

The Doctrine of God the Father
(The Person and Work of the First Person of the Trinity)
Trinity Baptist Church Discipleship Training
(November, 2004)

Introduction:

This study will focus upon the first person of the Trinity, God the Father. There will be a presupposition that God is knowable, yet not discoverable by human reason. God is known only by divine revelation and, although the works of creation and Providence reveal the existence of God, the ultimate source of divine revelation is the Word of God. God has revealed Himself as existing in three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God's revelation of Himself, however, is in no way essential to the accomplishment of His works. B. B. Warfield said, "The elements of the plan of salvation are rooted in the mysterious nature of the Godhead, in which there coexists a trinal distinction of persons with absolute unity of essence; and the revelation of the Trinity was accordingly incidental to the execution of this plan of salvation, in which the Father sent the Son to be the propitiation for sin, and the Son, when He returned to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, sent the Spirit to apply His redemption to men (Warfield, *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*, Vol IX, P. 113). Using the Word of God as our instructor we will study the doctrine of God the Father under two headings: *The Person of God the Father*, i.e. the nature of His divine essence, and *The Work of God the Father*, i.e. His operation as He carries out His eternal purpose.

Bibliography:

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- Charnock, Stephen. *Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God*, Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1979.
- Hodge, Charles. *Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986.
- Warfield, Benjamin B. *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*, Vol IX, Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 2003.
- Shedd, William G. T. *Dogmatic Theology*. Third Edition, Edited by Alan W. Gomes. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 2003.

Statement on the Trinity from the Second London Confession of 1689 (Chapter 2, article 3) "In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word (or Son), and the Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten or proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father, the Holy Spirit 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."

Part 1 - The Person of God the Father

I. God is One in Three

A. Christianity is monotheistic - we worship one God

Deuteronomy 6:4 - "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD:"

1 Corinthians 8:6 - "But to us *there is but* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *are* all things, and we by him."

B. This one God exists as a plurality of personhood-the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

1. Each personality is distinct from one another and capable of individual action.

(for example, the Father sent the Son, the Holy Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son, the Son is loved by the Father and the Father loves the Son, etc.)

2. God bears all of the qualities of personality

a. He is an intelligent, rational, moral being - He is a reasonable being capable of determining His own course of life.

b. God is self-conscious - He has a self-awareness.

C. Each of the three persons of God is of the same essence and is not inferior to the others in essence.

D. Those attributes that apply to God also apply to each of the persons of the Godhead. They are co-eternal, co-equal.

Hodge: "In the Bible all divine titles and attributes are ascribed equally to the Father, Son, and Spirit. The same worship is rendered to them. The one is as much an object of worship as the other. It is not more evident that the Father is God, than that the Son is God; nor is the deity of the Father and Son more clearly revealed than that of the Spirit." (*Systematic Theology*, p. 444)

E. The three persons exist simultaneously, undivided in divided persons.

II. The Attributes of God the Father (shared equally by the Son and the Holy Spirit)

A. God is a spirit, without body, parts, or passions

1. God is not bound by any physical existence - He does not possess a body

2. Every reference to physical attributes is an anthropomorphism

a. No one has ever seen God

John 1:18 - "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*."

b. Every physical manifestation is known as a theophany (the burning bush, the smoke of Mt. Sinai, the pillar of fire and cloud)

B. God is transcendent - He is above this material world

1. God could have continued in eternity without making Himself known to His creation - and we would not have known

2. He can only be known by self-revelation
Matthew 11:27 - "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him."
- C. God is eternal
Psalms 90:2 - "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou *art* God."
1. God had no beginning - has no end. He is infinite in every way
 Herman Bavinck - "Infinity applied to time is eternity"
(The Doctrine of God, P.154)
 2. Stephen Charnock - "He was before the world, yet he neither began nor ends; he is not a temporary, but an eternal God; it takes in both parts of eternity, what was before the creation of the world, and what is after; though the eternity of God be one permanent state, without succession, yet the spirit of God, suiting himself to the weakness of our conception, divides into two parts; one past before the foundation of the world, another to come after the destruction of the world; as he did exist before all ages, and as he will exist after all ages."
(Stephen Charnock, Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God, p. 278)
- D. God is self-existent, self-satisfied
 God needs nothing outside Himself
John 5:26 - "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;"
- E. God is omnipotent
1. God governs His creation with great power
 2. God's dominion is boundless, universal, absolute
 - a. Stephen Charnock describes the power of God-
 "The power of God is that ability and strength whereby He can bring to pass whatsoever He pleases, whatsoever His infinite wisdom may direct, and whatsoever the infinity purity of His will may resolve." *(Charnock, Stephen. Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God, p. 13)*
 - b. Nothing can stop God from accomplishing His will
Daniel 4:35 - "And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"
 3. God's power is derived from Himself - He is the sole cause He receives orders from none
- F. God is omnipresent
1. As a spiritual being God occupies all of creation - omnipresent
Psa. 139:7-10 - "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*.⁹ If I take the wings

- of the morning, *and* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; ¹⁰ Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."
2. God cannot be confined to space or location
- G. God is omniscient
1. God knows every detail of His creation
 2. God knows every detail with regards to history past present and future
 3. God's knowledge of all things has existed from eternity
 - a. God has always known all that He knows
Acts 15:18 - "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world"
 - b. God knows all things at once, He sees all things at once
 We can only think in a linear fashion - one thought following another. God knows all things at once.
 - c. God's knowledge has been forever with Him. In other words, God does not learn.
 4. God's knowledge is according to perfect wisdom.
 - a. God's thoughts are always right
 - b. Infinite knowledge brings infinite reason and proper conclusions God knows every potential cause and effect - His mind is filled with an infinite number of secrets - things in His knowledge alone **Deuteronomy 29:29** - "The secret *things belong* unto the LORD our God: but those *things which are revealed belong* unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."
- H. God is holy
1. The Hebrew word for Holy literally means separate or set apart
 - a. God is separate from all that is defiled
 - b. God is also separate in that He is above all creation - He is transcendent
 2. God is the measure of all things - He is the ultimate standard of holiness,
1 Peter 1:16- "Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."
- I. God is love
1. The greatest demonstration of God's love is **in** election
 - a. It was a unilateral love - unconditional
 It is **in** no way dependent upon something we did - it was completely undeserved
1 John 4:19 - "We love Him because He first loved us"
Romans 5:8 - "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."
 Deuteronomy 7:7-8 - "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you..."
 - a. God loved us so much that He sent forth His Son to die for us **John 3:16** - "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

1 John 4:10 - "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

- 2. God's love is infinite in its duration - it is unending - everlasting
- J. God is immutable -
 - Hebrews 13:8** - "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."
 - 1. God's mode of existence is different from ours. He exists in every moment of time. He also inhabits eternity. If eternity excludes succession then it must exclude any possibility of change.
 - 2. God is the same today as He was 100 trillion years ago
More accurately, God has remained unchanged from eternity.
 - 3. God can neither increase or decrease.
 - a. He is not subject to any development.
 - b. He has never known more or less than He knows - He neither learns nor forgets.
 - c. He is not affected by anything external to Himself
- K. God is good
 - 1. God's goodness is demonstrated in creation
 - a. God placed man in paradise
 - b. Every sense is an inlet for pleasure
 - c. God's provision is an expression of His goodness
 - 2. We see this character of benevolence even upon His enemies
Matthew 5:43-45 - "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and on the unjust."
 - 3. None of God's acts are malevolent by design
 - a. Sin has brought pain and suffering which demonstrates a harmony between God's holiness and God's love
 - b. Although God has ordained all things sin comes forth from men
- L. God is truth
 - 1. God is the ultimate expression of truth
God is truth and all that He reveals is truth
 - 2. Mistakes with God are impossible - His omniscience renders this impossible
 - 3. Moral deception is impossible with God - His holiness renders this impossible
Titus 1:2 - "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;"
 - 4. God has made promises that will find fulfillment
2 Corinthians 1:20 - "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."

- III. The Bible gives us progressive revelation of the three persons of the Trinity
- A. In the Old Testament God the Father is most prominent although the Christ and the Holy Spirit are clearly revealed
 - B. In the New Testament the Father is further revealed and His unique relationship with the elect is further revealed.
- IV. God the Father in the Old Testament
- A. He is a God of mercy, longsuffering, goodness, and truth
Exodus 34:6-7 - "And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, ⁷ Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear *the guilty*; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth *generation*."
 - B. He is a God of forgiveness
Psalms 51:1-2 - "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. ² Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."
 - C. He is a God of Justice
Exodus 34:7 - "Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear *the guilty*; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth *generation*."
 - D. He is a Covenant keeping God
Genesis 9:9, 15 - "And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; **verse 15** - And I will remember my covenant, which *is* between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh."
Exodus 19:5-6 - "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine: ⁶ And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel."
 - E. He is a Redeeming God
Isaiah 44:6 - "Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I *am* the first, and I *am* the last; and beside me *there is* no God."
 - F. He is a Faithful God
Psalms 36:5 - "Thy mercy, O LORD, *is* in the heavens; *and* thy faithfulness *reacheth* unto the clouds."
Lamentations 3:22-23 - "*It is of* the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. ²³ *They are* new every morning: great *is* thy faithfulness."

V. The Names of God the Father

- A. Elohim - the first word for God used in the Bible. "In the beginning God ... "

This name for God is used over 2500 times. In addition, other Hebrew names use the word EL to form compound words.

1. El Elyon- Compound word translated in KJV, "Most High God" - Genesis 14:18, 19, 20, 22; Psa. 78:56
2. El Shaddai - Compound word translated in KJV, "Almighty God" - Genesis 17:1
3. El Olam -Compound word translated in KJV, "Everlasting God" - Genesis 21:33

- B. Jehovah - usually translated LORD in the KJV. Most common name for God used in the Old Testament over 6500 times. The name Jehovah is also used in combination with other Hebrew words -

1. Jehovah-Nissi - The LORD My Banner
2. Jehovah-Jireh - The LORD Sees or The LORD Will Provide
3. Jehovah-Shalom - The LORD Our Peace

- C. Adoni - in the KJV it is usually translated Lord (small case letters)

- D. In the New Testament He is referred to as God, Father, or God the Father