

# The Fellowship of the Trinity

**Trinity:** God exists as one essence (nature) as three persons. As God, each person possesses incommunicable attributes essential to His nature that cannot change, cease, diminish, or increase. These are His omnipotence, immutability, omniscience, omnipresence, self-existence, and eternity. The distinction of each person is described (not defined) in the synergistic work of creation and the unveiling economy of salvation. Since each person is indivisible in essence (as one God), they are indivisible in operation.

## 1. The Fellowship of the Trinity Before and During Creation (John 17:5; Gen 1-2)

God is essentially relational:

- God has always existed in three persons. Consequentially, He is other-oriented. God has always existed as He is. His enjoyment, love, and glory He enjoyed in Himself cannot be expressed through temporal, finite language (Isa. 42:8; Jn. 15:9-12; 17:5).
- Creation, though not mandatory nor essential, is the outworking of God's relational essence He possesses in Himself.
- Mankind can only know God if He discloses Himself. God has revealed Himself through general revelation, His Word, and the conscience (heart) of all image bearers (Rom. 1-2; Ps. 8:3-6).
- God's creation of Adam (then Eve) reflects His essential belonging in Himself. Just as He is never alone, it was not good for man (Adam) to be alone (Gen. 2:18).
- God not only paired all the animals, but also man, who is made in His image. Eve was created from Adam's rib (Gen. 2:22). She came *from* Adam.

## 2. The Fellowship of the Trinity in the Incarnation (John 1:1, 14; Matthew 1:18-23)

- While the eternal Son proceeds from the Father through the incarnation, this procession does not imply dependence, inferiority, or eternal submission. The actions of each person in the Trinity reflect their eternal belonging but do not constitute it.
- In the incarnation, there is no degradation of the deity in the Son (Phil. 2:6-8), for the Son lost none of His divine prerogatives.
- At the fullness of time, God sent His Son, born of a woman...(Gal. 4:4-7).
  - The eternal Son did not begin to exist, for as God, He essentially is not only self-existing but immutable, omnipresent, and omniscient.
- John demonstrates this by identifying the Son as the Word (John 1:1):
  - A speaker says a word and reveals what the speaker wants to communicate and what that speaker is like.
  - John intentionally demonstrates that the Word is not the Father, nor the Holy Spirit, but the Son. The Word was *in* the beginning, not *created* in the beginning. He precedes the beginning. In the beginning "was" ... not "was made."
- In the beginning (eternity) was the Word (partaker of deity), and the Word was with God (equality and active in fellowship), and the Word was God (in nature and identity).
- The Word became incarnate (v.14).
- Through the incarnation, the eternal Son (Jesus of Nazareth) possesses two natures and two wills, one person and one essence. He is truly God and truly man.
- Matthew informs us that the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary (Matt. 1:18-23). In the supernatural act of the ages, the eternal Son united Himself to human flesh, yet without sin. God implanted Himself in Mary, enshrining Himself in human flesh.

## 3. The Fellowship of the Trinity in Jesus' Ministry (John 1:32; Matthew 3:17)

- The Son did not cease to be truly God in the incarnation, for God's incommunicable

attributes cannot change, cease, diminish, or increase (omnipotence, immutability, omniscience, omnipresence, self-existence, and eternity). These are essential to the Godhead, which He does not share with His creation. The humanity of the incarnate Son possessed none of this as He grew and learned (Luke 2:39-40).

- There is no indication that the incarnate Son exercised His incommunicable attributes as man, though He possessed them necessarily as God. The empowerment of the Holy Spirit provided direction, power, and authority for the humanity of the incarnate Son.
- Additionally, the gospel of John stresses the absolute and continual dependence on the Father for everything He says and does (5:19, 30; 7:16, 28; 11:41-42; 12:49-50; 17:7-8; 18:11), for the divine name (17:11-12), for glory (8:54; 17:22) and for all of those who believe in Him (6:37; 10:29; 17:6, 9, 24).
- The Father gives Jesus everything (3:35; 13:3; 17:2) so He can give to others. The Son gives the Father love (14:31), honor, and glory (7:18; 8:49; 17:1, 4), which is the outworking in redemptive history of Their relational belonging in all eternity.
- The Holy Spirit empowered the miracles of the incarnate Son during His earthly ministry to accomplish all that the Father had purposed for the Son (Jn. 6:38; 5:22-23).
- The motive of the incarnation was the eternal Son's sacrificial love toward the Father. This love is demonstrated in the incarnation, life, ministry, and death on the cross.

## 4. The Fellowship of the Trinity at the Cross (John 19:30; Matt. 27:36; 2 Cor. 5:21)

- As Jesus took upon Himself the sins of sinners, the Godhead was in no way severed, for God is one.
- Jesus did not become a sinner on the cross. He became a representative sin-bearer. God treated Jesus as if He was sin itself. Jesus did not become sin, nor was crucified for being a sinner. Instead, on the cross is the demonstration of the doctrine of imputation (2 Cor. 5:21):
  - God made Jesus to be sin, as Jesus was regarded, considered, and reckoned as sin itself. However,
  - Jesus had no sin (1 Jn. 3:5), did not sin (1 Pet. 2:22), and is blameless (Acts 3:14). He takes upon Himself that which does not belong to Him (sin) and credits to the sinner by grace through faith His righteousness.
- Jesus' cry of "forsakenness" and "thirst" (Matt. 27:46; Jn. 19:28) demonstrates the humanity of the incarnate Son.
- The cross is the ultimate demonstration of the love and fellowship among the persons of the Trinity:
  - The mission of the Son was to redeem those the Father gave Him, losing none (Jn. 17:10-12). In His death, burial, and resurrection, the Holy Spirit will be sent to save those for whom He died and which the Father gave Him.
  - At the end of the ages, the Son will deliver the kingdom to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24).
- In love for the Father, the Son has permanently united Himself to a human body. In love toward the Father and Son, the Holy Spirit dwells inside those whom the Son has purchased.

## 5. The Fellowship of the Trinity and His People (John 17:20-25; 20:22; 14:16-17)

- The Holy Spirit dwells fills, and animates the regenerated. This is the outworking of the person of the Spirit, as He is "breathed out" (Jn. 20:22).
- The same Spirit that was with them was promised to be in them (Jn. 14:16-17). He dwells and fills those whom He has regenerated, pointing His people to love of the Father and the Son, empowering them to live Spirit-filled lives.
- The fellowship God has always enjoyed He deposits inside His people who love not only God, but also one another (Jn. 13:34-35).