

## Theology 1.3 - Trinity

---

A. Attributes of God – are usually differentiated in terms of Commutable and in-commutable or non-commutable, and as either narrative or relational. Humanity as being made in the Image of God [*Imago Dei*] means we share some of these attributes in some measure... but only God has each in completeness and in perfection.

1. **God as Good** – the idea that things are ‘Good’ is a major theme in Genesis – 1:4 et al.
  - a. Good is a moral communicable attribute in classic theology. But what does ‘goodness’ mean?
    - i. Without fault – no error
    - ii. Satisfied – complete and whole
    - iii. Perfect and right – cannot be improved upon
    - iv. Pleasing – brings pleasure and satisfaction
    - v. Anything that can be identified as good – is of God
  - b. God’s Goodness means that He has the ability to evaluate His work and determine it to be ‘good’.
    - i. This means that God has knowledge – a communicable attribute.
    - ii. God has the ability to know from a complete and total perspective – God knows all the facts... that which ‘was’, ‘is’, and ‘will be’... this is past, present, and future.
    - iii. This evaluative aspect that we share as being made in God’s Image – *Imago Dei* – allows us the ability to figure stuff out – to plan and devise solutions.
  - c. Foreknowledge – God already knows what you need before you ask for it.
    - i. Prayer is not about giving God knowledge about you or what you need.
    - ii. Prayer is about coming into relational alignment with God.
    - iii. This is why prayer is so important – it moves us into God’s context.
  - d. What did it mean for man being alone to ‘not be good’? What does this say about God’s goodness?
    - i. Man was incomplete – he was out of balance. Thus we weren’t yet completely made in God’s image.
    - ii. God’s image includes male and female characteristics. Father and Son are obviously male in nature, while the Spirit is more maternal in nature due to the nurturing aspect of holding things together.
    - iii. Goodness has a relational aspect because it is for the benefit of someone else. Man was the beneficiary of all of God’s creative efforts.
    - iv. Creation was not done for God’s need – it wasn’t an itch He had to scratch. Rather, it was done for humanity and for the relational intimacy God wanted with us. God being Spirit didn’t need a physical reality, we being physical in a material world did... and are fundamentally dependent upon it.
  - e. The opposing theme [antithesis] of good in creation is the curse of Gen 3.
    - i. Sin [rebellion against God’s Way] elicited judgment – the curse.
    - ii. Jesus mission was restorative – to place humanity back into relational context with God.

- iii. Jesus healed people in different fashions... but why the difference on entering the Kingdom?
  - 1. The rich young ruler was told to sell everything and give it to the poor, then come and follow Jesus, but he was interested in what thing he could 'do' to satisfy the requirement and benefit himself, not who Jesus wanted him to be. God's fundamental desire is with our 'being', not necessarily in our 'doing'.
  - 2. The thief on the cross asked Jesus to remember him when He came into His Kingdom... Jesus said that day he would be in paradise. The thief threw himself on Jesus mercy.
  - 3. It would seem that the thief was at the end of himself... he was broken and humbled, he just believed by faith. The rich young ruler was attempting to justify himself through the law/OT and not the new covenant Jesus was ushering in.
- f. The relational aspect is key – Jesus' question posed to the rich young ruler was a clue... 'why do you call me good? Only God alone is good.'
  - i. 'Good' is relational – it always seeks to benefit others. Doing good works is thus intended to be relational, not self justifying. This was a major misunderstanding of the Jewish Law and even continues into modern practices in both Catholic and Protestant camps.
  - ii. The book of James is all about this relational aspect of love and grace... it is not about the law.
  - iii. Mercy, Justice, and doing good for others is a communicable attribute of God. This helps define who God is... and all of God's Justice is balanced by Mercy.
  - iv. We tend to think in terms of moral goodness, but what God appears to be focusing on is relational goodness... doing good for others.
  - v. In God's economy, 'doing' comes as a result of our 'being' – this is the message of the Book of James. Those who focus on 'works' make the same mistake the ancient Jews made... works do not justify [render us acceptable before God].
- g. The curse in Gen 3 is a reversal of the original intended created order.
  - i. The curse sets up antagonistic relationships within creation, which is the antithesis of what is good.
    - 1. Life and death are introduced.
    - 2. Enmity between serpent and the seed of humanity also has a Spiritual context that isn't merely earthly.
    - 3. Contention between Satan & seed [Jesus].
    - 4. Contention between husband and wife.
    - 5. Contention between man and earth.
    - 6. Contention between woman and childbirth.
  - ii. The curse sets in motion suffering.
- 2. **God as Just** – Justice is an attribute of God brought into focus because of suffering.
  - a. Justice comes into play because of the curse.

## Theology 1.3 - Trinity

---

- b. **Justice is another communicable attribute. Man is the only creature that has an inherent sense of justice – a result of *Imago Dei*.**
- c. **God’s sense of justice has a certain and ultimate resolution:**
  - i. **Satan will be destroyed.**
  - ii. **The world will be restored.**
  - iii. **Man’s relationship with God will be restored.**
  - iv. **Death will be destroyed.**
- d. **Thus, almost all of God’s just judgment is overturned by God’s mercy.**
- e. **Amos’ prophecy – ‘for 3 or 4 I will not relent’ – these judgments show that God’s expectations of His people’s justice greatly exceeded that of the neighboring nations.**
  - i. <sup>AM 1:3</sup> Thus says the LORD, “For three transgressions of Damascus and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, Because they threshed Gilead with *implements* of sharp iron.
  - ii. <sup>AM 1:6</sup> Thus says the LORD, “For three transgressions of Gaza and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, Because they deported an entire population To deliver *it* up to Edom.
  - iii. <sup>AM 1:9</sup> Thus says the LORD, “For three transgressions of Tyre and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, Because they delivered up an entire population to Edom And did not remember *the* covenant of brotherhood.
  - iv. <sup>AM 1:11</sup> Thus says the LORD, “For three transgressions of Edom and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, Because he pursued his brother with the sword, While he stifled his compassion; His anger also tore continually, And he maintained his fury forever.
  - v. <sup>AM 1:13</sup> Thus says the LORD, “For three transgressions of the sons of Ammon and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, Because they ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead In order to enlarge their borders.
  - vi. <sup>AM 2:1</sup> Thus says the LORD, “For three transgressions of Moab and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, Because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime.
  - vii. <sup>AM 2:4</sup> Thus says the LORD, “For three transgressions of Judah and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, Because they rejected the law of the LORD And have not kept His statutes; Their lies also have led them astray, Those after which their fathers walked.
  - viii. <sup>AM 2:6</sup> Thus says the LORD, “For three transgressions of Israel and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, Because they sell the righteous for money And the needy for a pair of sandals.
- i. **Hope accompanies each threat of judgment – it is as if God is hoping they will turn from their ways so that He may relent.**
  - i. **While other prophets focused on idolatry, Amos focuses on the results of idolatry – moral and ethical confusion and the resultant loss of relational integration in community.**
  - ii. **There is a variable accountability between the world and God’s people – God’s standards are high and He expects His people to stand taller than the nations.**
  - iii. **Whenever a nation became known for atrocities and oppressions – God raised up another nation to destroy them.**

## Theology 1.3 - Trinity

---

- iv. In accordance with God's expectations of His people – the church is subject to a more strict accountability... churches and Christian nations have a greater blessing and accountability.
- v. Modern transgressions include:
  - i. Our independence and individual identity and completeness.
  - ii. Abortion.
  - iii. Greed.
  - iv. Oppression.
  - v. Failure to relieve suffering of social injustice.
- ii. The church focusing 'inward' instead of 'outward' is a major flaw in modern theology.
  - i. The blessing God pours out is to be shared – the covenants listed in Scripture were intended for all the people.
  - ii. The focus on the corporate organization [institution] rather than the corporate body [organism] is a major failing.
  - iii. Pastors as 'CEO' rather than 'shepherds' and 'prophets' is a major failing.

### 3. Justice events

- a) 'Non-violent atonement' is a liberal movement claiming that God who allows wrath to fall upon Jesus is tantamount to 'divine child abuse'.
  - i. The liberals prefer moral expunction without the shedding of blood... they seek to remove the inherent violence and offense of the Cross. This is not the Gospel message of Scripture.
  - ii. God's plan of salvation was set in motion prior to the creation of the cosmos – the violence of salvation is borne directly by God... this is love.
- b) Sparrow passages:
  - i. MT 10:29 "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father."  
MT 10:31 "So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows."  
LK 12:6 "Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? Yet not one of them is forgotten before God."  
LK 12:7 "Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows."
  - ii. The sparrow passages are not a rigid equation – rather they show that God cares about the smallest details and that He will deal faithfully with His people.
  - iii. One aspect of God's plan is His desire for certain things to happen – but there is openness theologically about these – some may happen, and others may not. This is God's general plan.
  - iv. Another aspect of God's plan is His will – certain things have been decreed to occur to advance God's specific plan. This is God's specific plan.
  - v. The tension between God's specific and general plan is where we live.
  - vi. What actually happens:

## Theology 1.3 - Trinity

---

- i. Is allowed by God, but may not be what He desires. People have been given free-will and their actions have consequences that may harm others. This is also known as God's permissive will.
- ii. Things God specifically wants to happen – this is God's prescriptive will. In key moments in redemptive history including key moments of our own personal redemptive story – God enters history and changes the trajectory of events and our life. This is Grace in motion.
- iii. Natural catastrophes – are things that may happen because of the natural order of geo-physical actions – weather causes flooding, hurricanes, and earthquakes occur due to tectonic plate movement, etc. These flow out of the curse of creation from the Fall of humanity. Grace had the earth cursed... not humanity directly, thus humanity can be saved while the earth will have to be destroyed and recreated. This dynamic of Grace is almost never taught... which is to our detriment.
- iv. Occasionally one or another of these catastrophic events may be judgments against a particular group or person – but such in Scripture are always preceded by prophecy and prophetic warnings because God always warns before He judges... such is just as true today.
- vii. So, what can we do about AIDS, hurricanes, floods, and earthquakes – etc.
  - i. Evangelicals have too often been quick to judge and slow to help.
  - ii. Evangelicals' should be ready to alleviate hurt and despair when it occurs.
  - iii. Evangelical's should be ready to proclaim God's Word in a way that demonstrates God's love and plan for redemption.
  - iv. Evangelicals should be prepared to be treated like Jesus was – the world will love what you do, but hate what you say... see "Sermon on the Mount."
  - v. Evangelicals should be quick to love and proclaim, but should be slow from claiming God's righteous judgment against people, places or things. Prophecy in the church age is more of making straight the path to Glory by clear explication of Biblical truths and their application to our current situations and circumstances.

### 4. Gospel

#### a) Scope

- i. What you need to know to get to Heaven – in this sense, the gospel is very narrow.
- ii. Everything Jesus taught did, and accomplished – in this sense, the gospel is very broad.
- iii. As evangelicals, we need to define what the gospel is, we need a clear understanding of 'what it means' and 'what we mean by it' before we can communicate it effectively to others.

## Theology 1.3 - Trinity

---

- b) **Gospel Perspectives**
  - i. **Synoptic Gospels [Mathew, Mark, Luke] show a more programmatic approach aimed at Biblical Literacy, with a heavy emphasis upon the Kingdom of God.**
  - ii. **John and the epistles [especially Johnine & Pauline] take a more personal Spiritual Formation approach.**
  - iii. **The theological movements between the 'Biblical Literacy' and 'Spiritual Formation' are intended to be more of a dance... not a wrestling match. Such is the goal of all relational interactions. Jacob's wrestling match with an Angelic messenger did not end as well as Jacob hoped... he limped for the rest of his life as a result.**
- c) **Gospel Exercise – Evangelicals ought to be prepared to voice their position and understanding of the Gospel. A helpful approach is to:**
  - i. **Define the gospel in 1 word – why? [Justification]**
  - ii. **Define gospel in 3-5 words – why? [Peace with God for eternity]**
  - iii. **Be sure to develop:**
    - i. **Perspectives of the whole program of God.**
    - ii. **Life and accomplishments of Jesus.**
    - iii. **Necessary doctrine needed to be 'orthodox'.**
    - iv. **How much does a person need to know to have eternal life?**
    - v. **Relationship of the gospel in practice in this life.**
    - vi. **Identify priorities of importance in this development process.**
  - iv. **John's thoughts:**
    - i. **Seems to me this exercise is similar to a M\*A\*S\*H\* unit – segregating quick action responses where life & opportunity are short, and more deliberate approaches where time is available.**
    - ii. **This presumes we have some knowledge either of the person or situation where we can identify need and approach... and sensitivity to the Spirit before we respond.**
    - iii. **Doctrinal assumptions don't seem to apply – doctrine is more important to safeguard discipleship... preventing the twin evils of the abuse of freedom or legalism.**
  - v. **There is a fundamental simplicity in the gospel – thief on the cross next to Jesus believed and trusted Jesus.**
  - vi. **There is a profound complexity in the gospel – rich young ruler, count the cost, etc.**
  - vii. **Synoptics seem to focus on Biblical complexity and commitment.**
  - viii. **John's gospel seems to focus on simple Spiritual faith and love.**
  - ix. **The tension between the Synoptics and John is more of a balancing act... the two in concert are what we should all be aiming for.**
- d) **Gospel Coalition for the Next Generation – website**
  - i. **Basic divide in the Gospel – justification vs. sanctification**
  - ii. **Hodges – Johnine – belief in simple faith – Spiritual Formation.**

## Theology 1.3 - Trinity

---

- iii. Piper – Pauline – disciplined doctrine of justification played out in action – Biblical Literacy.
- iv. McClure – Synoptic Kingdom minded community – gospel in practice in this life today – Leadership Development or Missio Christi.

### 5) Roman Catholicism

- a) At the heart of Catholicism [vs. Protestantism] is the difference in the delivery system of faith. There is much general agreement in terms of the basics of faith – God in Trinity, Jesus as God and the only atonement, etc. One of the real problems in the Church is our tendency to divide into segments what God intended to be unified... we prefer to group in like-minded clusters rather than forge unity in faith believing. Some observations of faith in action:
  - i. When Sin happens
    - 1. Catholics – forgiveness is available to apply by penitence and ritual response dependent on the nature and severity of the sin.
    - 2. Anabaptists taught that there is one means of grace available to all who are in Christ which is immediate and personal.
    - 3. Catholics apply 7 sacraments as a reception of salvific grace. It is a pay as you go response to sin and salvation.
    - 4. Anabaptists taught that sin was paid once and for all, even though the sin-nature is a continual matter and must be dealt with before entry into heaven.
    - 5. Catholics – 7 sacraments help cut down the time that would otherwise need to be spent in purgatory to pay the sin debt.
- b) In Catholicism:
  - i. Grace is administered through the intermediate authority of the ‘Holy Roman Catholic Church’ and their priests as mediators. They alone control the administration of Grace through the application of the sacraments.
  - ii. Faith is important, but the ritualistic delivery system of grace through the sacraments is equally important appropriated by the penitent faithful.
  - iii. Catholicism is a pay as you go approach to sin though the delivery of the sacraments.

6) For evangelical proclamation we should ask – “Is there a definitive core truth of faith? If so... what is it?”

- a) How does this play out through Scripture? This requires a general and specific understanding of Biblical Literacy – each of the Biblical authors had a slightly different view of theology which shaped their writings. These differences are not necessarily in conflict, but rather form a mosaic of faith we can learn from.
- b) How do these differences play out in NT Scripture in the:
  - a. Synoptics –
  - b. Johnine –
  - c. Pauline –

## Theology 1.3 - Trinity

---

- c) **What we believe as truth matters in how we teach and preach, and indeed the entire approach to our ministry. This requires a general and specific understanding of Spiritual Formation.**
  - a. **What are the initial faith requirements –**
  - b. **What are the maturity requirements –**
  - c. **How is heresy identified –**
  - d. **How is the ideal of Christ-likeness defined and proclaimed –**
- d) **Discipleship is a holistic approach to knowledge [head] and spiritual experience [heart]. The balance of these two necessarily lead to an outworking of faith [hands].**