

Series: **God is...So What?**  
Today's Title: ***"The Trinity of God"***  
October 9, 2022 – *Select Passages* – Sermon 8 of 16

---

**Objective:** To help people know the doctrine of the Trinity and how it impacts our daily life.

---

### ***Opening prayer***

- I love bullet points.

I prefer a summary as opposed to the entire, detailed account.

We're also a 'sound bite culture' - which means we're not used to hearing the entire conversation in context, we are normally given just a 'sound bite' - which may or may not accurately represent what was said.

Today our focus is one of the most confusing doctrines for many Christians - and non-Christians: *The doctrine of the Trinity - the doctrine of the Triune God.*

But to understand the doctrine of the Trinity - you need more than bullet points and sound bites.

You need to think - engage your mind at more than a surface or summary level.

Jesus told us to "...love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." (Matt. 22:37)

It's not enough to say, *'I love God, so I don't need to understand all of this doctrine stuff.'*

Loving God “with all your mind” means to think deeply about Him - to learn the deep truths about Him - to meditate on the deep truths about who and what He is.

So, I invite you to do just that this morning - as we focus our minds on the doctrine of the Triune God.

One of the comforting realities is that over the past 2,000 years of Church history, there have been many, many great minds - great thinkers - who have paved the way for our theological understanding.

They did much of the heavy lifting for us, and we get the blessing and benefit of riding on their intellectual and spiritual coattails.

The first thing for us to understand is:

**The Trinity is not a new belief.**

Definition: “God is one God, eternally existing in three persons, Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

(Doctrine, What Christians Should Believe, by Mark Driscoll and Gary Breshears, p. 28)

“Within the one Being that is God, there exists eternally three coequal and coeternal persons, namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” (James R. White, *The Forgotten Trinity*)

The Apostle’s Creed was not written by the Apostles, but it was written to be an accurate record of their teaching.

Most date the Creed to the 1<sup>st</sup> part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century.

The Creed certainly has a Trinitarian foundation.

“I believe in God, the Father almighty...

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord...

I believe in the Holy Spirit...”

**Tertullian** - one of the earliest Church Fathers - was the first to use the term, “Trinity”.

He converted to Christianity around 200 A.D. - and spent the last 20 years of his life defending the faith.

Don’t miss a humbling reality in those dates.

He was only a Christian for 20 years - and much of those 20 years he was a defender of the Faith - becoming one of the Church Fathers!

- How long have you been a Christian?
- Have you engaged your mind to understand the Faith?

It may be unfair to compare ourselves to Tertullian. He was probably a genius - and I know that I’m not - but how seriously have we applied our mind to understand what the Bible teaches?

We live in a post-Christian culture - which doesn’t really know the Bible - the claims of Christ - the wonder and love of God.

We are the ones God has placed - in this time - to be His ambassadors - to represent Him to the culture around us!

Aside from the inspired writings of the Apostles, Tertullian was the first one “...to express the biblical

*teaching that the father, son, and Holy Spirit, are one in divine essence but distinguished in relationship as persons within the inner life of God Himself.”*

([Doctrine](#), What Christians Should Believe, by Mark Driscoll and Gary Breshears, p. 25)

The early Church councils made significant contributions regarding the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Council of Nicaea (AD 325), Council of Constantinople (AD 381), and the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) made great contributions to the clarification of this doctrine. ([Doctrine](#), What Christians Should Believe, by Mark Driscoll and Gary Breshears, p. 25-26)

**The Athanasian Creed** is another early summary of Christian doctrine. Athanasius was the Archbishop of Alexandria, and the creed was likely written after his death by his followers.

This is part of what this creed says:

“We worship one God in trinity and the Trinity in unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the divine being. For the Father is one person, the Son is another, and the Spirit is still another.

But the deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, equal in glory, coeternal in majesty...

Almighty is the Father; almighty is the Son; almighty is the Spirit: and yet there are not three almighty beings, but one who is almighty.

Thus, the Father is God; the Son is God; the Holy Spirit is God: And yet there are not three gods, but one God.  
Thus, the Father is Lord; the Son is Lord; the Holy Spirit is Lord: And yet there are not three lords, but one Lord.”

(<https://www.gotquestions.org/Athanasian-creed.html>)

That’s from the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

The doctrine of the Trinity - the Triune God - is not a new belief.

But what exactly is this belief?

What is the Trinity?

### **God is a Triunity - 3 persons - 1 essence**

A problem we have to wrestle with in this discussion has to do with the word ‘person’.

In English, ‘person’ means 1 distinct being.

However, when Trinitarian formulas (3 persons, 1 essence) were first written in Latin.

In Latin, the word ‘persona’ - where our English word ‘person’ comes from - was a word that described actors and the multiple roles they would play in a performance.

“So, when Tertullian first spoke of God as one being, three ‘*personae*’, he was saying that God simultaneously exists as three roles or personalities Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. However, the idea of “person” in that formula does not correspond exactly

to our English concept of personality, in which one person means one distinct being.”

(Everyone's a Theologian, An Introduction to Systematic Theology, by R.C. Sproul, p. 59)

All that to say we have a language challenge in understanding this doctrine accurately.

One of the ‘fence posts’ we can lean on is we can describe this doctrine from the vast number of Biblical passages that refer to it.

We can be absolutely confident it is a true and accurate description of God - because it is found throughout Scripture.

**1 Peter 1:1-2**

“To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ***according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with His blood***: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.”

**Jude 20b-21**

“...praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.”

***This is clearly a doctrine rooted in the Biblical text.***

At the same time, we can relax, knowing we don't have to explain its details - or understand how this doctrine is possible.

It's one of the realities of God which rise above the level of our human, finite abilities.

But that isn't a foreign thing for us.

***How many of us*** understand the physics behind a suspension bridge, yet we drive our car over it.

***How many of us*** understand the combustion engine, yet we start one up each day.

***How many of us*** understand the inner-workings of a computer and how memory works - yet we carry one in our pocket.

Life is full of things we know are true - they work - they are reliable - but we can't explain how they work.

Just think of this doctrine in that same way.

It's something we know to be true of God - because of His self-revelation in the Bible - even if we don't understand ***how***, it is true.

These different truths are like pieces to a puzzle - that have been left in places throughout a home with 66 rooms.

Our job is to take those pieces and figure out how they fit together - and when we do that, we have a glorious image of who / what God is.

All those puzzle pieces reveal: **He is a Triune God.**

**Terms:** Trinity vs. Triunity - explanation...

(Trinity speaks more to the 'Threeness' - the 3 persons, whereas Triunity is more balanced between the 3 persons [prefix] and the unity or oneness of God)

We see the first hint of the Triunity of God in the name  
“*Elohim*” in **Genesis 1:1-2**

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

“*Elohim*” - is plural noun

“*created*” - is a singular verb

This is a small hint which needs additional insight and truth to complete the thought.

Another clue in the first 2 verses of the Bible to the plurality of God is the mention of the Father (God) in **vs. 1** - and the Spirit in **vs. 2**.

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”

A slightly larger hint is seen later in the chapter:

**Genesis 1:26**

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.”

The use of the plural pronouns “Let Us” and “Our” is the first significant clue in the Bible to the plurality of God.

As I mentioned, this doctrine has caused many Christians over the century’s great confusion - when in fact, this doctrine is an attempt to clarify.

You see, the Bible is clear that God is one - there is one God - there is no God but Yahweh.

**Deuteronomy 6:4 (also 32:29)**

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.”

Because of this truth, the first of the 10 commandments:

**Exodus 20:3**

“You shall have no other gods before Me.”

Paul, in **1 Corinthians 8:6** says:

“yet for us there is one God...”

**Ephesians 4:4-6**

“There is one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

**James 2:19**

“You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe--and shudder!”

(Isaiah 44:8; 1 Cor. 8:6)

But we also see ample evidence in the Bible for the ‘Threeness’ of God - 3 persons within the Godhead. We’ve already seen verses which speak to God the Father, now let’s look at some verses where Jesus - the Son is called God.

**Hebrews 1:8**

But of the Son He (God the Father) says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom.”

**Romans 9:5**

“To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.”

**John 20:28**

Thomas answered Him (Jesus), “My Lord and my God!”

**Matthew 9:4** (omniscience of Jesus)

But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts?”

**Matthew 28:18** (omnipotence of Jesus)

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.”

**Matthew 28:20** (omnipresence of Jesus)

“...behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

**John 8:58** (eternality of Jesus)

Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” (Claiming to exist for over 2,000 years!)

(Titus 2:13)

Right after this, in **vs. 59**, His enemies pick up stones to execute Him for claiming to be God.

Jesus’ miracles affirm He is God (**John 20:30-31**), and in **Mark 2:1-12** in the account of the paralytic lowered through the roof, Jesus forgives sins, something only God can do.

We also see the Holy Spirit called God and given the attributes of God.

**Acts 5:3-4**

But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit...You have not lied to men but to God.”

**1 Corinthians 2:10** (omniscience)

“...these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.”

**Job 33:4** (creative power - omnipotence)

“The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.”

**Psalms 139:7** (omnipresence)

“Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your presence?”

The Holy Spirit is also credited with the work of regeneration (Titus 3:5), intercession (Rom. 8:26), and sanctification (2 Thess. 2:13). (Also: Ps. 95:3, 8-9; Hebrews 3:7-11)

**The problem:** God is one, but the Bible clearly identifies the Father as God, the Son as God, and the Spirit as God.

*So how can all this be true?*

How can these teachings of Scripture be harmonized into a greater understanding of these things?

**Answer:** A Triune God. The doctrine of the Triune God is the answer to the problem...it actually clears up what is to many a confusing teaching throughout the Bible regarding the deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

- In the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) produced a statement on the deity of Christ.
- In 381 A.D. the Council of Constantinople produced a statement confirming the deity of the Holy Spirit.

One of the clearest passages in which we see the oneness and Triunity of God is **Matthew 28:19**, where Jesus says:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”

In this passage, the grammatical details tell the story.

“name” is singular, yet there are 3 divine persons identified. When Jesus said this, it was on purpose...and it is a direct confirmation of the oneness and Trinity of God.

Paul in **2 Corinthians 13:14** clearly identifies the 3 persons of the Godhead.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

When considering these amazing truths, we must always ask, *‘Why does this matter?’ ‘Why are these truths important?’ ‘How do these truths connect with my life?’*

### **Apply it... So What?**

I don’t get the sense that the question of the Trinity revolves around the Father.

There seems to be no question as to the deity of God the Father.

Nobody that I’m aware of is debating or inspecting the belief that the Father is God.

“In the history of the Christian Church and all the cults and religions that have erred from biblical truth, there has never been any noteworthy false teaching that has denied the deity of God the Father because it is so obviously clear throughout the entirety of scripture.”

(Doctrine, What Christians Should Believe, by Mark Driscoll and Gary Breshears, p. 14)

So, the focus of our application - of the “So What?” section today is on Jesus and the Holy Spirit - and why their deity is crucially important for us to understand.

**1. False religions will deny the Trinity.**

The critics and enemies of Christianity will try and destroy the Bible...and they also aim their artillery at the person and nature of God - the deity of Jesus and the Spirit.

**Modalism** - teaches that *“God is successively Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - but He is not simultaneously Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three are modes - or manifestations of the one divine person of God.”*

(Doctrine, What Christians Should Believe, by Mark Driscoll and Gary Breshears, p. 31)

For some modalist, the God of the O.T. is the Father. In the incarnation the Father became the Son.

After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, God came back in the mode of the Holy Spirit.

Some Pentecostal denominations adopt a “Jesus only” - or what’s called “Oneness Theology”.

*“This belief holds that the Son is not eternal, nor preexistent. Jesus is the Father and the Son: Father in his divinity and Son in his humanity.”*

(Doctrine, What Christians Should Believe, by Mark Driscoll and Gary Breshears, p. 31-32)

Another error - heresy is:

**Arianism** - from the teachings of Arius (256-336 A.D.) who denied the deity of Jesus. He believed and taught Jesus was the highest created being.

This is what Jehovah Witness belief is today.

**Tritheism** - This teaches that the Trinity consists of 3 equal, independent, and autonomous beings, each of whom is divine.

Mormonism believes this - that the Trinity is 3 separate gods; the Father is an exalted man who became a god, Jesus is the first spirit-child between God the Father and his wife, and the Holy Spirit is another spirit-child of the Father and his wife.

They teach none of the 3 persons of the Trinity are eternal or almighty God.

(Doctrine, What Christians Should Believe, by Mark Driscoll and Gary Breshears, p. 33)

## **2. If Jesus isn't God, then His sacrifice will not save us.**

**Colossians 1:19-20**

“For in Him (Jesus) all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.”

**Hebrews 7:27**

“He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for His own sins and then for those of the people, since He did this once for all when He offered up Himself.”

**Hebrews 9:14**

“...how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”

**Hebrews 10:10-18**

“...we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all...when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God...”

For by a single offering, He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified...there is no longer any offering for sin.”

The main point of the book of Hebrews is the supremacy of Christ - and the finality and completeness of His sacrifice - because He was / is God incarnate.

### **3. If the Holy Spirit isn't God, then we don't have the power to live obedient lives.**

**John 14:15-17**

“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth...”

Our ability to live obedient lives to the commands of Christ lie not in our own power and self-determination, but in the power of the Spirit who indwells each believer.

This is why Paul refers to these things as the “fruit of the Spirit”.

**Galatians 5:22-23**

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

Sanctification is only possible because of the indwelling presence of God’s Spirit within us.

**4. If the Holy Spirit isn’t God, then our guarantee of salvation is symbolic, not real.**

Our holy living doesn’t guarantee our salvation. It gives us assurance, but not a guarantee.

Our guarantee is because we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit.

**Ephesians 1:13-14**

“In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him (Jesus), were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory.”

**2 Corinthians 1:21-22**

“And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put His seal on us and given us His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”

Notice the Trinitarian involvement in our salvation, but also in the “guarantee” of our salvation.

If the Spirit isn’t God, then being sealed with the Spirit is nothing more than symbolic – a mere token,

like tying a piece of yarn or string around your finger to remind you of something.

But the Holy Spirit is God – full deity – of the same essence as the Father and the Son.

We are sealed - secure - guaranteed in our salvation because of the work of the entire Triune God.

- God establishing us in Christ.
- Christ giving His life to atone for our sins.
- The Spirit sealing us in our salvation to guarantee our future inheritance in heaven.

**5. If the Holy Spirit isn't God, then we can't trust the Bible or its claims of inspiration and authority.**

**2 Peter 1:21**

“For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

The Biblical writers - both the O.T. & N.T. - wrote as Peter describes “...they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

This makes God - the Holy Spirit - the primary author of Scripture.

This is referred to as the doctrine of inspiration.

The implication of this is what we read in the Bible is a message from God.

Since God is all-knowing, all-wise, etc., we know He can't lie. Therefore, He can only write what is right and true.

**1 Corinthians 2:13**

“And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.”

But if the Holy Spirit is not God - then the Biblical writers were not inspired by God, and we cannot fully trust what the Bible says.

The Bible is only authoritative because it is His Word...God's Word.

But if it's not His Word - then it has no authority for the authority is based in the divinity of author, not the human writers.

## **6. The idea of relationship is sourced in God Himself.**

When I take a couple through pre-marital counseling, I take them to **Ephesians 5** where Paul talks about the roles of husband and wife.

Underlying that chapter is the reality of the Triune God - the oneness and unity of God - the different roles and submission in the Godhead - they are equally God in essence.

The Triune God is the perfect model of loving relationship.

If that were not true, then human relationships would be nothing more than an experiment.

But the model for our relationships - especially the marriage relationship - is the perfect relationship that exists in the 1 Triune God - eternally existing as 3 equal persons.

*Close in prayer*