

III. The Doctrine of God (Theology)

* Song: Our God of faithfulness, without injustice; Ascribe greatness to our God the Rock

Introduction

- * “Theology” proper is the study of God.
- * Throughout the entire world, cultures pray to, worship, and search for God.
- * God is the theme of poems, songs, stories, and dramas.
- * But while “God” is so familiar, He is so unknown.
- * To some God is a cosmic light or a guiding force, to others he is Brahman, Allah, or Buddha, and still to others, he is the sun a tree, or an animal.
- * Therefore, it is not enough to believe in some kind of god.
- * One must know the “One true God” who alone gives meaning to life, and life eternal.

A. The Various Views of God

- * When we study God, one's presuppositions are very important.
- * All other beliefs will flow from how you view God.
- * Let's quickly explore some of the primary ways in which people view God, or the presuppositions they have about God.

1. **Atheism**

- * Atheism is actually the absence of belief in a god.
- * An atheist is one who has no belief in god, or does not believe that God exists.
- * There are two kinds of atheists
 - * Dogmatic atheists: consciously promote the belief that there is no god
 - * Show comic: “I disbelieve in the one true God...”
 - * Practical atheists: simply live their lives as though there was no god.
- * Many atheists have simply substituted the worship of science, philosophy, technology, or even themselves as the object of worship.
- * The one who says “there s no God” is a foolish person, for he denies what is clearly revealed in the world, history, and in the deep recesses of his own heart (Ps. 14:1; Rom. 1:2; 3:3).
- * The one who comes to God must first believe that He exists and that He diligently rewards those who seek Him (Heb. 11:6).

2. **Agnosticism**

- * An agnostic is one who is without knowledge of God, or who believe that person cannot have certain knowledge of God.
- * God may or may not exist, we cannot know for certain.
- * *Joke:* Speaking of agnostics: what do you get when you cross an agnostic, a dyslexic, and an insomniac? A person who stays up all night wondering if there really is a dog.
- * For some, agnosticism becomes a convenient defense for living as though God does not exist and therefore without accountability to Him.
- * But God has clearly revealed Himself, and such people are left without excuse (Rom. 1:20).

3. **Pantheism**

- * Pantheism is the belief that God is all, and all is God.
- * The universe is god, the trees are god, the oceans are god, even man is god.
- * No distinction is made between God and creation.
- * Everything is an extension or attribute of God.

- * Hinduism is perhaps the best known expression of pantheism.
- * The Bible, however, clearly distinguishes a creator God from His creation (Gen. 1:2).
 - * God exists from eternity, but man has a beginning in time (Gen. 2:7)
 - * God is exalted above all that is in heaven and earth (Ps. 97:9)
 - * God's thoughts and ways are higher/above ours (Isa. 55:8; Rom. 11:33).

4. Dualism

- * Dualism is the belief in two opposing gods.
- * They are the god of evil/darkness and the god of good/light.
- * These gods are usually viewed as impersonal forces which influence man in his course of life.
- * Zoroastrianism is a prime example of dualism.
- * Christians have too often unknowingly embrace dualism in a faulty understanding of God and Satan.
 - * The reality of Satan should be acknowledged.
 - * But Satan is not to be viewed as a 2nd (evil) god.
 - * Nowhere in Scripture is he assigned the nature of deity.

5. Polytheism

- * Polytheism denotes the belief in many (poly) gods.
- * Remember the variety of gods in the Roman and Greek mythology (Zeus, Venus, Neptune, etc.).
- * Often these gods are in conflict; at times they enter the affairs of men.
- * Animism is sometimes viewed as an expression of polytheism, because it believes in many gods or spirits that abide in such places as trees, rocks, or rivers.
- * Also, popular Hinduism claims to have more than 300 million gods.
- * The Bible, however, acknowledges the existence of only one God, the true and living God.
- * It forbids the recognition, worship and service of any false gods (Ex. 20:3; 1 Sam. 5:3-4; Isa. 44:8-9).

6. Monotheism

- * Monotheism is the belief in only one (mono) god.
- * The Bible teaches the existence of only one true God (Dt. 6:4; Isa. 2:19).
- * Christianity believes that there is only one God, and is therefore a monotheistic religion.
- * But Christians are not the only ones who hold to a monotheistic view of God:
 - * Judaism (God is Yahweh)
 - * Islam (God is Allah)
 - * Deism (there is one god who is the transcendent and impersonal creator)
- * Therefore, monotheism alone is also not sufficient.
- * The Bible teaches a specific monotheism whose one personal God is both transcendent and immanent and exists as 3 eternal, inseparable persons.

7. Concluding comments:

- * We have seen that there are many views about God.
- * Since our belief flows out of our presuppositions, we must recognize ours for this class.

Presupposition: Belief in the existence of the one true God

- * We will maintain that the Scripture is divine revelation.
 - * So its claims about God may be expected to be reliable also.
 - * The Bible affirms the existence and nature of God.
- * We will maintain that the God of the Scriptures exists.
 - * Only on this basis are we able to explain the ultimate questions of life.
- * We will maintain that we can know God.
- * So we are not going to spend out time here today “proving” that God exists.
- * Rather, we will acknowledge that we are coming from the perspective of faith, with the presupposition that he exists.

Poem

- * In the words of the French scientist Blasé Pascal:

“If we assume that there is no God, and in the end it proves that we were right--what have we gained by that? Nothing essentially, we will still die.

If we assume that there is no God, and in the end it proves that we were wrong, what have we lost? Everything!

If we assume that there is a God, and in the end it proves that we were wrong--what have we lost by that? Essentially nothing.

But, if we assume that there is a God, and in the end it proves that we were right--what have we gained by that? Everything!

- * Man would be a fool not to accept the existence of God at the risk of losing everything.
- * So, we will spend the rest of our time examining what God is like (his nature and attributes).

B. The Nature of God

Discussion

- * When you think of God, what pictures come to your mind?
- * Some see God like a grandfather figure, Santa Claus, a bright light, a fearsome tyrant...
- * Our views of God have been conditioned by our backgrounds, family, culture, teaching.
- * Some of our perceptions may be accurate, but some of them may not.
- * Fortunately, God has revealed Himself to us in the Scriptures!
- * Next we will examine the character of God as revealed in his Self-disclosure.
- * We can come with the confidence that the Scriptures reveal to us who God really is.
- * The Bible doesn't try to answer all of our questions, but what it does give is accurate.

1. God is Incomprehensible yet Knowable

- * *He can't be known completely, but he can be known truly.*

a. We can know God through innate knowledge (Rom. 1:19-20).

- * Innate knowledge speaks of the capacity all men have to recognize

- that there is a deity, and the capacity to worship it.
- * But innate capacity by itself is not adequate.

b. We can know God through acquired knowledge

- * knowledge of God gained by studying his revelation & experiencing him personally (John 17:3).
- * He has chosen to communicate Himself to us (Scripture & personally)
- * God has revealed himself through His son Jesus (1 John 5:20).
- * We can experience him in our worship, preaching, gifts, etc.
- * Life experience deepens our knowledge of God, but we must:
 - * make sure that the experiences are in line with biblical rev.
 - * make sure grow out of our response to biblical revelation.

* *While God is knowable, we will never completely understand all there is to know about Him.*

c. Our knowledge of God is imperfect and incomplete

- * Although we say that God can be “known”, we admit that we cannot fully know or comprehend Him.
- * We will never have mastered all that there is to know about God.
- * That would allow us to change places with him.
- * Our finite reasoning alone cannot grasp God's infinite greatness
- * Even though He has revealed Himself to us through Scripture, He is partially veiled to us by our human limitation.
- * How can something finite understand something infinite?
- * His ways are higher than our ways, his thoughts higher than our...
- * See Isa. 40:28; 55:8-9; Rom. 11:33-36; Job 11:7.

2. God is Self-Existent

- * God exists totally within himself; he is autonomous (Ex. 3:14; 6:3).
- * Unlike creation, his existence is not dependent upon anything or anyone else.
- * The father has life in himself (John 5:26).
- * The grounds of his existence are in himself and therefore he can be the grounds of existence for others.

3. God is spirit

- * God does not have a physical body; He is not composed of material substance
- * He is not confined to a material body (immaterial) (John 4:24).
- * He doesn't possess any of the properties belonging to matter that are perceivable through the senses (eyes, ears, hands, feet, etc.).
- * Since he is spiritual (without form and matter) he is invisible (Lk. 24:39; Jn. 1:18; 1 Tim. 1:17, 6:15-16).
- * But biblical authors use **anthropomorphisms** to express God in terms we can understand (Gen. 3:2-3; Ps. 34:15; Isa. 66:1).
- * They simply are used to help us relate to the activity of God.

4. God is personal

- * God is not an impersonal force (like Pantheism or Hinduism would hold).
- * He has a personality, and is capable of experiencing emotions.
- * God is a personal spirit being who relates in a personal way to His creation.
- * God speaks, loves, hates, cares, and has emotion.

- * And he desires to commune with us.
- * He must be personal for Him to desire to have a relationship with us.
- * This kind of a belief in a personal God is known as “theism.”

5. **God is unity**

- * The Lord our God is one God (Deut. 6:4).
- * Numerically, there is only one God, and so He is indivisible.
- * The Trinity makes up 1 God.
- * Humans are a composite of many factors: Physical, mental, social, spiritual, etc.
- * The Lord our God is one God (I Kings 8:60)

6. **God is transcendent**

- * God goes beyond our known earthly existence.
- * He is set apart, or “other than” his creation.
- * Before he ever created the world and man, God existed.
- * He is high and lifted up, sovereign over all, and beyond human comprehension.
- * He is not identifiable in the finite realm, in a one-to-one ratio.
- * God is “wholly other” (Ex. 15:11; 1 Sam. 2:2; Isa. 57:15; Hosea 11:9).
- * Some people over-stress transcendence
- * They make God so distant from His creation that he is far removed from it.
- * He created, but then he removed himself from the created order and now has nothing to do with it.
- * God has no personal or relational connection with the world.
- * Such a view of God is called “deism.”
- * God’s transcendence must be seen in the proper balance/perspective.

* *While God is transcendent or set apart from his creation, he is also...*

7. **God is immanent**

- * Immanence refers to God’s presence and involvement with his creation.
- * Immanence speaks of God’s nearness or presence--He is not far from any of us.
- * He is near at hand and interacts with His creation.
- * He is not a remote, aloof, deity who created men then stepped back.
- * He indwells the believer (Acts. 17:27; Rom. 14:8; Matt. 6:25-30; 2 Cor. 1:3-4).
- * God can be trusted to always be present--He is in us.
- * God is close to us in space.
 - * Note: **Immanent** refers to space, not in time.
 - * **Imminent** refers to time--close at hand.
- * Some people over-stress immanence.
- * Some people don't have a proper balance between immanence & transcendence.
- * They are confused on the spatial nearness of God.
- * Consequently, they see no distinction between God and his creation.
- * This results in Pantheism (the belief that everything is God, even oneself).
- * We must be careful to keep God’s transcendence and His immanence in balance.

8. **God is Infinite**

* *God is infinite, or free from limitation (2 Chron. 2:6).*

a. **God is not limited by time--He is eternal**

- * God is not bound by time (Ps. 90:1-2)

- * God has neither beginning or ending (Isa. 44:6; Jude 25; Rev. 1:8).
 - * We are immortal: we had a beginning but we have no ending
 - * The universe had a first moment (Gen. 1:1) but not God.
- * The very name he called himself was simply “I AM”

b. God is not limited by space--He is omnipresent

- * Omnipresence refers to his capacity to be actively present any place where God wishes to be or where he is needed and called upon.
- * God’s presence permeates the whole universe.
- * He is not limited or bound by space (1 King 8:27; Ps. 139:7-12).
 - * “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” (Jer. 23:24)
- * God’s presence and power can be everywhere at all times. (Ps. 139:7-10)
- * This can be comforting or threatening depending on your spiritual state.
- * Sometimes it’s hard to understand the reality that God’s presence is everywhere, because of the fact that he is spirit rather than human flesh.

Story of little girl scared in a storm

One night there was a loud thunderstorm, accompanied by lightening and strong winds. The Bailey family had just gone to bed when a loud clap of thunder sounded. A scared little voice shouted from the next room, “Mama!” The mother responded assurance: “Sweetheart, go to sleep. Jesus is there with you.” Again, the lightening flashed and the thunder roared. “Mama!” came the child’s voice, “Mama, please come in here.” But Mrs. Baily was worn out from a full day’s activity, and her bed was so cozy and warm. “Honey, go to sleep. Jesus is watching over you.” “Mama,” the girl replied emphatically, “You come in here with Jesus and let me go in your bedroom with daddy!”

- * But rest assured, even though he is not physical, his presence is real just the same.
- * Note, just because God’s presence is capable of being everywhere at all times, does not mean that God will be actually present in all places.
 - * He is not in the liquor bottle, pornographic material, immoral sexual acts, etc.
 - * He is not in the empty can that I kick around with my boot.
- * This would simply be equating God with material objects.
- * Rather, omnipresence refers to his capacity to be actively present any place where God wishes to be or where he is needed and called upon.

c. God is not limited by knowledge--He is omniscient

- * God knows all things perfectly, past, present, and future (Ps. 139:1-6).
- * His knowledge is innate (intuitive)--he didn’t have to learn it--it’s natural.
- * The knowledge of God is beyond anything that we could understand.

God knows perfectly

- * His knowledge is complete and perfect--it has no flaws or gaps.
- * God does not forget.
 - * In the case of our sin, he remembers them against us, no more.

God knows the future

- * The future, which appears open, undetermined, and uncertain to us, is

already known by God.

- * Some question: "Then where is my freedom of choice, if God already knows my future?"
- * But God's knowledge is not causative.
- * He does not make it happen, he just knows that it will.
- * God doesn't just *have* a bunch of knowledge--he *uses* it.
- * God's wisdom involves His perfect application of His infinite knowledge in order to accomplish His will.

d. God is not limited by power--He is omnipotent

- * "Ah Lord God Thou has made the heavens...nothing is too difficult for thee." (Jer. 32:17)
- * God can bring to pass anything that he wills.
- * God has inexhaustible strength--nothing is too hard for Him (Gen. 17:1; Jer. 32:7; Matt. 19:26).
- * This is not boundless energy, or an uncontrolled ability to do anything at random, not just for the sake of display.
- * His power is controlled in order to accomplish his plan.
- * See Gen. 1; Matt. 19:26; Luke 1:35.
- * Omnipotence does not mean that God can do anything.
- * This power cannot cause him to do something contrary to his nature.
- * As a matter of fact, there are several things that we as humans can do that God cannot do:
 - * He cannot be tempted to do evil.
 - * He cannot lie.
 - * He cannot commit suicide.
 - * He cannot sin.
 - * He cannot violate his own nature.
 - * He cannot force humans to love and obey him.

e. God is not limited by imperfection--He is perfect

- * God is the absolute, the standard; He is perfection.
- * He has no weakness, flaws, or imperfection.
- * There is no place for relativism in Christianity - belief in God demands absolutes.

9. God is Constant (Immutable)

- * The nature of God does not change.
- * To change would be to become better or worse, and since he is perfect, he doesn't need to change--there can be neither improvement nor degeneracy.
- * He doesn't need to grow, mature, or become.
- * There is no danger of decay or diminishing.
- * Song: Great is thy faithfulness "there is not shadow of turning with thee"
- * Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29, 35; Mal. 3:6; Ex 3:14; Isa. 41:4; 48:11-12; Ps. 102:26-27; Heb. 13:8; Jam. 1:17.

Optional Discussion:

- * What about the biblical passages where God seemingly changes his mind?
 - * Jonah - destroy Nineveh (Jonah 3:9)
 - * Abraham - destroy Sodom & Gomorra, but would save it for 10 righteous (Gen. 6:6)
- * There seems to be flexibility within God, in spite of his immutability.

- * Immutability is not defined as immobility--God is not set in concrete.
- * God's essential character and ultimate purposes are what doesn't change.
- * What might appear to be God changing, is really man changing in relationship to God:
 - * God condemned Nineveh because they were sinners.
 - * When they repented, he did not carry out their destruction.
 - * They changed, not God.
 - * God's character was consistent.
- * We are viewing things from a finite human way of thinking.
 - * We want to impose human categories on God.
 - * We have finite thinking & it doesn't always answer our questions

C. The Moral Attributes of God

1. Holiness:

- * God's nature has absolute separation from all impurity of any kind (Isa. 6:1-5).
- * God is not contaminated with sin (Lev. 11:44; 1 Pet. 1:15-16).
- * This makes God separate from His creation.
- * God is infinitely perfect in himself: separated from all that is impure or corrupt.
- * The closer we come to God, the more aware we are of sin.
- * *Show comic: Man aware of his sin...*
- * We laugh at him, but really, this understanding would bring revival.

2. Righteousness (Justice):

- * Righteousness is God's holiness in action.
- * Righteousness is the expression of God's holiness in his dealings with his creatures (Neh. 9:7-8).
- * Everything which God does is just and right (Dan. 9:14).
- * While God is patient with sinners out of His great love, He is also entirely just in that He rightly judges all sin by the same standard (Jer. 9:24; Ps. 145:19)
- * All of His dealing with men are right, whether they be rewards or punishments.
- * In Christ, God's love and justice meet (Rom. 3:25f).

Discussion

- * If God is just, then why do we sometimes see the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper?
- * Why does God allow the righteous to suffer (ex. Job)?
 - * God's perspective is bigger than our limited view.
 - * Remember, the outworking of God's justice extends beyond this life.
 - * In the end, the faithful will always be rewarded, and the wicked will always be punished.
 - * Read the book of Habakkuk.

3. Truthfulness (Veracity)

- * God is truth--He is what He claims to be (Jer. 10:10).
- * God is perfectly reliable in his revelation and *he sees things as they really are*.
- * He speaks and it is truth--for He cannot lie (Heb. 6:18; Num. 23:19ff).
- * There is no deceitfulness in Him--He is truth.
- * And, he has revealed himself honestly.

- * There is no difference between who he is and who he has revealed himself to be.
- * See Ex. 34:6; Ps. 25:10; 31:6; Isa. 65:16; Titus. 1:2.

4. **Goodness:**

- * God is not only separated from evil, but he is positively good (Mark 10:18).
- * God's benevolent kindness to all of his creation.
- * God deals bountifully and kindly w/his creation (Ps. 145:9, 15f; Matt. 6:26; 28).
- * God cares about the welfare of His creation.
- * He blesses them whether or not they are his children (Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:17).
- * He shows common grace to all (Ps. 36:6)

Discussion

- * If God is so good, then why did he create a world in which there are evil, pain, and sorrow? (War, genocide, crime, etc.)
 - * God originally created a world free from sin, pain, sickness, etc.
 - * It was man who chose to sin and caused those things to enter the world.
- * But if God is sovereign, couldn't he wipe out the sin and sickness?
 - * Yes God is sovereign, but that does not mean he will operate us like robots, that he will control mankind like a dictator.
 - * There are 2 dimensions of God's sovereignty:
 - * He is sovereign within history, over those who accept his sovereignty and submit to it.
 - * He is sovereign over history, in determining its outcomes, and in due course, it things will end up as God has decreed.
 - * Unfortunately, within these parameters, rebellious humans have the freedom to bring ruin on themselves and their environments whenever they refuse to submit to God's sovereignty.
 - * In spite of this, God can bring about good in the midst of suffering.
 - * Christ is the ultimate example of this.
 - * God did do something about the evil and suffering in the world, He sent his son Jesus Christ to deliver man from his plight.

5. **Love:**

- * God is love and is the source of our love one toward another (1 Jn. 4:8).
- * God is characterized by agape love-the strongest of all kinds of love.
- * "I love you no matter what."
- * This love is extended to anyone, even those who are not worthy of it.
- * The love of God is what moved him to send his son to die for us (John 3:16).
- * God's love moves beyond the emotional and volitional realms.
- * God has no compulsion to make himself known, but his love for us.

6. **Grace:**

- * God's unmerited favor shown to those who have forfeited it, and are by nature under condemnation of sin. (All of us.) (Eph. 2:8).
- * God gives us what we don't deserve.
- * All of the spiritual blessings that come to the sinner are the result of God's grace (Eph. 1:6-8; Titus 3:24).

7. **Mercy:**

- * If grace is God giving us what we don't deserve, then mercy is when God

doesn't give us what we do deserve (Eph. 2:4).

- * God is compassionate and tenderhearted on those in need (Ps. 103:13; Mt. 9:35).
- * God's pity shown to those in misery or distress, irrespective of what they deserve.
- * God's mercy is abundant and enduring (Ps. 136).
- * Note: God's mercy must be seen in balance with His justice.
- * In the end, mercy does not cancel out the justice of a holy God, if one continues to refuse the claims of Christ.

8. **Long-suffering:**

- * This refers to God's patience.
- * Because of God's mercy he is slow to anger and he bears long with those who continue in disobedience.
- * God is patient and suffers long for the sin of His creation.
- * The love, grace, and mercy of God shown to people in spite of their long and continued disobedience and rejection of God.
- * Ultimate judgment/justice will come, but it takes time.
- * He gives them a chance. (Ex. 34:6-7)

Summary

- * God calls upon us to emulate His moral attributes.
- * As His people, we are to be loving people who are concerned about our neighbor and our world.
- * We are to act with grace and mercy toward all men.
- * We are called to holiness--and should separate ourselves from the world to God's standard.

D. God is a Trinity

Opening Story

There were once two men traveling on a train, a scientist and a poet, they were riding in the same compartment. They had never met before, so naturally, there wasn't much conversation between the two. The poet was minding his own business, looking out the window at the beauty of the passing terrain. The scientist was very uptight, trying to think of things he didn't know so he could try to figure them out.

Finally, the scientist was so bored, that he said to the poet, "Hey, do you want to play a game?" The poet being content with what he was doing, ignored him and continued looking out the window, humming quietly to himself. This irritated the scientist, who asked again, "Hey, you, do you want to play a game? I'll ask you a question, and if you get it wrong, you give me \$5. Then, YOU ask ME a question, and if I can't answer it, I'll give YOU \$5." The poet thought about this for a moment, but he decided against it, seeing that the scientist was obviously a very bright man. He politely turned down the scientist's offer.

The scientist, who, by this time was going mad, tried a final time. "Look, I'll ask you a question, and if you can't answer it, you give me \$5. Then you ask ME a question, and if I can't answer it, I'll give you \$50!" Now, the poet was not that smart academically, but he wasn't totally stupid. He readily accepted the offer.

"Okay," the scientist said, "what is the EXACT distance between the Earth and the Moon?" The poet, obviously not knowing the answer, didn't stop to think about the scientist's question. He took a \$5 bill out of his pocket and handed it to the scientist. The scientist happily accepted the bill and promptly said, "Okay, now it's your turn."

The poet thought about this for a few minutes, then asked, "all right, what goes up a mountain on three legs but comes down on four?" The bright glow quickly vanished from the scientist's face. He thought about this for a long time, taking out his notepad and making numerous calculations. He finally gave up on his notepad and took his laptop, using his Multimedia Encyclopedia. After about an hour of this, the poet quietly watching the mountain of Colorado go by the whole time, the scientist FINALLY gave up. He reluctantly handed the poet a \$50 bill. The poet accepted it graciously, turning back to the window.

"Wait!" the scientist shouted. "You can't do this to me! What's the answer?" The poet looked at the scientist and calmly put a \$5 bill into his hand.

- * *There are some questions that we will never be able to answer.*
- * *Trinity is one such subject.*
- * *We will never have all of the answers to all of our questions about the Trinity.*
- * *But that doesn't mean that we can't attempt to understand the basic concept of Trinity.*
- * *Let's examine this topic and see what questions we can answer.*

1. What is Trinity?

a. Working definition

- * God is one divine being who exists from eternity as 3 equal persons (God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

Discussion

- * Break up into groups of 3-4 people.
- * A friend of yours has just heard you state that you believe God is a Trinity.
- * He/she accuses you of believing in 3 gods.
- * How do you answer this?

Problems with defining/discussing Trinity

- * The very concept of Trinity (1yet3) is hard to understand & communicate
- * The language used in talking about the Trinity is difficult & mystifying.
- * Scripture does not sketch out a clear doctrine of the Trinity.
- * *Because this is such a difficult concept, there are incorrect ways of understanding the Trinity.*

b. Incorrect understanding of Trinity: Tritheism

- * Belief in three separate Gods.
- * This denies the unity of God and results in an elevated polytheism.
- * The father is God; the Son is God; and the HS is God.
- * But the three are not each a God; rather, together they are *the* God.
- * The A/G tends to practice this, though we do not claim it.

2. Proper understanding of Trinity

The Orthodox view of Trinity maintains:

a. God is a unity.

- * There is only one God (Monotheism--not Tritheism)
- * We must make sure and maintain the unity of God: there is only 1 God.
 - * See Deut. 6:4; Eph. 4:6
- * The Bible has strong teachings on the oneness that exists between God the Father, son and Holy Spirit.
 - * See Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; Mark 12:2-9; John 10:30; 14:26; 15:26; Rom. 1:4; 5:5-6; 8:2-3, 9, 16-17; 14:17-18; 15:16-17, 30; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Pet. 1:2; etc.
- * The idea of Trinity does not destroy the idea of unity.
- * The 3 persons are the same in their nature or essence.
- * They share the same nature.
- * Though their functions/expressions may differ, they are = in their nature.

b. In the one God there are three persons: Father, Son and HS.

- * God is one essence/nature with 3 subsistences.
- * The Scriptures (and church history) make abundant reference to this.
- * See Mt 28:19; Jn 14:16-17; 2 Co 13:14; Lk 3:21-22; 1 Co 12:4-6, etc.

Not contemporary meaning of "person"

- * There is a problem with our contemporary use of the word "person".
- * "1 God in 3 "persons" is not to be understood according to how we define "person."
- * We use it to separate and distinguish between different people.
- * In this understanding there are not three distinct beings in the Godhead.
- * We must understand a fuller use of "person"

Historical background of "person"

- * Let's consider the historical use of Greek word "person".
- * The early church first stated the doctrine of the Trinity in the Athenasian creed. They said he was "God in three persons".
- * This was written when "person" was a more fluid word
- * It came out of a Greek theater setting.
- * One actor had to assume many roles.
 - * This could be done through the exchange of masks.
 - * The mask enabled them to become different persons.

Relating this to God

- * God has 3 different ways of expressing himself.
- * God in three modes of existence.
- * He has three ways of existence, but all are eternal and simultaneous.
- * Like the man who is a husband/father, friend, and doctor.
- * These are three simultaneous expressions, not sequential expressions.

So, one God in 3 persons

- * There are not 3 separate beings in the Godhead.

* Rather, the 3 persons share the same essence or nature, however, each may have primary functions in which the others share in participation.

c. Each of the persons is fully and completely God

- * Divine names are ascribed to each of them.
 - * Biblical writers did not throw the name of God around.
- * Divine Attributes are Ascribed to each of them.
 - * Eternal, etc.
- * Divine Works are Ascribed to each of them.
 - * Creation, etc.
- * They are listed together in Scripture-on an even level.
 - * See Mt 28:19; Jn 14:16-17; 2 Co 13:14; Lk 3:21-22; 1 Co 12:4-6

- * Son--John 1:1; Jesus: “if you’ve seen me you’ve seen the Father
- * Holy Spirit--Acts 5:3-4 Ananias & Saphira lied to the HS/God.

3. Analogies to help explain the Trinity

* *Various analogies have been suggested to help one grasp this complex issue.*

a. 3 sides of an equilateral triangle

- * The 3 persons of the Trinity are likened to the 3 sides of a triangle.
- * Together the 3 sides make the one triangle, together the 3 persons comprise the one God.
- * All the persons are distinct but equal and necessary to make up God.

b. 3 forms of water

- * The Trinity can be likened to water, which can be expressed in 3 forms.
- * liquid, solid (ice), gas (steam)
- * All 3 share the same chemical substances (H₂O), but are separate in identity.

c. 3 parts of an egg

- * Shell, white and yoke.
- * The three are distinct, yet all make up the same egg.

d. Man with 3 modes of expression

- * One man can be a husband/father, friend, and doctor.
- * This analogy helps demonstrate some functional distinctions,
- * but we must still caution to not separate them into three Gods.

* *While these analogies may be helpful to aid in understanding, one should remember their inadequacies.*

* *Analogies are not perfect representations.*

* *In the end, the only thing we can rely on is the teaching of Scripture.*

4. Conclusion: We must believe in the Trinity even if we can’t explain it.

- * Scripture reveals that God is one & is expressed in 3 persons-Father, Son & HS.
- * We must accept this, even if we can’t explain how it exists or functions.

- * So, whether I can express it or explain it, I must believe it.
- * Biblical revelation overrides my necessity of understanding or explaining--I must still believe it.
- * Augustine said:
 - “The person who tries to understand the Trinity will lose his mind.
The person who tries to deny the Trinity will lose his soul.”