

BIBLICAL MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD: THE TRIUNE GOD

John 1: 1-18, 14:15-17, 25-26, 16:5-15

INTRODUCTION

We are beginning today a new series, entitled “Biblical Manhood and Womanhood.” In this series it is my goal to answer the questions: What does it mean to be a man? What does it mean to be a woman? What difference does it make? You may think it strange, given that our series is about maleness and femaleness that the first sermon in the series is entitled, “The Triune God”. Genesis 1: 26-27 contains the simple reason we are beginning with a consideration of the nature of God’s existence as a trinity. These verses tell us that God made man in his image and likeness and that he made man male and female. We are going to talk next week more fully about this passage in Genesis but for now you need to know that you can never truly understand who you are as a human being who is either male or female without giving consideration to who God is because you are made in his image as a man or as a woman.

J. I. Packer in his book, “Knowing God” says this, “Knowing about God is crucially important for the living of our lives. As it would be cruel to a tribesman from the jungles of the Amazon, to fly him to London, put him down without explanation in Trafalgar Square and leave him, as one who knew nothing of English or England, to fend for himself, so we are cruel to ourselves if we try to live in this world without knowing about the God whose world it is and who runs it. The world becomes a strange, mad, painful place, and life in it a disappointing and unpleasant business, for those who do not know God. Disregard the study of God and you sentence yourself to stumble and blunder through life blindfold, as it were, with no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you. This way you can waste your life and lose your soul.”

But there is another reason, not directly connected to the purpose of our series, why I want us to spend this morning considering this great, Triune God. Psalm 27: 4 says, “One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.” It is the delight of every true child of God to know and love God more and more. Just like the reader of a book delights to sit down with a favorite novel or the connoisseur of fine wines delights to sit down with a new bottle of wine, so the child of God delights to meditate upon this great God who is her Savior. The famous pastor, C. H. Spurgeon said it this way, “The proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father.” It is my desire and my prayer that as we give thought to God’s Trinitarian nature our hearts will be filled with wonder and praise and love for this great God who is our Savior. It is my prayer that the Holy Spirit will enable us to know him better so that we will trust and obey him more to His glory.

It is my plan this morning to first set forth what the Scriptures teach concerning the fact that God is a Trinity and then seek to show how God’s existence as a Trinity finds expression in our creation as man and woman.

First, I will state the doctrine by quoting Wayne Grudem’s definition from his “Systematic Theology”. **“God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God and there is one God.”** I want to support each part of this definition by seeing where in the Scriptures each portion is taught. We will spend most of our time in the gospel of John so that we are not skipping all over the Bible (page ____).

➤ **God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

First I want you to see that the Scriptures teach that there are three distinct persons in the Godhead. Many of you have heard Christian teachers or preachers use this analogy of the Trinity. I have myself used this analogy. The trinity is like me in that I am the son of my father, the husband of my wife and the father of my children. I am the same person but I also act in three different capacities, or roles. This analogy is false. It is in fact an analogy of

one of the famous heresies in the early church formulated by a guy named Sabellius and therefore called Sabellianism. The Scriptures clearly teach that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct persons. Each one possesses all the characteristics of personhood, mind, will, and emotion. They are not each merely the same person acting in different roles or capacities. In other words, the Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Spirit. Each one has a peculiar characteristic that makes him distinct from the others.

Look with me at John 1: 1-4, 14 and 18. Notice in vv. 1 & 2 that the Word was “with God”. The Word, as v. 14 makes clear is Jesus, the Son of God. That little preposition “with” shows that the Word is distinct from God. He is with God. In the Greek language there are several words that can be translated “with” and the one that John uses here is usually used to describe how persons are with one another. It is seldom used to talk about inanimate objects being together. Notice in v. 14 that the Word came and took on flesh. He is the one who came from the Father. Now notice in v. 18 how Jesus Christ is said to be at the Father’s side. In other words, we see that Jesus is distinct from the Father. They are two separate persons, not the same person acting in different capacities. Also it is necessary to point out that this Word, who is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was with God in the beginning. Every Bible reader knows that the phrase, “In the beginning”, refers to the opening line of the Bible where we are told, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” This refers to the eternity of God. He is the beginning and the end. There never has been a time when God did not exist. In the same way the Word has eternally been with God, at the side of the Father. That means that the Son of God did not come into existence when Jesus was born but has always existed as a separate and distinct person.

Now look at vv. 32-34. Here is John the Baptist, whose mission was to bear witness to the identity of Jesus, describing something that he saw and heard that is astounding. First he says that he saw the Spirit come from heaven in the form of a dove and remain on Jesus. Now here we have mentioned for the first time, “the Spirit” who has come from heaven. Then John talks about “the one who sent me”. This is clearly not the Spirit and not the Son of God. He is a person of authority who gives commands and who is to be obeyed and who is not the Spirit or the Son. The man, don’t miss that, upon whom the Spirit rests is called by John, the Son of God. Notice, not **a** son of God, but **the** Son of God. Here, for the first time in John’s gospel, we see the three persons of the Godhead working together. The Father sending the Holy Spirit out of heaven to rest upon the Son of God who has become a man.

The final point that I want to nail down for you is to show that the Holy Spirit is a person. He is not a force from God or an emanation from God but he is a distinct person. Turn with me to John 14: 15-17. This is one of those times where knowing Greek is necessary to get the full impact of what is being said. In the Greek language every noun and pronoun has an ending that is either, masculine, feminine, or neuter. The way you know what noun a pronoun is referring to is by the ending. (Give an example of pronoun referring to a noun.) A feminine noun is always referred to with a pronoun that has a feminine ending, a masculine with masculine and a neuter noun with a neuter pronoun. The Greek word for Spirit is pneuma which has a neuter ending. But notice that throughout these verses the pronoun that is used is masculine, “him” not the neuter, “it”. Also, notice that Jesus calls the Holy Spirit “another Counselor”. That word, “another” points to the fact that the Holy Spirit is a person and that he is distinct from Jesus. If the Holy Spirit is not a person he would never have said, “another” which means someone else, just like me, to take my place. He is not sending a thing to take his place but a person. The term “Counselor” is not used to describe a thing, but a person. Finally, the reason the world does not accept the Holy Spirit is because it does not know him but the disciples know him because he lives with them. Again these are all the ways you talk about a person, not a thing or a force. We know that the Spirit has eternally existed because in Genesis 1:2 he is present “in the beginning”.

Up to this point we have seen that God has eternally existed as three distinct persons, each one possessing all the characteristics of personhood. Next we see that...

➤ **Each one is fully God.**

Each person of the Godhead is called God. The Father is called God in John 1:18 where the God who has never been seen is the Father whom Jesus makes known. Repeatedly we are told God is the one who sent his Son into

the world (John 3:17, 21, 34) and Jesus repeatedly says that the Father is the one who sent him into the world (John 5:36-37, 6:57). Thus the Father is God.

Jesus is called God in John 1:1 and 18. In John 5: 17-18 the Jews want to kill Jesus because he called God his Father thus making himself equal to God. The Jewish people, who were fiercely monotheistic, were often incensed at Jesus for his claims to be God. John 8: 56-59 and 10: 29-33 are two other examples. In other words, Jesus' enemies understood that he was claiming to be God and they ultimately killed him for this claim. They did not kill him because he performed miracles or taught about God, but because he claimed to be God and they were convinced that he was just a man and so he was committing the worse possible kind of blasphemy. Finally, look with me at John 20: 24-29. Notice that Thomas calls Jesus "my Lord and my God" and then Jesus rather than rebuking him, affirms the correctness of his confession. He is called God and he accepts the title.

Finally, the Holy Spirit is referred to as God. Again, turn to John 14: 15-20. When Jesus calls the Holy Spirit "another Counselor" he is not simply saying that another person is going to show up but another person who is of the same quality as he is. In other words, the one who takes the place of Jesus, who is God, must also be God. This is even clearer when we see at the end of v. 17 that the Holy Spirit will be "in" the disciples and then at the end of v.20 that Jesus will be "in" the disciples. In other words, Jesus says that he and the Holy Spirit, while being distinct persons are the same being. To have the Holy Spirit "in" you is the same as having Jesus "in" you. Since Jesus is God, then the Holy Spirit must also be God. In John 3: 5-8 no one will see God's kingdom unless they are born of the Spirit. In John 1:13 we are told that everyone who is a child of God has been born of God. To be born of the Spirit and to be born of God are the same thing. Therefore, the Spirit is God. In Acts 5: 3-4 Peter asks Ananias, "Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit? You have not lied to men but to God." According to Peter, to lie to the Holy Spirit is to lie to God.

If time permitted I would go on to show that not only is each person of the Godhead called God but that each person of the Godhead is treated as God and acts as only God can act. However, I will simply pass by these and encourage you to read more on your own. If you want suggestions of what to read talk with me afterwards.

I want you to consider for a moment what it means that each person is fully God. Whatever is true of God is true of each person of the Godhead. Jeremiah says, "Ah Sovereign Lord you made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm, nothing is too hard for you." God the Father is omnipotent or all-powerful, God the Son is omnipotent, God the Holy Spirit is omnipotent. Moses says, "Who among the gods is like you O Lord, majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?" This means that God the Father is majestic in his holiness and so is the Son and so is the Holy Spirit. Whatever is true of God, as God, is also true of each person in the Trinity.

What we have seen up to this point is that **God has eternally existed as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and each one is fully God.** But we also need to affirm that...

➤ **But there is only one God.**

Here is the point at which Moslems and Jehovah Witnesses and Unitarians criticize the Christian faith. They claim that by making the first two assertions, we are polytheists, that is, we worship three gods. That is not true, we worship only one God. God is not divided in his Trinitarian nature. He is one essence, one being, not three. The Bible everywhere makes this claim. Listen to these few statements of the uniqueness and the unity of God's being:

Isaiah 45: 5-6, "I am the Lord and there is no other, besides me there is no God;.... from the rising of the sun and from the west, ... there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other."

Isaiah 45: 21-22, "There is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me. Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other."

Deut. 6: 4-5, "Hear O Israel, The Lord is God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."

Acts 17: 24-25, "The God who made the world and everything in it is Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands and he is not served by human hands as if he needed anything for he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else."

1 Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God and there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus."

In John 10:30 Jesus says, "I and the Father are one."

What the Scriptures clearly teach us in regard to the nature of God is that there is only one God who is united in his essence, in his being without any division or mixture. But this one God eternally exists as three persons, each one equally sharing in the fullness of the divine essence and never making a division in the one being and yet each one is a distinct person. As Calvin says in his Institutes, "The Father and Son and Spirit are one God, yet the Son is not the Father nor the Spirit the Son, but they are differentiated by a peculiar quality." And again, "In the one essence of God there is a trinity of persons."

In a moment I want to show you what difference God's existence as a trinity makes to our understanding ourselves as made in his image, male and female. However, before we go there I think it is only appropriate that we stop and gaze upon the beauty of the Lord. First, gaze with me upon the beauty of his awesomeness. You and I cannot truly conceive of a being that is united in his essence and yet eternally exists as a trinity of persons. Language strains to communicate what has been revealed to us as true. God exists in a manner that is almost completely unintelligible to us and for this reason is awe-inspiring. Have you ever felt awe? I have been in the Rocky Mountains many times. I have often driven up the road that goes through Rocky Mountain National Park. I never tire of pulling off the road on one of the overlooks and gazing at the beauty of the mountains. Watching the shadows of the clouds scud across the mountains. Seeing the Big Thompson River lying like a snake down in the valley. Peering over the precipice to the tree line a mile below. My heart is pierced with the beauty and awesomeness of these mountains. I cannot truly take in how massive and timeless they are. Often I have felt speechless and dazed at their magnificence. Yet, the awesomeness of the mountains is but a grain of sand compared to the mountains of God's grandeur revealed in his being. Who do you know that has eternally existed as three persons and yet one being? These are not simply dry and boring doctrines to be known but a person to be worshipped, feared, loved, and trusted.

Second gaze with me at the beauty of his condescension and mercy towards us poor, helpless, ignorant sinners. What kindness it is that God has chosen to reveal to us something of the nature of his being. He is the God who dwells in unapproachable light and before whom the mighty cherubim must cover their eyes. Yet he has chosen to reveal himself to us who are but dust. How would you feel if the President invited you over to his house and began revealing to you the most intimate details of his life? How would you respond if Bill Gates had you come to his house every day and began to divulge to you all the secrets of his software and patiently instructed you as to the inner workings of his company? The fact that the God who made the stars and calls them each by name has deigned to reveal the intimacy of the Trinity to us is enormous mercy for which we ought to give praise.

I want to turn now and consider what God's existence as a trinity means for our existence as humans. When we say that we have been made in God's image we mean that we bear a resemblance to God. We mean that everything that is true of God has an analogy in us as humans. So when we see that "in the one essence of God there is a trinity of persons," we ought to expect that to be reflected in our creation as human beings in some way. I want to state three ways God's existence as a Trinity is reflected in our existence as beings made in his image, male and female.

➤ **Humanity reflects the unity and diversity of the Godhead in being made male and female**

There are many ways that the human race reflects the unity and diversity of the Godhead but none so marvelously as that of maleness and femaleness. Men and women are united in their humanity. They are equally made in the image of God. They are equal in their standing before God, their sinfulness, their ability to be redeemed and their ability to fellowship with their creator. God does not prefer men to women, nor women to men. But men and women are different from one another. It is an established fact that we are different at the biological level. However, when we go beyond biology, there is enormous controversy over how we are different and over whether the differences are necessary to being male and female or if they are merely the result of cultural conditioning. It is at this point that I believe a reflection on the distinctions that exist within the Godhead can be helpful. Men and women are not simply different in their biology. They are not simply different in their psychology. Men and women are fundamentally different from one another as the members of the Trinity are different from one another. Because of the constraints of time, I am only going to consider the distinctions that exist within the relationship between the Father and the Son. What is it that makes the Father differ from the Son because they do not differ in their divinity?

➤ **The Father loves the Son and sends him forth to do his will**

Matthew, Mark and Luke record the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. Each of them record that when Jesus was baptized the Father spoke from heaven and said, “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” In John 17: 24 & 26 Jesus says, “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.” “I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them...” But not only does the Father love Jesus but he is the one who commands the Son. Even in the verse I just read the Father “gives” certain people to the Son and “gives” the Son his glory. But also, he sends the Son forth to do his will. Jesus says in John 4:34, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.” In John 17: 4 he says, “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.” In John 5: 36 he says, “...the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me.”

The name Father captures well the distinctiveness of the Father’s place in the Trinity. He loves the Son and he commands the Son. He is the one who has authority but who delegates his authority to the Son. The Father is the initiator, the planner, the leader. But always in a loving way that honors and glorifies the Son.

➤ **The Son honors the Father and always does what pleases him**

In all the passages I just read this is clearly stated. Again consider Jesus’ saying that his food is not his own will but the will of the one who sent him. What sustains Jesus and gives him strength is doing the will of his Father. As eating gives us pleasure and strength, so doing the will of his Father is what pleases and strengthens Jesus. Or consider his prayer in John 17:4, “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.” Jesus delighted to make God’s reputation great and he did it by simply doing the work that God assigned him. Then there is Jesus’ strong statement in John 14: 28 where he says, “You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.” How can Jesus who knows that he and the Father are equally God, say that the Father is greater than he? The answer is that the Father is greater in the same way that a human father is greater than his son. He is not more fully human, nor more deserving of being treated with the respect that humans ought to receive. But he is greater in his authority, his right to be obeyed. In the fellowship of the Trinity, the Father is greater in his authority but not in his divinity. The Son is less in that he always submits to his Father and does what is pleasing to him without being diminished in any way as God or in giving up any of his rights as God.

The thing that is most striking to me as I see the relationship between the Father and the Son in the Scriptures is the delight each takes in the other and in fulfilling their duties in relation to each other. The Father loves his Son and is always pleased with him. He sends him to do his will and when it is finished he exalts him to his right hand and bestows on him all authority and gives him the name that is above all names so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow and tongue confess that he is Lord. Then the Son always delights to honor the Father and to do his

will. He has no will of his own but what the Father wills and so he perfectly accomplishes his Father's work. He will, after he has destroyed all his enemies, gladly turn over the kingdom to his Father so that God will be all and in all. It's all joy in the happiness of the Godhead as the Father lovingly leads and the Son respectfully submits.

We are going to see in the coming weeks how this relationship of unity and diversity, leadership and submission is reflected in our creation as men and women. We will see that maleness is analogous to the Father in authority and loving leadership and that femaleness is analogous to the Son in giving respect and responding to loving leadership.