

Fellowship with God the Trinity

Several years ago as I (Pip) was reading the bible, God spoke into my heart through this verse. **1 Corinthians 1:9** *'God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord'*

I saw for the first time that God the Father has called me into his fellowship with Jesus. Up to that point, although I loved God deeply, God as my Father always seemed remote and distant to me. I knew in my head that God loves me because the bible says so but I lacked assurance in my heart. When God switched the lights on in my heart that he loved me so much that he wanted me to know him as Jesus knew him I was amazed. I began to see that he wasn't like my earthly dad; strict, quick to rebuke, slow to hug and affirm. It was a revelation to me and a personal revival began in my heart. I began to understand the significance of God as the Trinity in ways I hadn't understood before.

The word 'called' also means 'to be summoned.' It is more than a random invitation or a one off request; it is a direct and personal summons into the presence of God! Imagine you received a letter from the King or Queen of England summoning you to Buckingham Palace. You would be pretty impressed and you would probably tell all your family and friends and go and buy a new outfit for the occasion but you wouldn't pack your bag for an overnight stay with royalty or expect to be able to access their company day or night. Yet in this verse the King of Kings does just that – he summons us into the fellowship or communion that Jesus enjoys with him eternally.

What is this fellowship of Jesus?

It is nothing less than the intimate, joyous inter-relationship of eternal love Jesus has with the Father and the Holy Spirit. You and I have been called into this richness of eternal love and into the unity and union of the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit so that you *'... being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God'* **Ephesians 3:17-19**

Doctrine of the Trinity

The word 'trinity' isn't in the bible but the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are seen throughout. In the 4th/5th centuries, heresies denying that Jesus was the Son of God faced the early church. A council of theologians came together to address these doctrinal challenges biblically and explain the reality of God as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit revealed in the bible. This became known as the doctrine of the Trinity and the next section explains the main points.

Trinity means Tri-unity – there is one God who exists eternally as 3 distinct persons. There are two important points to keep in mind; God is one in essence and 3 in persons.

1. **One in essence:** Essence is the stuff that makes you who you are. Another word for essence is 'being' or 'substance'

God is Spirit. God is one in his spirit being. There is only one God...

Deuteronomy 6:4

'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one'

God the Father and Jesus the Son declare their eternal nature and their existence in their name, 'I AM.'

Exodus 3:14

'...And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM". And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, "I AM has sent me to you."'

John 8:58

'Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."'

2. **Three in Persons.** God is 3 persons who relate to one another as community. Let's unpack this a bit.
 - a. God is Love – The New Testament is written in Greek and the Greek word for love is 'agape.' Agape describes a love that is devotional, sacrificial, outward, giving, covenantal in its meaning, unbreakable in its promise, eternal in its duration and unconditional. As a fountain gushes out the water of life so God's love is overflowing and is the source for all life.
 - b. Love has to be expressed through relationship. This is why Christianity is so unique to all other faiths because the Father calls us into a relationship that is intimate, personally experienced and established through sacrificial love.
 - c. God calls us into the relationship that he already enjoys. It takes three people to make a community and this is the fellowship we are summoned into - the community of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Through sin we lost our home in this love and through salvation we are restored to this intimacy we lost.

God is one in being and 3 in persons. The following diagram¹ explains this



The Father glorifies the Son and the Holy Spirit who in turn glorify the Father. To glorify is to honour, value and to treasure another. This love is outgiving and we are called into this unity.

The Father is not the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is not the Son nor is the Son the Father. They are 3 distinct persons who are united in love.

The Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son and the Spirit is in the Son and the Father. They are ONE and indivisible. Because they are one they are equal, there is no hierarchy.

John 10:30 *"I and My Father are one."*

¹ Diagram from gospelcoalition.org

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are fully God.

Ephesians 1:2

'Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.'

Titus 2:13

'...looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ'

Acts 5:3-4

'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit... you have not lied to men but to God.'

The significance of the Trinity for believers

My misrepresentation of God as Father affected my relationship with him. I knew that Jesus had forgiven me for my sins and I knew the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in my life but the Father was remote and distant. Consequently my knowing of God was stunted. I was not rooted and grounded in his love as he intended me to be; nor could I be filled with all his fullness. I had projected my experience of earthly fathering onto Father God. The entrance of God's word into my heart changed my misconceptions and gave me insights into the significance of the Trinity for every believer.

1. The Father calls us into fellowship

1 Corinthians 1:9

'God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord'

2. Furthermore, we were called into this fellowship before the foundation of the world

Ephesians 1:4

'...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.'

3. The Father sent the Son into the world to deal with all that separates us from him

John 3:16

'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.'

4. From the foundation of the world the Son was prepared to be the sacrifice for sin

Revelations 13:8

'...written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.'

5. Through the Cross the Son makes our fellowship possible

Colossians 1:21-22

'And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death to present you holy, and blameless and above reproach in His sight –'

6. The Son sends the Holy Spirit to believers

John 15:26

'But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.'

7. The Holy Spirit establishes our fellowship as the Father and the Son make their home in us through the Holy Spirit abiding in us.

John 14:23

'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him and We will come to him and make Our home with him.'

8. The Holy Spirit bears witness in our spirits of our relationship with God.

Romans 8:15

'For you did not receive a spirit of bondage again to fear but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father". The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.'

9. The Holy Spirit is God's abiding presence in us teaching us all things as we walk through life

John 16:13

'However, when He, the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.'

Note: don't divide God in your thinking; whatever the Father is doing, the Son and the Spirit are united with him.

The significance of Jesus' prayer

Before Jesus went to the cross he prays for his disciples and those yet to believe.

John 17:20-24

'I pray... that they may be one, as You, Father are in Me and I in You; that they also may be one in Us...'

Much can be said from these scriptures but I want to focus on one significant point here. From the beginning of time, God's heart is for us to be ONE in him. He created us to live out of this fellowship and unity that he enjoys as the Trinity. Adam and Eve knew this reality before the fall. Jesus' last prayer is for the Father to establish this for us through the cross. The cross reverses the fall. **Through new birth a wonderful miracle happens.** We are joined in spirit to Jesus.

1 Corinthians 6:17

'But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him'

Through faith in Jesus, not only are our sins forgiven but we are made ONE with God. We are literally brought into the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is not something we receive after death. It's an eternal fact that is to be our present reality. This is

the fellowship we are called to. Jesus has established you in this fellowship through his death and resurrection. Through faith in him you enter into this fellowship. Nothing can separate you from this place, yet how many of us know this oneness with God? I encourage you to lay hold of God for this so that these truths become your reality too.

2 Corinthians 13:14

'May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all, Amen'

This love relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit extends into eternity. In the next session we look at the person of the Holy Spirit.

Suggested Further Study

Living in union with God

Fellowship with Others