

1John 4:7-21

No Christian doctrine is as mysterious as the Trinity

No Christian doctrine is more abhorrent to Judaism than the Trinity

And yet the doctrine is unmistakable

Jonathan Edwards – I think the doctrine of the Trinity to be the highest and deepest of all divine mysteries

Although the Trinity is hard for us to comprehend

It is how God reveals Himself in Scripture

The Trinity is defined as one God eternally existing in three Persons

It is important to note that they are not three different gods

Rather God is three persons in one essence

The Divine essence subsists wholly and indivisibly

Simultaneously and eternally in the three members of one Godhead

The Father – the Son - and the Holy Spirit

The Bible is clear that these three Persons together are one and only one God

John 10 – Jesus speaking – The Father and I are One

1Cor 3 – Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you

Rom 8 – If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him

The Father and Jesus are one – the Father and the Holy Spirit are one

Jesus and the Holy Spirit are one

Yet while exhibiting the unity of the Trinity

The Bible also shows the distinctiveness of the three

Let me put it this way

The Bible makes it clear that God is one God – not three

And the one God is a trinity of three Persons each with personality

This isn't something that just appeared in the NT

The OT implies the idea of the Trinity in several ways

For instance the name for God – Elohim is a plural noun suggesting more than one

In Genesis God says – Let Us make man in Our image

Deut 6 – Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One

The word translated One means unity – it could easily read

Hear O the Israel the Lord is our God, the Lord is Unity

The NT builds on these truths

Jesus specifically mentions all three in His last message of Matthew

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit

And Paul closed his Letter to the Corinthians with this benediction

2Cor 13 – The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all

The Bible is clear - there is only one God

Who exists and always has existed as a Trinity of Persons

To deny the existence of the Trinity is to deny the very nature of God

James White – The Trinity is the highest revelation God has made of Himself to His people. It is the brightest star in the firmament of God's truths. (Now listen) We must know, understand and love the Trinity to be completely Christian. This is why we say the Trinity is the greatest of God's revealed truths.

It is the truth of the Trinity that explains God as a relational Being

I have heard people say that God created us because He was lonely

As Al Borland might say - I don't think so, Tim

From eternity past the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Have enjoyed the complete fullness of interpersonal relationships

Let me put it another way - God has never been lonely

Now all I have said is leading me to this

Bases upon His perfect relationship and desire to fellowship with His creatures

God created us as relational beings – we need to relate to be complete

Being created in God's image means that we have self-awareness

We have the ability to think rationally - appreciate beauty

Acquire wisdom and understand morality

But the most significant aspects of being made in the image of God

Is our ability to be aware of God, commune with Him,

And our ability love God and to love others

We not only have the ability to love – we have a need to be loved

The love we have for others is a shadow but its a real reflection

Of the perfect love within the Trinity

The NT mentions many kinds of love

But the supreme love is the love that comes to us from God at salvation

Rom 5 – The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us

One of the great truths of the Bible is that God's love now resides in us
God placed His love within us and we display it by loving others
Is love important – you bet it is – John says
God's love in us is one of the three proofs we have of our salvation
In today's passage John discusses perfect love as it relates to
The character of God – the coming of Christ – the Christians claim of faith
And the Christian's confidence in the coming judgment

First let's look at perfect love and the Character of God (READ 7,8)
John calls us beloved – which means, “divinely loved ones”
As he calls us to love each other he uses the word “agape”
Unlike friendship - emotional - or physical love
Agape love is giving love and self-sacrificing service
Agape love is love given to someone who needs to be loved
Not necessarily someone who is attractive or lovable
That is just how God loves unlovable sinners like us
And I shouldn't have to mention that we all have the need to be loved
The first reason we are to extend love to one another
Is that the love in us is from God
Jesus is the source of your life and He's also the source of your agape love
So as you abide in Christ you will manifest the love of God in your life
Now if you examine your life and find that you are not all that loving
The reason is – you are not all that abiding
Remember as you abide in Christ, Christ abides in you
And the love of Christ will just be naturally displayed through your life
Not displaying love – not abiding – it's really that simple
Of course the love that John is writing about
Is divine love that God gives to those who are His
So everyone God has saved in the past
Continues to give evidence of salvation in the present
Then John writes – my paraphrase – selfish lives do not know God
This could mean that if you're selfish you aren't saved
But there are too many unsanctified selfish Christians
For that to be the only answer - So plain and simple

If you are not sacrificing for others you're not living the Christian life
If you are saved at all
Now the Jewish leaders of Jesus' time knew a lot about God
But they didn't know God
The evidence was their life of selfishness and their judgment of others
The absence of God's love in them revealed their lostness
Just as conclusively as did their incorrect theology
By His very nature God is love
So He is the source of love and He defines love
The love of God explains why God created humans with free will
He wants us to love and serve Him because we want to love and serve Him
God's greatest commandment is that we love Him
With all our heart soul mind and strength
And when we are saved He places His love within us
So it is God's love in us that gives us our love for Him
This is love not that we loved God, but that He loved us
It was God's love for us that sent His Son to the cross
If God only operated on the basis of His justice
All of us would stand condemned – not one of us would make it to heaven
But here we are living by grace because of the love of God
God loves those who are His children with a special kind of love
But God's love for all mankind can be seen in every day life
We live on a planet that supports life – all of us get sunshine – all get rain
A W Tozer said – We take sane breaths because God is good to us
God doesn't owe you anything and yet
Common grace is the reformers term for God being good to everyone
Every good thing in your life comes from His love

We see perfect love modeled in the coming of Christ (READ 9-11)
God's love is most clearly seen in the advent of Jesus
Jesus' life death and resurrection is the supreme example of love
Divine logic devised a plan to rescue men and women
And then divine love carried it out
Divine love caused Jesus to seek and to save the lost

We didn't love God so He rescued us – no we were at war with Him

It was God who loved us – and out of His divine eternal infinite love

God sent His only Son to be an atoning sacrifice for our sins

Isa 53 - All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the love of God has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

God sent His only Son into the world so that dead men and women

Might live through Him – that is love

So we should follow God's example

And love others with sacrificial Christ-like love

God not only gave us His perfect love when He redeemed us

In Christ God gave us the perfect model of sacrificial love

His and His Son's

Now let's look at perfect love and the Christian's claim to faith (12-16)

Since no one has ever seen God at any time

And Jesus no longer walks the streets

People will not see God's love unless God's people show it to them

People will not see God's love unless we His children love one another

And if we sacrificially love one another – it will be Jesus on display

Our love of each other will show that God abides in us

And it will show that His love is perfected in us

We have a mission in life – an important one

The unseen God displays His character through His visible children

The love that originated in God and was manifested in His Son

Is now visibly seen through the lives of His children – you and me

Bruce Milne – The Holy Spirit brings us into a living relationship with Jesus, so that we share in His redemption. All Christian experience can be focused in this one gift of God to us through the Spirit - our union with Christ.

We can know that we are saved by God's gift to us of His Holy Spirit

The Spirit in us makes us one with Jesus – it's that simple

Not that the Father loves us – the Son loves us and the Spirit loves us

Brothers and sisters

Believe me when I say - you are loved (turn to each other and say)

There is a great hymn that speaks to the knowledge of that love

Loved with everlasting love, led by grace that love to know; Spirit leading from above, Thou has taught

me it is so. Oh this full and full and perfect peace; oh this transport all divine, with a joy that cannot cease; I am His and He is mine

God's love is eternal and His gift of the Holy Spirit forever seals it
As we abide in Christ, God abides in us and His Spirit works in our hearts
Now listen – our believing the Gospel is evidence of the Spirit's ministry
Because sinners are dead they will never come to God on their own
Saving faith is possible only because God through His Spirit grants it
John writes – you can believe me – I was there – He chose me
I saw His life - I saw Him die – I saw Him raised from the dead
I know without a doubt - the Father sent Jesus to be the Savior of the world
Now an awful lot of people saw everything John saw
Heard much of what John heard and yet they didn't believe
John wouldn't have believed if the Father hadn't called him
Jesus hadn't chosen him and the Spirit hadn't opened his eyes to the truth

Finally God's love gives us confidence in the coming judgment

(READ 17-21)

Holy Spirit love increases our love for God and each other

And Holy Spirit love causes us

To be confident about the judgment to come

John writes that you can live your life with confidence

Your future is secure and bright

For as a born again believer you have nothing to fear from God

When you think about appearing before God

As someday you will

You should face it not with fear but with certainty and boldness

And as your love for the family of God increases

Through the power of the Holy Spirit

So will your confidence in your salvation

Like I said a few of weeks ago

Your future's so bright you ought to wear shades

Phil 3 – For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior; the Lord Jesus Christ

Paul uses the phrase - eagerly wait for a Savior

Now that's way past not worrying about it

It's the same at that first date you had – the day arrives and as the clock gets closer to the time of the date so does your anticipation – you want the clock to speed up – you want to be with that person

In the movie West Side Story Tony loves Maria

And he is going to see her that night

So of course he sings – the minutes seem like hours; the hours go so slowly, and still the day is light - but tonight – tonight - I'll see my love tonight

Brothers and sisters - that's eagerly awaiting – that is how you should be

When you consider your future life in heaven

You should be eagerly waiting for it

Finally John tells us – As He (Christ) is, so also are we in this world

Now that is an astounding thought – almost impossible for us to conceive

As Christ is so are you

This means a couple of things

First – when the Father looks at you He sees the righteousness of Jesus

1Cor 1 – By His (God's) doing you are in Christ, who has become to us wisdom from God and righteousness

When God sees you He sees His Son's character

Which means that God sees you not as you live today but how you will be

We tend to think of Jesus as our Friend and God as our Judge

Jesus is the good guy – but be wary of the Father

Nothing in salvation happens without the Father's plan and approval

He sent His Son to die on your behalf

He is the One who chose you before the foundation of the world

He is the One who has declared you – righteous

He has given you the Spirit as a pledge and a seal

God loves you passionately

Secondly Jesus didn't die just to get you out of hell and into heaven

Jesus died so that He might get Himself out of heaven and into you

Instead of the King walking on the earth

Bringing the good news of salvation to others – the Gospel

He has appointed millions of us as ambassadors to do that work for Him

An ambassador is someone sent from another country

Who brings the words of his king to the people of the country he is located

You are Jesus replacement on this earth

We are Christ's ambassadors
Sent to bring His Good News to a needy world
That is job number one
Now the conduct of an ambassador is to reflect the king he represents
The signature virtue of the King we represent is love
And the world will heed our message in the exact proportion
To the way that our lives reflect the message we bring
Let me put it in simple terms
We bring a message of love and forgiveness
But if our lives are not loving and forgiving – particularly to each other
The world will believe by our example that the message is false
And if our lives are loving and forgiving – particularly to each other
It validates our message and attracts others to Jesus
That is why John tells us that if we tell others we know God
And display hatred and bitterness towards each other
Who will believe the message and the message is important – it's vital

Let me close with a quote from C. S. Lewis

Someday God is going to invade this earth in force. We do not know when. We can only guess why He is delaying. He wants to give us the chance to join His side freely. God will invade. But I wonder if the people who ask God to interfere openly and directly in our world, quite realize what it will be like when He does. When that happens, it is the end of the world. When the author walks on the stage, the play is over. God is going to invade all right, but what is the good of saying you are on His side then, when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something else – something it never entered your head to conceive – comes crashing in; something so beautiful to some of us and so terrible to others that none of us will have any choice left? For this time it will be God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side. There is no use saying you choose to lie down, when you it has become impossible to stand up. That will not be the time for choosing; it will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen, whether we realized it before or not. Now today, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side. God is holding back to give us that chance. It will not last forever. We must take it or leave it.

Some of us have said a prayer and we think everything is OK
Some know passage after passage in the Bible
So they think everything is OK
John writes that maybe it isn't – take a good hard look at yourself
Are you loving others sacrificially – is the love of God coming through you

Agape love – giving self-sacrificing love

My life verse is

Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ, Jesus

Now one of the reasons that is my life verse

Is because I have had to start over so many times

But every day every hour every minute can be a new start with God

Maybe right now is the time for you to take that verse to heart

Forget your past and press on toward God today

Some of you may know you aren't saved – but today God brought you here

And if He brought you here that means He has called you

And Jesus has chosen you

Only one more step

Let the Holy Spirit bring you the new life that is in Jesus