" one. The spirated one. Now you may be thinking, what in the world is that? Well, let's talk about it.

The biblical teaching on the Divine Processions as it relates to the Holy Spirit. So we've talked about the first member of the Trinity. We've talked about the second member of the Trinity. Let's now talk about the third member of the Trinity. So Divine Processions as it relates to the Holy Spirit, is that both God the Father and God the Son sent or spirated the Holy Spirit into the world. Or you could say that in the Divine Processions, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. Now you understand what this means because you already understand unbegotten and begotten. So what this language is teaching us is that the Holy Spirit too, is of the same essence as the Father and the Son. Well, what is that essence? That the Holy Spirit is God. The Holy Spirit is God.

Again, we turn to the Gospel of John to flesh this out. Turn to John 14. Again, a familiar verse that you will recognize, but you'll be able to see it in a little bit of a different light. John 14. This, of course, is in the Upper Room Discourse. The night before Christ's crucifixion, He's talking to the disciples. He's saying, I'm going away. But He says He's going away. But at the same time, look at verse 26. Notice what Jesus tells them. "But the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to remembrance all that I said to you." Okay, so Jesus is going away. We know this. And in this chapter, specifically John 13 through 16, Jesus is teaching the disciples that I'm going away, but I'm sending to you another one who is just like me, the helper, the comforter, the advocate, the Holy Spirit. This verse is Jesus' own personal testimony about God the Father sending the Holy Spirit. Again, for the Father to send the Spirit has to mean that the Spirit is God. In addition, Jesus says the Holy Spirit will bring to the disciples everything that Jesus taught. Well, how can the Spirit be sent from the Father? And how can the Spirit bring to the mind of the disciples everything that Jesus taught? How can He do that? Just have a really good day, a really good couple months? No, it's because He, too, is God.

Now turn over to chapter 15. And one more text. John 15:26. Jesus again, “When the helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father.” Now, that is a profound statement. Again, we've already seen that God the Father is sending. Now, we are told that Jesus Himself is sending the helper. Well, who is the helper? Verse 26. “That is the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father. [And what will that Spirit do?] He will testify about me.” He will testify about me. So in other words, all that is in God is communicated to the Holy Spirit as well, by way of procession or spiration. Now again, don't think of this in human terms. When we say that all that God is has been communicated to the Spirit, we are not saying that there was a moment in time when the Spirit wasn't all of his “godness .” Again, we are working in eternal theological categories. The Spirit has always been God. But when the Scripture tells us that the Spirit was sent or spirated, again, this helps us understand that God is one, but there are three persons in the Godhead. The unbegotten one, the Father, the begotten one, the Son, and the spirated one, the Holy Spirit. Spirated is simply a verb form of the Greek word, which we translate Spirit.

Now, if you're confused here, that's okay. Here's what John MacArthur says. “The Bible gives no clear and complete explanation of what those expressions mean.” This is challenging. This is difficult. We only have so much revelation, and we only have so many words. Really, that's why it took about 1000 years of church history for men to figure this out. Thankfully, we're on this side of church history, and we have all the resources in the world to be able to delve into these realities.

By the way, just a side note before I let you have a little break here, that during the time of the Reformation, John Calvin, for example, John Calvin only had access to about 350 books in his library. 350. Imagine if we combined all of our libraries, how many would we have? Thousands. Thousands. Men, we have so much information, so much content, so much theological understanding given to us in books to help us grasp the Divine Processions.

Well, as we dive back into the Divine Processions, I want to end our time in this section, this particular concept, by showing you the (Athanasian) Creed, which was written sometime during the first few centuries, I think probably around the fourth century. But I want you simply to just see the language used to describe what we are talking about here. “The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone, not made nor created, but begotten.

The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son, neither made nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers, one Son, not three Sons, one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.” So you can see here the language that we are using tonight, what was worked out in these early centuries. And a majority, if not all of these ancient creeds, they were in response to heretical teachings about a certain member of the Trinity. Like when you look through the fourth century, really all of the official church creeds or documents from that time, they are responses to Christological error. So people weren't sitting around saying, well, let's just come up with some really great language that defines the Trinity. I'm sure that was part of the discussion. But the primary point of creeds like this were to demonstrate, in the most clear terms possible, what the scriptures teach about God to refute the false teaching that was circulating the ancient world.

Glenn Butner, who has recently written a book called Reformed Dogmatics, or Trinitarian Dogmatics, rather, I think I have Reformed Dogmatics, it's Trinitarian Dogmatics. Now, he writes, The Father, Son, and Spirit share the same simple primary substance without any hierarchy of divinity, and neither eternal generation nor eternal spirations [that's referring to the Son and the Spirit] in any way divides this essence or allows a merely partial transmission of God's nature through a procession.” So in other words, when we talk about unbegotten, begotten, inspirated, we are saying that the full essence of God is communicated to that person of the Trinity, not a partial transmission, but the full essence of God. Okay, so now that's Divine Processions.

Now, why is that crucial to start there? Well, I'm glad you asked, but now let's consider the Divine Missions, the Divine Missions. So the Divine Missions, when we say and use this theological term and concept, we say there is one God who exists in three persons who savingly acts in creation. So where Divine Processions is the eternal relations of origin, think eternal, the eternity past, when we talk about Divine Missions, we think of God acting in redemptive history. And that's why it's called *opera ad extra*. That's Latin for the external works of God. So the Divine Processions are the internal works of God, unbegotten, begotten, spirated. And now when we get to the Divine Missions, we're talking about the external works of God, how God works in the plan of redemption.

So, let me put this in question form. And maybe you've thought this. Why does the Father send the Son into the world on a rescue mission to save sinners? Why is the Son not sending the Father to do that? Or why didn't the Holy Spirit send the Father to take to Himself human flesh? Or why didn't the Holy Spirit become incarnate and transfigure on the mount? Or why didn't the Son descend in Acts 2 at Pentecost? You see, the eternal ordering of the Trinity in the Divine Processions gives us the order and the structure in the Divine Missions. That's important. Let me say that. The eternal ordering of the Trinity in the Divine Processions, it gives us the order and structure of the Trinity in the Divine Missions. So let's turn to a few biblical texts as we begin to develop an understanding of the Divine Mission.

Turn to John 14. You knew this. We were going to the Gospel of John. Turn to John 14. So there are other texts besides the Gospel of John that help us understand the Divine Missions. Let me give you an example before we get to John 14 from Exodus 31. When the nation of Israel is building the tabernacle, we are told that Bezalel is filled with the Spirit of God. Okay? He's filled with the Spirit of God. Now, we're in the Gospel of John. Make sure you're in John 14. And I want you to see the Divine Mission coming out in these verses. John 14:16-17. Jesus says, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another helper that He may be with you forever." Who is this helper? "That is the Spirit of Truth." Turn over to chapter 15. We've already looked at this text, but look at it again, verse 26. "When the helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about me." Turn over to chapter 16:7. Jesus says, and He continues, that "I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you." Okay, so let's stop there. So you see how the Divine Processions are now played out in the Divine Missions. God the Father has begotten the Son. God the Father and the Son have spirated or sent the Spirit. That's what we have here. So in these verses, we have the Divine Processions and the Divine Missions. Now go to Acts chapter 2.

Turn over to Acts 2. Of course, you know the Book of Acts records the first 30 years of church history, AD 30 to AD 60. Acts 2, look at verse 33. Peter's sermon at Pentecost. Notice his language here. "Therefore, having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit." So you can see the language that Peter is using in his first inaugural sermon, at the first church service. You can see that he is talking about God,

but he's moving between the distinct persons of God. Here he talks about Christ being exalted at the right hand of God, and then he also talks about receiving from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit.

Now turn over to Galatians 4. Let's look at another New Testament passage that talks about the Divine Missions. Galatians chapter 4, again, a familiar verse. Think of it in theological, trinitarian terms. Galatians 4:4. "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son." So the Father sent the Son. Why? Because the Son is begotten of the Father. Again, Divine Procession, Divine Mission. So God sent forth his Son, "born of a woman, born under the law so that He might redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons [verse 6 goes on to say] God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." So you can see what the Trinity was in eternity past is played out in the Divine Missions during the plan of redemption.

So there's no switching around of the persons of the Trinity. There's a specific order; we would call that a taxis. The first person is the Father, the second is the Son, the third is the Spirit. But there's also a unique way that they proceed from one another, and there's also a unique way that they accomplish the plan of redemption.

Now, Glenn Butler in *Trinitarian Dogmatics*, he says, and follow along with this as we begin to look and formalize our definition of this. That Divine Missions is "a voluntary extension of the Divine Processions into creation. [He goes on to say] In the Divine Missions, the fullness of the infinite, eternal, immutable, and simple God is manifest in the persons of the sun and Spirit within the finite, temporal, mutable, and composite created world." That's a very helpful definition. Very helpful. Put more simply, Matthew Emerson, he says, "The Divine Missions are revelations and extensions of the Divine Processions, the manifestation of divine persons in creation."

Now, if you are reading along in *Biblical Doctrine*, you probably came across MacArthur when he writes, "The external works of the Trinity and the economy of redemption, therefore, reflect the order established by the internal works of eternal generation and procession within the divine life. [MacArthur goes on] The Father sends the Son in the economy of redemption because He begets the Son eternally. The Spirit is sent by the Father and Son *ad extra*, because He eternally

proceeds from them *ad intra*. Now, I think you're beginning now to see how all of these terms are coming together here. Remember, extra biblical language used to describe biblical concepts. And you can see this is challenging. And it ought to be, because we are finite beings looking into a divine God, a triune God for that matter.

Now, how important are these Divine Missions? Brothers, I want us to understand that our salvation rests in the fact that the Father sent the Son into the world. And not merely just sent the Son into the world, but the Son Himself took to Himself human nature. He assumed human nature. So the eternal Son became the God-Man. I mean, what an amazing and profound reality. In the Divine Mission, the Son took to Himself human flesh in order that He could pay the ransom that was due to all of those who have sinned against God yet repented and believed in the Son. All right, that's ultimately where the Gospel of John is going.

You need to see that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that this Son can deal with your sin problem. I mean, for those of us here tonight who have turned and repented of our sin, our transgressions, our iniquity, we have turned from those things and trust in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, we have been forgiven of our sins because of His perfect, righteous life. And His righteousness, His obedience to every aspect of God's law is then credited to our account. Now, this wouldn't be a big deal, but He's the God-Man. So He is able to bring God to us and then bring us to God in His perfect life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Brother, this is the good news of the Divine Missions, that Christ Jesus came into the world to rescue sinners, and like the Apostle Paul says, of whom I am chief. Anybody in here ever feel like the chief of sinners? Now, we have a Savior to deal with our sin, the Son, Jesus Christ. Divine missions is absolutely crucial.

So, we've looked at three key concepts. Let's now fourthly consider Inseparable Operations. Inseparable Operations. When we say Inseparable Operations, what we mean is there is one God who exists in three persons, whose acts are undivided. Let me say it again. There is one God who exists in three persons, whose acts are undivided. Now, think what we've considered so far. We're bringing this all together. God is one God. He's one being one essence. He has one nature, one will. Yet, this one God exists in three persons. And in the Divine Processions, the full essence of God has been communicated to each of the three members of the Trinity. And those processions

paved the way for the Divine Missions, where God sends the Son into the world to be a savior of the world, and the Holy Spirit of God applies that saving work to those who believe in Christ.

Now, the question is, did the Son go into the world kicking and screaming against the will of the Father? No, God, please. Father, don't send me. This is going to be brutal. Did the Holy Spirit feel left out of the drama of redemption since it was Christ who died on the cross and not the Spirit? Is Christ upset that He's at the right hand of the Father while the Spirit indwells believers? Well, the truth is that in every act of God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit work inseparably because they are all of the same essence, of the same nature, they have the same will, and therefore, they have the same action.

Matthew Barrett, in his book, *Simply Trinity*, writes, "Since the persons of the Trinity are indivisible in essence, they are also indivisible in their external operations. Having the one simple will in common, they perform a singular act in any external operation." Vern Poythress, in his book, *The Mystery of the Trinity*, he says, "All three persons of the Trinity are involved in all three phases of divine action, because they indwell one another." So in other words, men, because the Trinity is one God in three persons, and this Triune God is one essence with only one will, the Triune God's works cannot be divided. So God isn't working over here, the Father is not working over here, and the Son is doing a little bit of work over here, and then the Holy Spirit's getting in on some of the work over here. That's not how the Bible presents the inseparable operations of God.

Although the Triune God's works are done in unity, they cannot be divided. Sometimes aspects of that work are appropriated by the biblical authors to certain persons of the Trinity. Now, I'll show you some examples below. But let me summarize it this way. The Triune God's works cannot be divided. Every single work of God is of God. This includes the Father, Son, and Spirit. And yet, different persons of the Triune God are emphasized in the undivided works. So one God, one nature, one action. Said another way. The Triune God has one internal nature, which means therefore when He acts, He has one external action. So He has one internal nature. Therefore, when He acts, there's only one external act. Let me say it this way. In every act of God, because He is one in nature, in three persons, all three persons are working in that act.

Now, don't misunderstand me here. And this is key. Inseparable operations is not teaching that each person of the Trinity collaborates, because that assumes that each person of the Trinity has their own will. But that isn't true. Because they have one will, they are inseparable when they work out that will. Matthew Barrett goes on to say, and listen to these words, "When we say God acts as one, we assume He is one." What's that doctrine called? Divine simplicity. "Since his very nature or essence is one, He acts as one, not merely cooperating, but performing a single act that accords with the triune God's single will. Yes, there are three persons, but since it is the same divine essence subsisting in each, these three persons always perform the same act."

Now, how does the Bible demonstrate this one working of God, yet appropriated to the three persons? So let me give you some theological language, and you've heard of this before, so stick with me here. In the one work, the Father authors the act, the Son accomplishes the act, and the Spirit applies the act. Theologians have said it a different way. The Father gives, the Son creates, and the Spirit confirms. Or you could say it this way, the Father begins the act, the Son advances the act, and the Spirit completes the act. Personally, I like this one best. The Father decrees, the Son accomplishes, and the Spirit applies.

Now, are there any biblical examples of inseparable operations? Well, absolutely. And you know this. The fact of the matter is, men, that you already know the doctrine of inseparable operations, and you already believe it. You just might not have thought about it in these particular terms. And I'll show you an example. So where do we see inseparable operations in Scripture? Well, I would say we see that in every work or act of God. Okay. But we'll look at three specific examples, and this will bring a little clarity, I hope.

Number one, in creation. So we are told in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, God [the Father] created the heavens and the earth. We are told in John 1 and Colossians 1 that Jesus Christ created the heavens and the earth. And then in Genesis 1, Psalm 33, and Job 26, we are told the Spirit created. Again, this is just a representative example. So the Bible has no qualms with saying or speaking about inseparable operations. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit all worked in creation. They have one nature, one will. Therefore, when God decides to work, the Father, Son, and the Spirit, they all work because they're all of the same divine essence.

A second example would be salvation. A second example would be salvation. Now we don't have time to turn there tonight, but you're familiar with Ephesians chapter 1. In Ephesians chapter 1:3-6, we are told that the Father decreed salvation. In Ephesians 1:7-12, we are told that the Son accomplished salvation. And then in Ephesians chapter 1:13-14, we are told that the Holy Spirit applies salvation. So when Paul talks about the doctrine of salvation in Ephesians 1:3-14, he says it is a work of God, but then he appropriates certain aspects of salvation to one of the members of the Trinity. God decreed it. Remember, God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. And then it tells us that it was Christ Himself who accomplished salvation to the praise of the Father. And then in Ephesians 1:13-14, we are told that it's the Holy Spirit who applies that salvation as a seal or as a guarantee. Notice nowhere does Paul say, well, look, Ephesians, three gods accomplished your salvation. He doesn't use that terminology. He speaks of the one God and then demonstrates how each person of the Trinity works in the great act of salvation.

So another example that we could consider is Christ's resurrection, is Christ's resurrection. Again, most Christians, if they are asked who raised Christ from the dead, well, they'll say, God the Father, of course. God the Father. And would they be right? Well, they would be right, absolutely. So we would want to amen that. But at the same time, the Bible goes beyond that and demonstrates that the resurrection was a work of the triune God. You may be thinking, well, how did Jesus Christ resurrect Himself? Well, He's fully God and fully man. It was this human nature that was dead lying in the tomb, but his full divine nature, his full divine essence never stopped. So in Acts 2, we are told that the Father raised up Christ. In John 10, Jesus Himself predicting his resurrection, He says, look, I laid down My life and I will what? Raise it up again. I will take it up again. And then in Romans 8:11, we are told it was the Spirit who raised Christ from the dead. So you can see again the workings of the triune God, how each person of the trinity operates in the same work. Yet at certain places, that work is appropriated to a certain or specific member of the trinity. And that's what I'm trying to describe here to you in the inseparable operations of God.

In Acts 2, when Peter's preaching, he appropriates the one divine act of resurrection, he appropriates that to the Father. When Jesus is predicting his resurrection, he appropriates it to Himself. "I'm going to lay down My life. Oh, by the way, I'll take it up again." And then in

Romans 8, the apostle Paul, speaking of the one act of resurrection, he says, “Oh, by the way, it's the Spirit of God that raised Christ from the dead.” So that's the inseparable operations of God.

We must continue with another concept, the perichoresis of God. I saved this one towards the end, because I knew you guys would be awake for this. All right, well, what do we mean now when we're talking about perichoresis? What we mean by perichoresis is there is one God who exists in three persons who mutually indwell each other. One God who exists in three persons, and these three persons mutually indwell one another. Now, again, we only have limited biblical revelation and limited human words to talk about this aspect—or this concept—of God. But I'm going to say this again, and I want you to think about what I'm saying as it relates to God being invisible and God being a Spirit and God not taking up any matter. Perichoresis means there is one God who exists in three persons who mutually indwell one another. Men, God is not like us. God is not like us.

Now, what do we mean by perichoreses? Well, perichoresis literally means movement in a circle. That's not that helpful, to be honest. Movement in a circle. But the concept or the idea is that every person of the Trinity mutually indwells the other persons. So perichoreses says that the Father is in the Son, the Son is in the Holy Spirit, the Son indwells the Father, and the Spirit completely indwells the Father. Here's how one fourth century church father summarizes it. He says that perichoreses is the revolving circle of the glory moving around from like to like. That's also not that helpful. But you understand what he's trying to get at there. So the early Christians understood the Biblical teaching of the mutual indwelling of the persons of the Trinity, and they tried to explain it from like to like. That's how Gregory of Nyssa explains it.

But let's look at some Biblical texts to see if this is what the Bible really teaches. Let's turn to John, chapter one. Let's turn to John one. And again, think of this in perichoretic terms. John 1:18. Well, again, we've already looked at this text. Let's look at it again. John 1:18, “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.” So there's that perichoretic language. The begotten God is in the bosom of the Father. Okay, now turn to John 10, John 10. I think a couple familiar verses here. John 10:30, to give us some context here, Jesus is speaking. John 10:30, Jesus clearly says in John 10:30, what does He say? “I and the Father are one.” Again, there's personal testimony about the unity of

God. Now drop down to verse 38, John 10:38. “But if I do them, though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand [and here we go] that the Father is in me, and I in the Father”. Okay, here's that perichoretic language. Jesus Himself says, I am in the Father, and the Father is in me.

Turn over to John 14. Turn over just a couple of chapters to John 14. Jesus again, He's speaking to his disciples. “Do you not believe,” this is John 14:10. “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you, I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in me does his works. Verse 11, “Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me.” Now, I think Jesus has a pretty good idea and understanding of who God is. And Jesus is telling the disciples, look, I am in the Father, and the Father is in me. Now turn over to John 17, Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17:21, so now He's praying for those who will believe in the truth. John 17:21, Jesus says, “that they may all be one, even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us.” Now, that's amazing right there. So that's the perichoresis of God. Jesus says, Father, you are in me, and I'm in you. But then He says, for those who will believe the truth, for those who will believe in me, they will also be in us.

Well, so that there is a divine perichoresis, but in one sense, there is a perichoresis where we are told that God Himself indwells in us. And we think of Paul when he says that your body is a what? Temple of the Holy Spirit. The God of the universe indwells every single believer with his gracious, covenantal presence. That amazing? Now, what about the Holy Spirit? (Now, just to be clear before we move on to the Holy Spirit, I am not saying that because God dwells in you that you now become part of the divine essence and are a God yourself. You are not. I am not a little Christ. So don't walk away tonight thinking that you are. That's not what we're teaching here.) But what about the Holy Spirit? So we've seen Jesus Himself saying, I'm in the Father, the Father is in Me. What about the Holy Spirit? Well, many theologians have made a case that 1st Corinthians 2:10-11, tell us that the Spirit searches the depths of the Father, which also tells us that the Spirit is included as the Perichoresis of God.

Now, this makes complete sense, right? Because everything about God is true about what? Every member of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit. Now, we're going to save this for next semester, but it gets a little more challenging when you start talking about the Son, taking to Himself a

human nature. And so now the person of the Son now has both God nature and a human nature. More challenges will save to the fall. But for now, we need to understand the doctrine of Perichoresis. Every member of the Trinity dwells in the others. It's truly fascinating.

Well, let's now consider (and I really wanted to save this until 8:50 tonight) the historical vocabulary of the Trinity. The historical vocabulary of the Trinity. Now, there's a lot we could say about the development of the vocabulary that we use today. Again, it's really a blessing that we are this far removed from the closing of the biblical canon. We have 2,000 years of church history where pastors and theologians have worked through human language to try and define all of these terms. So this is good. So if we had time, which we don't, we could look through at the development of all of these technical terms. But let me just give you a small sample, a small taste, and you can spend time researching this all summer.

So let's first talk about the progressive growth of Trinitarian language, the progressive growth of Trinitarian language. So if you look back in the early centuries of the church, you will come across men trying to define the Trinity. We first see this word Trinity used by Tertullian in the second century. So the idea of using the word Trinity, men, has been around a long time. Going all the way back to Tertullian in the second century. In fact, you can see here in this paragraph that from Tertullian alone, we get the idea of substance, right? When we say that God is one being, He's one essence, He's one substance. We also get the term Trinity, which comes from the Latin Trinitas, which just means tri-unity. And we also get from Tertullian the idea of three persons. That's pretty powerful. Other words, and I mentioned one of them already, the Trinity, but another one that we get from the early church is the word substance. The word substance. Again, Tertullian strategically used substance to demonstrate that the Bible isn't teaching tri-theism, three gods, but that every person, remember, of the godhead was of the same substance, fully God.

Another word I mentioned is the word persons. This comes from Latin word that means concrete individual. So by the second century, so we're looking at some 100 or so years after the completion of the New Testament, that words like trinity, substance, and person were already circulating the ancient world. Now, about 150 years, and stick with me here, about 150 years after Tertullian, we come to 325 AD in the Council of Nicaea, the Council of Nicaea. And it was

in this Council that many church leaders stood up against Arius, who was teaching that Jesus Christ the Son was not of the same substance of the Father, but of similar substance. Well, if you are a similar substance of God, are you God? No. So in 325, men got together at the Council of Nicaea and said, no, Arius, you're a heretic, and Jesus Christ is of the same substance of God. That was ultimately the battleground. And you can see the Council of Nicaea in 325, what they wrote. "Christ, the Son of God, is begotten from the Father, that is, from the substance of the Father." And by the way, when this word, *ousia*, the Greek word, *ousia*, is translated into other languages like *esse* for Latin, that's where we get the Latin word or the English word, now essence.

So you can see in these early centuries, we've got Trinity, we've got persons, we've got substance, we've got being, we've got essence. All of these words that we use today, men, have been handed down to us through the centuries. And we can keep going. We could go to 381 at Constantinople. Three other men that are huge in these discussions would be the Cappadocian fathers. You can see here on the slide. They helped us understand that God, the Father is unbegotten, the Son is begotten, and the Spirit is spirated. Among many other doctrines. So that's the progressive growth of Trinitarian language.

And then secondly, just a taste of this, the consistent articulation of Trinitarian concepts. Now, what do I mean by that? Well, if you just look back through systematic theologies, and this is real practical, if you just look back through various systematic theologies, or you look back through various historical theologies, what you're going to find in these volumes is that theologians have documented past explanations of Christians trying to formulate these doctrines that we hold to today. Again, there's so many examples that we could jump to and use here. I'll just give you one, because we haven't quoted from Him tonight. John Calvin, he says, "The essence of the one God is simple and undivided, and that it belongs to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit." Again, men, everything that I'm teaching you tonight, none of that is new to the church. That hasn't just arisen in 2026. These are all theological truths that are born out of the biblical revelation of God, the inerrant Word of God that men have tried to explain for 2,000 years. So that was a brief look at the historical vocabulary of the Trinity. (I'm so sad. I just had to like pass over like six pages of notes. I don't know what happened there.)

Let's fourth and finally, in the couple minutes we have left, look at the necessary appropriation of the Trinity. This is where we started, right? We started tonight with really an encouragement and exhortation for our time together tonight, not to be simply academic or intellectual, but we want to be able to apply the wonderful truth that is the Trinity. Well, how can we do that? Let me give you three ways, maybe four.

The first way is, your understanding of the Trinity must inform and drive your worship. Men, we take what we learn tonight and what we considered from God's Word, and we must let that inform our minds and inform the infections of our heart so that we might worship, so that we might worship the triune God.

Secondly, our understanding of the Trinity must shape our view of salvation and sanctification. Men, your salvation was accomplished. It was decreed by the Father, accomplished by the Son, and applied by the Spirit. The triune God saved you. And that's why Romans 8 tells us that nothing can break that salvation. Nothing can break that salvation. Nothing can separate you from the love of God, the Father, that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. That's what Christ says. Look, "No one can snatch you out of My hand." And do you think that the Father and the Spirit are just sitting around while Christ alone is doing the only holding your salvation? No, they're inseparably working, brothers, to keep us in them. Sanctification as well, right? It is God who began to work in you, and He will do what? Bring it to completion. And not just the Father is working in that, but the Son and the Spirit.

Number three, your understanding of the Trinity must fuel your desire to be holy, for He is holy. There is a reason why the cherubim in Isaiah 6, they cover up their face and they cry out, Holy, Holy, Holy.

Men, I've only scratched the surface of my notes. I mean, compare that to the vastness and the beauty and the grandeur of our God. What an amazing reality. Men, before I pray to close us out, let me just get in your minds some resources that can help you explore the doctrine of the Trinity a little bit more. Make sure you check with your wife before you purchase these. Okay? Check the budgets. But some of these works are shorter. Some of them are more extensive. Most, if not all of these we have in our bookstore, and we can get these for you, so we can connect and talk about that later. But let me make some recommendations for you.

If you're wanting sort of an entry point into everything we talked about tonight, *Simply Trinity* by Matthew Barrett is, again, it's a very helpful resource, clear, fairly concise, and gets straight to the point on some of these concepts that we talked about tonight. We've got it in the bookstore. It's helpful.

Another one would be *proclaiming the Triune God*. It was edited by Matthew Barrett, I think. Several different authors worked on this one, but they're the same idea. It's working through these concepts. Just a couple hundred pages.

Another one that just recently came out, if your interest was really peaked by the doctrine of inseparable operations, *Beholding the Triune God* by Matthew Emerson and Brandon Smith. Very short volume, very accessible, really helpful.

Another one, this one's larger, so you need to set aside the next few months to read this one, would be *The Mystery of the Trinity* by Vern Poythress. Very helpful, very good. A little more challenging than those three previous books. So if you're really trying to get into the weeds, you want to get *The Mystery of the Trinity*. Very helpful.

Another one I'd recommend, this is actually part of your reading, I gave you a sample article, but *The Holy Trinity* by Robert Letham. Very good. This one's a few hundred pages, a little more challenging, but again, very helpful.

Now, if you want to go all in, you'd want to get this one on *Classical Trinitarianism*. It's about two dozen different authors that just hammer out all of these theological concepts. It's excellent. The book is just gigantic. So if you need a weapon, there, you've got one. *Trinitarian Dogmatics*. If you could only purchase one, one on that list, this is the one I would recommend. It is absolutely fantastic. It's tough. But it is, if you will get into this one and take your time through this one, it will be extremely, extremely helpful. Any questions about anything we talked about?

Men, I'm grateful that you were here tonight.

You can take your lanyards off, put them in the basket in the back. If you want to help take the refreshments to the chapel, that would be amazing. I'll communicate these books to you via email, and we'll get an order put in and those things. But thank you for being here. Let me pray, and then you are dismissed.

Father God, we love you. We are grateful for your Son, Christ, whom you sent into this world to redeem us from our sins. We're grateful that you have applied salvation to our lives, and you've given us your Spirit as a sealing guarantee. We want to praise you and honor you, our triune God. We ask all these things in the name of the Son, amen.