

## The Trinity



Mark Gyde

## The Trinity

It seems to me that when we think about the persons of the Trinity we think about them in isolation from each other. We think about what Jesus can do for us, what the Holy Spirit can do for us and maybe even what the Father can do. We do not consider them as a single relational unit.

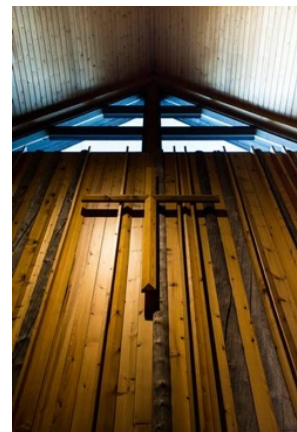
The problem is it is easier for us to consider what Jesus and the Holy Spirit can do for us because they have been more visibly present in our Christian experience. In the past the Father has been distant, angry or at best has acted through the other two members of the Trinity. All of which has led us to have a mentality of the Godhead existing solely to satisfy our needs and desires.

Even in coming to Jesus and the Holy Spirit we are confused as to their respective roles and their individual personalities.

Jesus has become the person who heals us, provides for us, confirms our salvation and is most often the one we pray to. Although even in our prayers we often forget that he is our big brother and therefore have to use a number of biblical titles when talking to him which has the natural effect of distancing him and de-personalising our relationship with him. The focus of Christianity since the Reformation has largely been on Jesus almost to the exclusion of the other members of the Godhead.

Jesus is the one who meets our needs and meets the needs of others. He is the mediator between our earthly life and our eternal inheritance which is something we think we still have to win.

This historical view of Jesus fails to recognise who he is and what he has done for us – not only on the cross but also through his resurrection. Yes, he meets our needs, yes, he saves us but he can do so much more for each one of us. Yes, he looks in our direction but primarily he looks at his Father. Not only does he meet our needs and look ‘man-ward’ but he also introduces and releases the Holy Spirit into our lives.



This historical view of Jesus has created a need centred Christianity which has made our religion self centred rather than God (or Father) focussed.

The Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal has shifted this historical viewpoint but not in a way which is totally consistent with scripture.

The Holy Spirit, so long forgotten, is now welcomed into mainstream Christianity. The word “Pentecostal” describes the way in which the Holy Spirit has been introduced into the church. We have limited the person and influence of the Holy Spirit in a way that mirrors his appearance on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. On this

occasion there was an outpouring of the Spirit, the fruit of which was men speaking in other tongues, a greater boldness and freedom than previously experienced. A freedom and an outpouring which led to a revival in which many were born again. That has become our paradigm for outpourings and manifestations of the Holy Spirit but are we seeing revivals that produce the fruit described in John 15: abundant and lasting fruit?

Yes, this is what the Holy Spirit does and we need to welcome it with open hearts and enjoy such outpourings. But this is not all, there is more, much more to experience and enjoy.

In John 14 Jesus describes in great detail the role of the Holy Spirit and this is very different to our standard paradigm or perception. He is a person, he is a comforter (another comforter, therefore in addition to Jesus). He is a guide. Above all though



he comes to show us, to confirm to us and to bring alive in us that we are no longer orphans. If not orphans, then by definition we are sons and daughters. The Holy Spirit challenges the lie we believed in the garden; the lie that tells us we are fatherless.

Paul develops this further in both Romans and Galatians. As we receive the Spirit we are empowered, caused and even motivated to cry out “Abba, Father”. Something in us

comes alive when we receive the Spirit as our true identity begins to emerge and is confirmed within us. We know we are his sons and daughters as the Spirit of the Son has been embedded in our hearts.

All of us are biological sons or daughters but that does not mean we live as a son or daughter. If our hearts are closed to our parents that knowledge purely describes a biological or legal fact. It does not describe a relationship. The Holy Spirit comes into our hearts and that changes everything. The Spirit of Sonship is the Spirit of both the Father and the Son and receiving the Holy Spirit changes our heart so that we know who He is and who we are!

Instead of describing a theoretical or legal relationship, instead of using terminology we start to live a relationship. Not as a clone or imitation of Jesus but we begin to live as he lived. We live as sons and daughters because we are sons and daughters.

It is an expression of life which flows from the gift of the Holy Spirit within us. It is much more than purely being enabled to do greater things as vital and important as those things may be.

Too often we have viewed the Holy Spirit as the add-on enabler or fixer. A tool box full of goodies to help us in our Christian life, to make us more productive and maybe even make us better Christians.



Yes, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are important but they represent the “Pentecostal” expression of life. Focusing solely on these important gifts of the Spirit does not lead us to fully grasp sonship or the true relationship with the Holy Spirit which Jesus describes in John 14. We are left in orphan-hearted Christianity where sadly the Holy Spirit (or more accurately our use of his gifts) accentuates that orphan-ness.

The Holy Spirit is not primarily given to enable us to “do”, he is given to enable us to “be”.

Again the danger we face is that our view of the Holy Spirit becomes like our incomplete view of Jesus; given to meet our needs and to help us become better people. Once again it is only part of the story and the part which Christianity has grown up with over the past few centuries.

What we have therefore created is only a partial view of part of the Trinity. An incomplete concept of what is essentially a relationship. Our ideas have been good. Our understanding, in part, has been both correct and biblical, but nonetheless incomplete. Rather than seeing the Trinity as glorifying itself we have allowed our partial picture to focus on something more attuned to our own benefit or encouragement.

What then of the Father?

So far I have painted a picture of two members of the Trinity and my view of our incomplete understanding of them, their nature and their role in our lives.

God, the Father, seems to have been hidden. Why? Is he waiting for an appointed time when it is safe for him to reappear. Safe for who? Him or us?

I’m not a church history scholar but I wonder if, before the Reformation, the Trinity or Godhead was seen as one entity known collectively as ‘God’ or the Almighty One very much like the ‘Yahweh’ of the Old Testament. The Reformation revealed the person of Jesus in part and the Pentecostal renewal revealed the person of the Holy Spirit in part. And so God, the Father, remains hidden and kept away from us



because we have believed the oldest lie that God is not good and nor can he be trusted. The lie Satan sold to all humanity in the garden, “God is not for you, he is against you!” And so our Creator and the lover of our souls has been nowhere to be found for centuries.

We have allowed our thinking to be limited so we only see Jesus and the Holy Spirit as persons on our side, sent to help us and to equip us. Sent to make us, one day, acceptable to the unknown member of the Trinity, the Father.

As Paul says we only see in part. That has been the limitation of the church and in many ways it will be continue to be our limiting factor “we see and understand in part”. As the eyes of our heart are opened we begin to see things more clearly and the limitations we feel begin to be eroded as our understanding becomes more complete.

We are satisfied, or have allowed ourselves to be satisfied, with the partial truth and understanding we have created for ourselves. We have settled for something much less than the best that is on offer. We have tasted and allowed ourselves to satisfied without eating the full meal and so our desire for more has been quenched. We have settled for the partial when the fullness is still to be grasped. In fact, Paul encourages us to enjoy all the fullness of God. That, to me, is a lot of fullness and a whole lot more than we have currently grasped. There is more, so very much more.



We have turned the Trinity upside down and inside out and therefore have only been able to find “roles” for two members. The members which we perceive as having something to offer us. Our needs being met and us being equipped to serve. The focus is on us and therefore our servant hearted Christianity. “What can I do to serve God?” has been the cry of Christians and our church structures

have sought to answer that cry through a variety of programmes and activities – many of which have been good and valuable but ultimately motivated by a lack of understanding as to the reality and completion of the Godhead.

We find things for Jesus to do, we find things for the Holy Spirit to do. There are things that Jesus can give us, there are things that the Holy Spirit can give us. But what about the Father? What can he do for us? What can he give us?

The answer is blindingly obvious when we understand in our hearts **that God is love**. When our hearts fully grasp the magnitude of those three words everything changes. Because what the Father offers us is what we desperately need. It is the answer to the cry of every human heart.

**What the Father offers is love.** That is who he is and that word, love, represents the totality of his dealings with mankind.

We need love, specifically we need the Father's love. We need to know that we are loved as Jesus is loved, that God the Father is loving each and every one of us right now and that he is being a Father to us. Right now and every moment of every day.

This is what the mysterious third person of the Trinity has to offer, this is what he brings. **Love**. Perfect and complete unconditional love.

The reason, I think, that we have ignored him or left him out is because love is something we receive as a gift and we are not good at receiving. Orphans can't receive. We like to give. We like to be trained so we can serve and give (performance) but receiving is not something we do easily. In our orphan hearted Christianity it has been a foreign concept that anyone, particularly God, would want to give us anything. Why would he want to give us anything when our mindset since the time of the garden has been to work and strive in order to keep this untrustworthy master away from us.

So we do not embrace the Father because we feel we don't need, warrant or have earned what only he can give – Love. We need Jesus, we need the Holy Spirit but our orphan hearts tell us (lie to us) that we don't need to be loved. Yet, this is the very thing we crave, the very thing we were made for.

We have settled for our partial view of only part of the Trinity because it feeds our needs. It feeds our longing to be useful and it makes us feel we are, in some way, appeasing the Godhead. What we have settled for is the belief that our ongoing salvation can only be the result or reward of our good works.

In some ways the church needs another reformation. We believe that it is by faith we are saved and our salvation is an act of grace. Once we are saved we have to work in order to maintain our salvation. Our view has become: it is not by works that we are saved but it is by works that we remain saved. Orphan hearted thinking at its best!

We are closed to receive love as we don't see what value it can have to our driven lives.



It is only when we realise that, from its sad beginning in the garden, humanity is orphan-hearted that things can begin to change. We must not purely see humanity as orphan hearted but we must see the orphanness that is within our own hearts. It is the acceptance of our individual orphanness that starts the process of change. This recognition starts the process of the eyes of our hearts being opened so we can begin to see things as they really are.

We have to face and see the orphanness in our own heart and in doing so we face and see the reality of our need of a Saviour. Not one who this times saves us from our sin but one who saves us from the emptiness of an orphan heart. We desperately need a Saviour who will fill the void in our hearts. A void that can only be filled with the perfect and complete love of our eternal and real Father.

When we face our orphanness we see our need for the third person of the Trinity. We see our need to receive love. We see our need to receive the only thing the Father can give us – his love.

As the eyes of our heart are opened to receive love then the orphanness within each one of us begins to reduce, decline and ultimately disappear. Gradually our eyes are opened to an amazing truth, an alternative way of living. We discover sonship. We start to see everything through a different set of eyes. In reality, though, not a new set of eyes just all the wrong filters we have created being peeled away so we see things in the way they were meant to be seen. We see as the Father sees.

As sonship grows in our hearts we will inevitably turn our view, our partial view of the Trinity around into its more complete and true form.

We see a son who came from the Father not only to help us in our time of need. We see a son who shows us the way to the Father, not once but in an ongoing way. Jesus is constantly revealing the Father, he goes on doing it. The revelation of the Father by Jesus is not a one-off event which took place at the point of our salvation, it is an ongoing day to day revealing of the Father. Not only does Jesus constantly reveal the Father but he shows us how to live as a son or a daughter. We have an example of the spirit of sonship at work.

And so we begin to walk as Jesus walked not by copying everything he did but by having the same heart. A heart to please the Father in everything we do. A heart to please the Father that will break down the barrier between what we have called secular and spiritual. There is no distinction so far as the Father is concerned, he does not see two different personalities contained within one skin. He sees us a one





person: a son or daughter. The distinction is man-made and it hinders our walk of sonship because we see one part of our life as being more valuable than another part. Part of us is therefore held captive and we do not see the spirit of sonship released fully into our everyday lives as we work in the office, work at home, or go about our daily business. This false distinction is man-made and comes out of a largely religious sense of duty and obligation.

We cannot create a spirit of sonship through our own effort. It is not a prize for living a good life. The heart of sonship is given to us when we receive the Holy Spirit of Sonship. It is his spirit in us that causes us to walk in his ways. It is his spirit in us which is the only thing that can ever enable us to walk as Jesus walked.

In fact “cause” may be too tame a word. I think the indwelling of the spirit of sonship is stronger than “causing us” I think it motivates, even drives us, to walk as Jesus walked. We are not made to be clones but we are created as an open vessel to receive the spirit of sonship which enables us to walk like Jesus in our own unique expression which is wrapped up in our personality and character.

Receiving the Father’s love is not a one off event but it becomes the central event of our daily living. Living loved. This is what the Father gives to us. This is the thing that we desperately need, this is the answer to the cry of the human heart. Yet this is the very thing we have stopped ourselves from receiving. In fact, we have been unable to receive it because the eyes of our heart have been closed to the state of our own heart.

Thankfully, the Father by his grace and his longing for relationship plants that seed of desire in our hearts which enables us to begin to see the orphanhood of our heart. This desire sets in motion a longing for satisfaction, a satisfaction we find when we allow the Trinity to act as they love to act. To act in unity together bringing us into the full revelation of who we are.

So instead of seeing a Godhead which in part meets our needs we allow Jesus to turn away from us and back to the Father. We allow the Holy Spirit to expand his role from merely being a tool box to becoming the impartation and source of life within our hearts.



The Trinity therefore becomes a Father who we see through the eyes of the Son; a Son who reveals his Father to us moment by moment and shows us that we are loved as he is loved. It becomes a Son who shows us our need of a loving Father



and shows us what our lives can look like as we begin to walk as he walked. It becomes the Holy Spirit who is the channel for the Father's love to be poured into our hearts which enables the spirit of sonship to grow within us. This Holy Spirit causes us to walk in the Father's ways out of the desire of our heart. The Trinity is three individuals working as one in order that the life of Christ may be released in us and that we would work in sonship just as Jesus walked in sonship.

Instead of seeing only a partial Godhead we step into this vital life giving relationship. In a very real sense we become part of this mystical relationship as we are caught up and become "in Christ". Our gaze moves away from what we have to do or what we have to become and it turns to the Father who is the source of everything we need – **LOVE**.

