



Who is The Trinity?
Romans 8:14-17
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February 15, 2026

Introduction

When I graduated from seminary, I was handed a diploma that said I had completed a *Master of Divinity*.

I understand why they call it a master's degree

- but I often laugh at the thought that I have somehow “mastered divinity,”
- as if I now know everything there is to know about the God of the universe.

Even after a lifetime of study, can anyone truly master the Divine?

- Can finite humans fully comprehend an infinite God?
- No. And yet—God has revealed Himself.

As we saw last week, while God's infinite nature is beyond full comprehension,

- He has revealed Himself sufficiently in Scripture so that we may truly know Him.
- We do not have to guess about His character.

He has revealed Himself as just and merciful, transcendent and personal, holy and loving.

- He is sovereign over all things, knows all things, and has power over all things.
- He is uncreated, unconstrained by time, space, or matter.



And throughout Scripture we also learn this:

- God is triune.
- He is one God in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Those of you who are skeptical of Christianity may say,

- “See. That doesn’t make sense.
- How can I believe something that sounds like a contradiction?”

But confusion is not contradiction.

As theologian R.C. Sproul once said,

- *“The Trinity is not a contradiction; it is a mystery—but a revealed mystery.”*

So I would simply ask you to listen to how God has revealed Himself.

- You may come to see not only the beauty—but the necessity—of the Trinity.

And for those who already believe,

- I pray you will not think of God in vague, general terms,
- but grow in appreciation for our triune God and understand how to relate to Him rightly.

Because what we believe about God shapes how we relate to God.

Getting God wrong is not like merely mispronouncing His name

- it’s misunderstanding His nature.

Growing up, I had a neighbor who always called me Craig.

- I would gently correct her—“It’s Greg”—and she would reply,
- “That’s great, Craig. Come on in.”
- Eventually I just gave up.

Getting my name wrong wasn’t a big deal.



But imagine if she had said,

- “Oh, you’re a cat. The litter box is over there.”
- “If you want to go outside just meow.”

Getting my name wrong is one thing.

- Getting my nature wrong is another.
- And we must not get God’s nature wrong.

Beyond offending our Creator,

- it inhibits our ability to relate to him properly.

Before we can appreciate our relationship with God,

- we must understand God’s relationship within Himself.

1. God’s Relationship Within Himself

Our church’s statement of faith reads:

- “We believe in one God, Creator of all things,
- holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons:
- the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

These claims emerge from Scripture:

- God is one.
- God is Father, Son, and Spirit.
- These three are distinct persons.

Let’s take them in order.

A. God Is One



In the ancient world, polytheism or the idea of multiple existing gods, was common belief.

- You would simply worship whichever god fit the occasion.

But Scripture declared something radically different:

- Deut. 6:4 “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.”
- Isa. 45:5 “I am the LORD, and there is no other.”

So when we talk of the Trinity, it must be clarified we do not believe in three gods.

There can only be one ultimate, uncreated, sovereign being.

- Not rival gods competing like the mythical gods of Olympus
- —but one supreme God.

And yet scripture also insists that this one God exists eternally as Father, Son, and Spirit.

B. God Is Father, Son, and Spirit

From the opening pages of Scripture, we see plurality within the unity of this one God.

Genesis 1:26 God declares, “Let us make man in our image.”

- Who is the us God is speaking of?

The “us” cannot refer to angels

- They do not create, nor do they share God’s image.

But what we do see in Genesis 1:2 is that the Spirit is present at creation.

- John 1 and Colossians 1 also tell us that all things were created through the Son.



So when God says, “Let us create,” the Father speaks in divine fellowship with the Son and the Spirit.

Further claims in the New Testament make this unmistakable.

Jesus says in John 10:30,

- “I and the Father are one.”

The word for one there is not masculine,

- it is neuter which means Jesus was not saying The Father and I are the same person,
- rather they are the same in essence.
- In plain English, Jesus is saying “We are one thing”

John opens his Gospel by saying:

- The Word was *with* God (The Son distinct as a person).
- And The Word was God (The Son was the same in divine nature).

Then in Matthew 28:19, Jesus sends his disciples out telling them to baptize...

- “In the name” — singular — “of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

One name. One God. Yet Three distinct persons.

C. The Three Are Distinct Persons

At Jesus’ baptism in Matthew 3 we see all three persons of the Godhead at once:

And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him;¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”



This passage perfectly refutes modalism

- —the idea that God switches between three modes at any given time.
- Like He merely runs back stage and changes costumes.

But The Father is not the same person as the Son.

The Son is not the Spirit.

The Spirit is not the Father.

God is One being but three distinct persons.

I've heard it best explained this way:

- God is one “What” and three “Whos.”
- We are one “what” and one “who.”

For example sir, how would you answer if I asked you “What are you?”

- And how would you answer if I asked you, “Who are you?”
- You are one what (a human) and one who (Name).

A Rock is one what and no who.

- God is one infinite “What” with three distinct “Whos”.

At Jesus' baptism:

- The Father sends the Spirit and affirms the Son.
- The Son obeys the Father.
- The Spirit magnifies the Son.

Distinct, yet perfectly united.

And because God is triune, He has always existed within Himself in perfect love and fellowship.

If you really think about it, we want a triune God.



- If God is not triune, he is a lonely God who creates humans to love him.
- Without the cooperation of his creation, a non-triune God would be needy and unable to receive or express love.

But God is perfectly content within Himself.

- He has no relational need or lack within him.
- He has embedded within Himself obedience, community, honor, humility, and dignity.

Most importantly he has within himself perfect love.

- The 4th Century theologian Augustine said, “If you see love, you see the Trinity.”

God is one being with three persons and he contains within himself love itself,

- therefore love is neither extinguishable from existence nor contingent on fickle creation.

And yet, this God opens the gates of that eternal love and invites us in.

- Which leads us to the glories of Romans 8 and...

2. Our Relationship With God

Now we finally get to our main text this morning.

Romans 8:14-17 is where I want us to consider some of the riches found in the trinity. Let's read it again.

14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.



In this passage, we see the Trinity active in our salvation and relationship.

A Christian's relationship with God is defined by each member of the trinity in three key ways:

First, a Christian's relationship with God is defined by being...

A. Led by the Spirit

Verse 14 says “All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”

This statement is world changing.

Contrary to popular opinion, just because you are God's creation doesn't make you a Child of God.

- By nature, we are sinners—rebellious and enslaved to fear.
- But through the Spirit, our adoption is applied.

As Martyn Lloyd-Jones said,

- “The highest privilege of the gospel is not justification; it is adoption.”

To be forgiven of our sins is one thing, but to be invited in as family is another.

Ephesians 1 says we were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance.

He himself bears witness with our spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the nearness of God dwelling in the believer as a permanent resident and owner,

- there to remind us of our true identity as sons and daughters.
- He has framed and hung the adoption papers on the wall of our hearts.



In the Spirit we have help and power to do what we cannot on our own.

We are no longer helpless to fall back into fear and slavery to sin, because the Spirit dwells in us to lead us in the truth.

- In the Holy Spirit our relational connection to God is applied, sealed, and guaranteed.

Application

So what does this mean for you?

Most of our lives are built on fragile identities.

- We anchor ourselves to relationships, careers, success, money, reputation
- things that can be taken from us overnight.

Even the identities we try to construct for ourselves require constant effort to maintain.

- And when your identity is unstable, fear is inevitable.

But even on your worst days

- when your strength is gone and your confidence is shaken
- the Holy Spirit of God bears witness that your identity is secure.

He reminds you that you are not abandoned and not forgotten.

- You are a son. You are a daughter.

Trust what The Spirit says about your identity and your fears more than your own heart.

Christian psychologist Edward Welch reminds us,

- “God never intended us to bear the overwhelming burdens of life by ourselves.
- Instead, he gives himself-- just the right person to bear them with us.”
- The Let Spirit led you.



A Christian's relationship with God is defined by being led by the Spirit and by being...

B. Children of the Father

In verse 15 we read believers have received the spirit of adoption “**by whom we cry, Abba Father.**”

- This phrase echoes the passionate and personal way Jesus prayed to the Father in the garden of gethsemane.

In Mark 14:36 Jesus prayed,

- “**Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.**”

This is the way we ought to pray as well because Jesus himself taught us how to pray the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6.

- Jesus teaches us to address our prayers to Our Father.

God is the KING of the universe.

- If you need something done, it makes sense to go ask a King.
- But Jesus teaches us to cry out to our Father.

Tim Keller once said, “**The only person who dares wake up a king at 3:00 a.m. for a glass of water is a child. We have that kind of access.**”

- I am so glad we can pray honestly and openly to our Father.

He is not a cold or impersonal cosmic being.

- He knows us and wants us.

We can cry out to Him passionately and intimately knowing He has compassion for us a Father does his children.

But make no mistake, He will also discipline us as a father disciplines the children he loves.



- A good father lays down rules to follow and boundaries that protect.
- He is neither a Tyrant nor Pushover, he is our Father.

We can surrender all our plans and desires over to him because His will for us is perfect and good.

When we know Him as Father, it will inevitably shape how we pray, obey, and trust.

Application

So what does this mean for you?

Many of us live self-reliant and self-sufficient lives.

- In our shame we hide, in our pride we strive,
- but if we are children of the Father we should be running to him for help and guidance.

Perhaps today you need to remember that God is your good father

- that you can and should run to Him with everything you face.

Are you quick to run to him?

- Do you recognize your need for his help before rushing into things?
- Are we childish enough to cry out to him or do we do things in our own power?

A child cries out, a child trusts.

A Christian's relationship with God is defined by being led by the Spirit, by being Children of the Father and by being...

C. Heirs with the Son

Romans 8: 17 says if we are children of God then we are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.



The fact that we are considered sons should cause us to wonder, how can we become sons in the first place.

C.S. Lewis once said,

- “The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God.”
- In this case, It takes a son to make one.

Ephesians 2:13 tells us “...you who once were far off have been brought near (HOW?) by the blood of Christ.”

- By his blood, The Son of God has made us brothers and fellow heirs.

As we've seen, The Spirit applies adoption to us officially, and the Father adopts us as his own relationally,

- but Jesus was the one who paid for our adoption sacrificially.

Now that we are sons, we have been given the rights and privileges of children including inheritance.

- What is this divine inheritance?

Hebrews 1 says God the Son is appointed heir of all things.

- And astonishingly, what belongs to Christ is shared with us.
- Not because we earned it—but because He did.

In this life we receive his righteousness, full access to the Father, and the help of the Spirit.

We also receive the hope of a resurrection body like Jesus and eternal life with him.

- We who were once far off get to share in Christ's eternal glory.

But look again at verse 17.

- This passage says if we are to share in the glory we will have to suffer with Christ first.

What does that mean?



- Those that will be glorified with Christ are those who put their trust in Christ.
- And part of trusting in Christ is following him even as we share in his sufferings.

A true follower of Christ is one who will persevere to the end through the sufferings of futility, pain, and even persecution.

- Through that pain, we will groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for the redemption of our bodies.

The inheritance of Christ is ours if we wait and persevere.

We have savings accounts for our children, but they are not legally allowed to touch the money until they are adults.

- They might lack money now and find it excruciating to wait that long, but the pain of the wait teaches them to value what they will be given.

When we share in the sufferings of Christ, we learn the weight of his gift and the price that he paid to secure it.

- This present suffering is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

Then and only then will we understand verse 18,

- “that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

In Christ we have all spiritual blessings and share in His glory, His righteousness, and the promise of a resurrected body.

Application

So what does this mean for you?

It is easy, in the middle of frustration or suffering, to quietly believe that God has shortchanged us.

- We hear about a glorious inheritance with Christ, yet what we feel is the daily call to deny ourselves and take up our cross.



- And if we're honest, that can feel disheartening.

But we must remember:

- every cross Christ calls you to carry leads to an empty tomb.
- Every death to self opens the door to resurrection life.
- There is no suffering in Christ that is wasted.
- On the other side of Christ-like faithfulness is eternal glory.

Perhaps today you simply need to be reminded of what is already yours in Christ.

- In Christ you have forgiveness of sin.
- You have reconciliation with God.
- You have the sure hope of a resurrection.

The full glory is not yet realized, but it will be revealed to those who place their hope in the One who paid for it.

A Christian's relationship with God is defined by being led by the Spirit, by being Children of the Father and by being fellow Heirs with Christ.

Conclusion

Once we understand God's relationship within Himself then we can appreciate our relationship with God.

- Instead of the chaos of polytheism, there is one God reigning over all.
- But contained within the Trinity is perfect communal self-sufficiency.

Each individual person of the Trinity works in perfect synchronization and are therefore woven throughout our redemption.

- The Spirit applies to us what the Father appointed for us because of what the Son accomplished for us.



And through this divine adoption we have been invited to experience the perfect love the God has enjoyed for all eternity.

- In the Trinity, we are led by the Spirit, made children of the Father, and share the glories of the Son.

If we oversimplify God, we will miss much that we have in him.

- We rob ourselves of technicolor blessings when we settle for viewing God in black and white.

4th Century theologian Gregory of (Nah-zee-AN-zus) said of the Trinity, “No sooner do I conceive of the One than I am illumined by the splendor of the Three; no sooner do I distinguish Them than I am carried back to the One.”

I encourage you...Revel in the mystery of God this week.

- Let the magnitude of His nature overwhelm you with amazement and gratitude.
- Bask in the fact that you have been invited into the perfect communion He has experienced since eternity past.

The doctrine of the Trinity matters because

- In all that God is, we find all that we need.

In God we find

- secure help
- incorruptible love
- and eternal glory.

There is no God like our God. Amen? Lets pray.