

**The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 2, Paragraph 3 – “Of God and the Holy Trinity”,  
Message # 68 – “The Divine Perichoresis”, Presented in the Adult Sunday  
School Class by Pastor Paul Rendall, on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021.**

**Paragraph 3** – In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, d) the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, e) yet the essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is f) eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit g) 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.

d) 1<sup>st</sup> John 5: 7; Matthew 28: 19; 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 13: 14; e) Exodus 3: 14; John 14: 11;

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 8:6; f) John 1:14,18; g) John 15:26; Gal 4: 6)

**We are continuing to look at the Personal Distinctions and Relations of the Divine Trinity. Today I want us to think about the question: What is the Divine Perichoresis?**

Remembering that God is one in His Essence and that there are 3 subsistences, or Persons, in Him, we need to remember that these Divine Persons are not subsisting as 3 individual Gods, but rather they are 3 Persons who mutually indwell each other in regard to all of their acts. This is called by theologians – The Divine Perichoresis.

**“This terms literally means movement in a circle**, and it figuratively refers to reciprocity (that is, Divine giving, sending, and receiving, taking place between the Persons), or interpenetration.”

**“An equivalent term is circumincession** (Latin – *circumincessio*), which means in the doctrine of the Trinity ‘that the persons are most intimately united; so that one always remains in the other and with the other.’ “God’s unity transcends fellowship, for Divine love in the Trinity involves sharing the whole life and activity of the Divine nature.” “Each Person of the Trinity completely embraces and encompasses the others in mutual sharing of all Divine glory without any Person losing His distinct Personhood.” **(That is a quote from Johannes Wollebius**, as it is found in Joel Beeke’s *Reformed Systematic Theology*, P. 892)

Let me give you another quote, this time from **John of Damascus** who wrote a book called *Orthodox Faith*, back in 745 A.D. – “The abiding and resting of the Persons in one another is not in such a manner that they coalesce or become confused, but, rather, so that they adhere to one another, for they are without interval between them and inseparable and their mutual indwelling is without confusion.” “For the Son is in the Father and the Spirit, and the Spirit is in the Father and the Son, and the Father is in the Son and the Spirit, and there is no merging or blending or confusion.” “And there is one surge and one movement of the three Persons.” “It is impossible for this to found in any created nature.”

**1. The Divine Perichoresis is seen in the Mutual Indwelling of the Father and the Son.**

**A. Both before time Began and in the Incarnation and Ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**John 1: 18** – “No one has seen God at any time.” “The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”

In this verse, the only begotten Son is spoken of as being in the bosom of the Father. What does this mean? Well, it means that in eternity past, the Father and the Son resided together as Persons of the Divine Trinity, even as they do now. But the emphasis is that the Son was residing in the Father as His very heart; His very loving heart, the One who He purposed to give for lost sinners to be their Savior, their Lord, their King, and their salvation. He knew that the Son would be able to declare Him in a way that would fully and faithfully

represent Him. The reason being, that Jesus shared the Father's glory and would be able to reveal that glory in His words and actions.

**Joel Beeke in His Reformed Systematic Theology** says that "we should understand that the distinctions among the Divine Persons do not separate them, but rather they bind them together, for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit indwell each other". (Vol. 1, P. 891) The bosom of the Father (kolpos in the Greek) is the place of intimate friendship, a physical picture of relational union."

**An earthly illustration of this from from the ministry of the Lord Jesus –**

**John 13: 23** - "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved."

What John is doing here physically, in leaning on Jesus' breast at the Supper, is a good picture of what was the much greater reality in the Divine Perichoresis in eternity past. All things regarding the creation of the world and the redemption of the elect, how the three Persons of the Divine Trinity would accomplish this, were purposed together in the counsel of Redemption, because there was a mutual indwelling of the 3 Persons.

**There was great love between the Persons of the Divine Trinity in this.**

**John 17: 20-23** - "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as you, Father, are in me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." "And the glory which you gave Me I have given to them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in me that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and love them as You have loved Me."

The mutual indwelling, the Divine Perichoresis, that existed between the Father and the Son was a perfect mutual indwelling of love for each other which was shared together as Persons of the Godhead. And the prayer of the Lord Jesus is that those who would believe in Him would have a real spiritual unity united by and through the Person and working of the Holy Spirit, so that the world would know that the Father had sent the Son to be the Savior of the world, and thus demonstrate this great love to all mankind.

**John 1: 14** – "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

We see here that no one has seen God at any time because He is Spirit. But that when the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, we (the apostles, us and all of mankind through their word) beheld His glory, glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. He by His life, His words, His works, and the miracles that He did, He has declared Him. He has explained Him, He has (ἐξηγήσατο, from exegeomai) exegeted Him. (made Him known to us and declared what He is, in so many ways, that when we look at Jesus in the Scriptures, we understand the Father as He really is; holy, wise, righteous, loving, good, kind, faithful, and true.

**2. The Divine Perichoresis is seen in relation to His earthly ministry being accomplished.**

**John 3: 34** – For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure." "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand."

This verse pictures well, for us, the Divine Perichoresis in the Son of God being sent by the Father, speaking the very words of God because the Father does not give the Spirit by measure to Christ, because Christ is God the Son, beloved of Him from all eternity, and therefore, He has given all things into His hand. There is a mutual indwelling in the Persons of the Godhead which is particularly seen in the earthly ministry of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

