

“Singleness of Purpose”
John 5:19-21
(Preached at Trinity, October 31, 2018)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Chapter 5** Jesus has arrived at Jerusalem during one of the feasts of the Jews. Going to the Temple He passes a multitude of people who were sick, blind, or paralyzed who were laying helplessly around the Pool of Bethesda. Jesus has regard for one in particular and heals him. He immediately arose and walked.
2. Once again, Jesus falls into conflict with the Jews. **Verse 9** describes the issue precisely: "Now it was the Sabbath on that day."
The Pharisees were dogmatic about the Sabbath and had added at least 1500 rules that had to be followed. In their eyes Jesus was in serious violation of the Sabbath. This fueled their hatred of Jesus.
John 5:16 NAU - "For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath."
3. But there was a further reason for the conflict between Jesus and the Jews.
In **Verse 17** Jesus makes a profound statement.
"My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."
 - A. First, Jesus is calling God His Father – “My Father.” The Jews did not refer to God with the familiarity of “my Father.” This was offensive to the Jews.
 - B. Second, the Jews clearly understood that Jesus was making Himself equal with the God.
Jesus was saying that God’s Sabbath rest did not mean He was idle. God doesn’t cease His providential work on the Sabbath.
Just as the Father is active on the Sabbath Jesus is also active.
4. This infuriated the Jews. They were not just angry. They were out for blood.
John 5:18 NAU - "For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God."
5. Jesus answered their charge, not by denying it, but by declaring it plainly.
John 5:19 NAU - "whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner."
6. "Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them . . ." The verb tense suggests a continual action. In other words, Jesus continually answered their objections the same way.
7. That which pertains to the Father also pertains to the Son.
John 5:21-23 NAU - "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. ²² "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him."
8. Jesus is making a clear statement of His divinity and the nature of the Trinity

- I. There is but one God, but this one God exists in three persons
 - A. Our Confession of Faith describes it well
 1. There is but one God
 LBC Chapter 2: *Of God and the Holy Trinity*
 Paragraph 1 – “The Lord our God is but one only living and true God; whose subsistence is in and of himself, infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but himself; a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions . . .”
 - a. This states the singleness of God – “one only living and true God”
 - b. It describes His self-existence, His infinity and perfection, His incomprehensibility, invisibility, simplicity, and impassibility
 2. This one, single, undivided God exists in three persons
 LBC 2:3 – “In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son; all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on him.”
 - a. This statement declares the unity of the Godhead – Of one substance, power, and eternity.
 - b. It declares the indivisibility of the Godhead – the essence undivided, “who is not to be divided in nature and being”
 - c. But three distinct persons – “distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations.”
 - B. To rightly understand God and the Trinity it is essential to distinguish between the being of God and the persons of God
 1. The being of God describes the one Divine essence – the Godhead in general; all that pertains to God
 - a. The attributes of God are those characteristics that make up the essence of the divine nature.
 - b. God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. He is solitary, self-existent, without parts or division
 - c. Herman Bavinck described it – “The term “being” or “essence” indicates God’s unity, emphasized throughout Scripture, maintained by monotheism . . . No matter what distinctions are present within the Divine Being, the unity of God’s essence can never be abrogated.”¹

¹ Bavinck, Herman, *Doctrine of God*, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1997), Page 298.

2. But the one solitary, undivided God exists in three persons.
What is the meaning of the term “person”
 - a. The definition often focuses upon the personhood of man.
One of the dictionaries I looked at defined a person as, “a human being, whether an adult or child, as distinguished from an animal or a thing.”²
 - b. Personhood is not limited to the realm of humanity.
A person is a distinct entity or individual. A person possesses a will. A person is self-conscious and self-aware—a sense of self.
 - c. A person is an intelligent, rational, moral being – He is a reasonable being capable of determining His own course of life.
3. God exists as a single being existing with three separate persons called the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 - a. The three Persons are not modes of manifestation but distinct individual persons, each partakers of the same Divine Being.
 - b. Each of the persons of the Godhead make up the one essence of God. In other words, there are three persons yet only one God. Bavinck – “One and the same divine nature is present in each person individually and in all collectively. Hence, in God there is one eternal, omnipotent, omniscient nature. There is in God one mind, one will, one energy.”³
 - c. Each of the persons share the full nature of the one God. Each are eternal, and self-existent. Each share all of the attributes of the Divine nature.
 - d. It is important to understand the concepts of “being” and “persons” We must remember that God is undivided. Our Confession says God is “without body, parts, or passions . . .”
4. Although God is not divided and each of the Persons of the Godhead share equally the Divine essence there are distinctions between them. The Father is the Father only, the Son is the Son only, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit only.

- II. Each of the persons of the Godhead are distinct from one another and capable of individual action.
 - A. The persons of the Godhead are capable of individual action but corporately they are doing the solitary action of God.
 1. In what we call the economy of the Godhead, each person has distinct functions
 - a. The Father designed the work of redemption. He designed the works of creation and providence. He is seen as representing the Trinity in the Counsel of Redemption.⁴
The Father does His will which is the will of God

² Bavinck, Herman, *Doctrine of God*, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1997), Page 298.

³ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/person>.

⁴ Berkhof, Louis, *Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1938), Page 91.

- b. Christ is eternally begotten of the Father, sent forth as the Redeemer of God's elect. Jesus came to do the will of the Father, which was the will of the Son which was the will of God.
 - c. The Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son to do the will of God, which is the one and same will of the Holy Spirit.
 - 2. Although God is monotheistic, each of the Persons of the Godhead are in a true relationship with each other. While as persons each possess a will, they are each doing the singular will of the one divine essence of God.
 - B. Jesus came to do one and the same work as the Father
 - 1. The Father and Son were of one mind in the eternal covenant of redemption.
This eternal transaction between the Father and the Son was the single mind of God.
 - 2. By Jesus telling the Pharisees that He is doing the same thing as the Father He is stating that He is of one mind and one purpose with the Father.
John 5:19 NAU - "for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner."
John 5:20 NAU - "For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing"
John 5:21 NAU - "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes."
 - 3. The reason Jesus is declaring that He and the Father were doing the same thing is the reality that they are the same Divine Being
John 1:1 NAU - "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."
 - a. Jesus Christ, the Word, was with God and He was God
 - b. The One who was eternally at the side of the Father was one with the Father. As the Father was Creator, the Son was the Creator.
Colossians 1:15-16 NAU - "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created through Him and for Him."
 - 4. Each person of the Godhead is one in purpose
God declares:
Isaiah 46:9-10 NAU - "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me, ¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'"
 - a. God declares His purpose will stand. It will be established. It will be accomplished.
 - b. God is speaking in the fullness of His being. The Father is speaking, the Son is speaking, the Holy Spirit is speaking. God has but one single purpose.

Conclusion:

1. It is important for us to have a proper understanding of the Trinity. Too often we are inclined to see the three distinct persons of the Trinity as three separate Gods. This is the accusation raised against our Trinitarian position.
There is but one God.
2. But this one God is trinitarian. We must worship Him as a triune being. Our Confession describes the essential importance of understanding the Trinity. It states that the “doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on him.”
3. We understand the distinction of persons of the Godhead. Jesus Christ the Son has come that we might be reconciled to the Father. The Holy Spirit is the agent of regeneration and the author of our faith and repentance.
Yet we do not come to God divided. We were baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
4. You must trust in Jesus Christ alone in order to be delivered from your sin and reconciled to the Father—that you might be restored to a right relationship with God.