

## FOUNDATIONS OF THE FAITH

### God's Design for the Roles of Men and Women

#### Week 1: The Trinity

##### Defining Terms:

- Ontological: Refers to the nature or essence of a thing as it actually is, not its function or appearance. In discussing the “ontological” nature of the Trinity, we are referring to the very being of God, not merely what He does.
  - Example: A sergeant and a private in the military have different functions, but they are ontologically the same. They are both humans made in the image of God, with equal eternal worth.
- Economic Trinity/Economy of Redemption: These are phrases which are traditionally used to refer to how God has ordered Himself, outwardly, toward creation and the act of redemption. That is, how He functionally acts, in the three persons, in time and space. This is contrasted by what is traditionally called the “immanent Trinity,” or the “ontological Trinity,” which refers to how God is ordered inwardly. The economy of the Trinity is an outward revelation of the inward ordering of God.
  - Example: The Father acts to send the Son. The Son acts to lay down His life. The Spirit acts to apply the work of the Son.
- Eternity: The complete and simultaneous possession of existence. Eternity does not refer to time going on forever in past and future. It refers to an existence which simply *is*.
  - Example: God does not simply live forever. He does not remember His past-self, or anticipate his future-self. He exists as He does, outside of time. This is how He says to Moses, “I AM.”

## The Foundation – One God. Three Persons.

- Scripture is clear that there is but one God.
  - *"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one."* — **Deuteronomy 6:4**
  - *"There is one God, and there is no other but him."* — **Mark 12:32**
  - *"For us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist."* — **1 Corinthians 8:6**
  
- Though He is one in being, He exists as three distinct, yet unified, and equal persons – Father, Son, and Spirit. Each person shares in the full divine essence of God. They are not “forms” of God, mere “parts” of God, or separate beings. They each are fully God, fully divine, and co-eternal. This means they share in the same omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, eternity, holiness, and glory. They are ontologically the same.
  - *<sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.* — **Matthew 28:19**
  - *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.* — **2 Corinthians 13:14**
  - *And after being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon Him, And after being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon Him, and behold, there was a voice out of the heavens saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”* — **Matthew 3:16-17**

## Eternal Personal Distinctions

- If the three persons of God are equal in essence, then what distinguishes them? They are distinguished by how they eternally relate to one another within the Godhead. That is to say, that they each hold a different relational status from each other, which carries distinct duties, and they have eternally existed as such.
  - The Father: He is unbegotten, and serves as the “font of deity.” This does not mean that he precedes them or causes them to *be*, but within the internal life of the Godhead, the Son and the Spirit receive their subsistence from Him.
  - The Son: He is eternally begotten of the Father. This does not imply that He had a beginning, or that He was created. The Son has eternally existed as a begotten son, relationally.
    - <sup>7</sup> *I will tell of the decree:*  
*The LORD said to me, “You are my Son;*  
*today I have begotten you. Psalms 2:7*
    - <sup>14</sup> *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth...<sup>18</sup>*  
*No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known. John 1:14, 18*
    - <sup>5</sup> *For to which of the angels did God ever say,*  
*“You are my Son,*  
*today I have begotten you”?*  
  
*Or again,*

*“I will be to him a father,  
and he shall be to me a son”?* **Hebrews 1:5**

- The Spirit: He eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son, laboring as a helpmate. He is fully God, not a force or an emanation, but a divine person with intellect, will, and feeling.
  - <sup>26</sup> *“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. **John 15:26***
  - <sup>3</sup> *But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?  
<sup>4</sup> While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.” **Acts 5:3-4***

### **Roles in the Economy of Redemption**

- God exists as three persons who all share in the same divine essence. These three persons hold distinct eternal relationships between them. Outwardly, they act in time and space in distinct roles as well, laboring to accomplish unique tasks which are fitting and reflective of their internal, eternal, nature.
  - The Father: His characteristic activity in the economy of salvation is **initiation, election, and sending**. He is the architect and originator of the plan of redemption.

- *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world."* — **Ephesians 1:3–4**
  - *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son."* — **John 3:16.**
  - *"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law."* — **Galatians 4:4.**
  - *"All that the Father gives me will come to me."* — **John 6:37.**
  - *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name."*  
— **John 14:26**
  - *"The God of peace... raised from the dead our Lord Jesus."* — **Hebrews 13:20.**
- The Son: While the Father initiates and sends, the Son's characteristic role is **being sent, coming, obeying, and accomplishing.** The Son does not self-authorize his mission; He receives it from the Father and executes it perfectly.
- *"For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me."* — **John 6:38**
  - *"The Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise."*  
— **John 5:19**
  - *"And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."* — **Philippians 2:8**

- *"And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, 'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.'"* — **Matthew 26:39**
- *"Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power... When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all."* — **1 Corinthians 15:24, 28**
- The Spirit: characteristic role is **application, illumination, empowerment, and glorification of the Son**. He is the one who brings the work of the Father and Son home to the creature.
  - *"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak... He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you."* — **John 16:13–14**
  - *"He saved us... by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit."* — **Titus 3:5**
  - *"In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance."* — **Ephesians 1:13–14**
  - *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you."* — **Acts 1:8**

- What emerges from the biblical data is a consistent pattern. The Father initiates, elects, and sends. The Son receives the mission from the Father, comes in willing obedience, and accomplishes redemption. The Spirit is sent by both Father and Son, applies what the Son has accomplished, and redirects all glory back to the Son and the Father.

### **The Imago Dei**

- Just as the Trinity is one God who is equal in nature, distinct in person, and ordered in relation, so man and woman are one humanity, equal in dignity, distinct in calling, and ordered in a loving, purposeful relation. This pattern is not accidental. It is woven into the fabric of reality itself, because we are made in the image of a Triune God. To erase the distinction between men and women in the name of equality misreads the Trinity, because in God, equality never requires “sameness.” And to use distinction as a reason to diminish women equally misreads the Trinity, because the Son's willing submission to the Father makes him no less God.