

Summation of the Trinity

13 July 2003

Text: Psalm 85: 7 Show us your steadfast love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation. 8 Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints; but let them not turn back to folly. 9 Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land. 10 Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other. 11 Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and righteousness looks down from the sky. 12 Yes, the LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. 13 Righteousness will go before him and make his footsteps a way.

Titus 3:3-7: 3 For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. 4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

In the Name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Think about the words I just said. One God in 3 Persons. Why is this important? Why do Christians insist we worship one God, yet speak of 3 Persons? Wouldn't it be easier simply to claim we believe in 3 Gods?

First of all, Scripture teaches the Trinity. We often forget that, aside from Luke, the New Testament was written by Jews who were taught from birth to say the Shema: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)." When Jesus was asked about the greatest commandments, the Shema was the first commandment He uttered.

Yet, every New Testament writer used Trinitarian language, including Paul. In fact, the passage from Titus is only 1 of 120 passages in the New Testament that addresses all 3 Persons of the Trinity. As Paul points out in Titus, all 3 Persons of the Trinity are involved in our salvation.

Second, notice that we say "3 Persons," not "3 individuals" or "3 natures." God exists as 1 nature shared by 3 Persons of the Trinity. This has two results:

1. When we are adopted as children of God, our human nature does not change; our "personhood" changes. We remain human, with all the faults implied; however, we achieve the legal standing accorded to sons of God. When Tertullian first used the term "persona," he used it in a legal sense as one having standing before the court. Too many Christians want to give up trying to live the salvation lifestyle when they don't experience a radical transformation in their lives; too many other Christians want to give up on young converts when they struggle with old habits. Remember, God changes our standing before Him, not the stuff with which we are made.
2. The Trinity reminds us that God exists in relationship: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit exist in an eternal relationship united by perfect love. If relationship is important within *God*, it is just as important within *us*. The Church exists in relationship, and while we will never — this side of eternity — attain the perfect love relationship of the Trinity, we are still called to live in relationship with other believers. People of God, we have no choice: we cannot successfully live the salvation lifestyle without the Body. We need each other!

Paul tells us how we were in verse 3; he then tells us how a Trinitarian God saves us by His grace. Your salvation depends on the Trinity. Without the work of the Trinity in our lives, we have no hope of seeing God and dwelling with Him in perfect unity. But for those who allow the Trinity to work within them, we truly experience a taste of heaven while we struggle with our nature here on earth.

In the Name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.