

<p>The Trinity and Your Prayer Life Trinity Sunday, Holy Trinity Doncaster</p>	<p>3 June 2007</p>
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Introduction

Thanks for having me this Trinity Sunday.

What a wonderful opportunity it is today to reflect on the nature of God, Father, Son and Spirit.

If you're new here, or just visiting Holy Trinity church for the first time today, let me explain a little.

This is a Christian church, and Christians worship the one true God.

We believe that God has spoken through His Word, the Bible.

And the Bible speaks of one God and ruler of all.

The one God who reveals himself as Father, Son and Spirit – three persons in one God.

So that's why you'll hear Christians speak of God their Father who loves us; and Jesus, the Son of God who died for us; and God the Holy Spirit, who lives in us.

Three persons in one God, the Trinity.

If that sounds complicated, don't worry about it. Come back next week and the senior pastor here, Paul, will explain everything!

But for this morning, listen to what that great Christian thinker and apologist, C. S. Lewis, said about the doctrine of the Trinity.

He said, "The Trinity is either the most ridiculous, foolish thought conceptualised by man...

(because how can you have $1+1+1 = 1$?)

or else it is the most profound truth, so distinctly beautiful, found in Christianity alone." x2

Now, here's the question for us this morning: wait for it:

What does the distinctly beautiful, wonderful and glorious Trinity have to do with our prayer life? x2

You know the saying, "Everyone's an atheist until something goes wrong"?

Until you're at the end of your resources:

your business fails completely,

your relationships give you so much grief,

you or someone you love becomes desperately unwell –

at that point every atheist suddenly starts to pray!

The atheist **doesn't even know** if there's a god, but they begin to pray.

If you're a Christian here today, then **you know** your God: Father, Son and Spirit.

The question for you today is, how does the knowledge of God as Trinity affect your prayer life?

What I want to do this morning is to simply show you what difference the Trinity makes to Paul's prayer life; and what difference it should make to ours.

We're going to do three things together:

1. We're going to observe what Paul thinks about the Trinity;
2. we're going to observe how his thinking, his theology, affects his prayers' and
3. we're going to put that into practice ourselves.

First then, what does Paul think?

The first thing to say is that Paul understands God as Trinity.

Vv3-14 are one long sentence in the original Greek text of the Ephesians; and the first word of that sentence is "Blessed"; "Blessed be God...".

Everything that follows is a description of the God that Paul is blessing.

What 'blessing' means here is that Paul is praising God.

He's saying, "How great is our God! ...the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ.. etc. etc."

v3-6, Blessed be God the Father!

the Father of the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ

who has blessed us in Christ

who has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world

who has destined us for adoption as his children through Christ

who has freely bestowed his glorious grace on us in the Beloved Son.

v7-13, Blessed be God the Son!

in whom we have redemption through his blood,

the forgiveness of our sins through his death for us on the Cross,

according to the riches of his grace lavished on us.

Blessed be God the Son,

through whom the Father has lavished his grace on us (v8)

in whom the Father has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure (v9)

in whom the Father's will is to gather up all things, things in heaven on earth (v10)

in whom we have obtained an inheritance in God's kingdom (v11)

on whom, we believers, set our hope; and

for whose praise and glory we live (v12).

Blessed be God the Holy Spirit! vv13-14

Eph. 1:13 In him [in Christ, God the Son] you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit;
Eph. 1:14 this [or more accurately, **who**] is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Blessed be God the Spirit

with whom we are marked as a seal of God's promise;

who is Himself, God's promise;

who is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people.

That phrase needs a bit of explaining.

The moment you become a Christian, as my Sunday School teacher explained to me when I was six, God the Holy Spirit comes to live inside you.

God the Holy Spirit is given to the Christian believer at the moment of their conversion.

And typically, three things happen:

First, the believer receives a sense of assurance that they are forgiven and accepted by God simply because of what Jesus has done.

Second, the Spirit helps us to want to read and to actually understand God's Word in our lives, whereas before the Word might have been obscure to us.

And third the Spirit changes our lives so that we actually live according to God's Word and will.

That action of the Spirit in us – giving us assurance, a hunger for the Word, and changed life;

that's like the downpayment on our inheritance;

that's the first sign that we are indeed part of God's own people;

headed for heaven after death, living lives changed by the Spirit now.

Blessed be God the Spirit!

Well, that's Paul's thinking about God the Holy Trinity.

Now, how does this affect his prayer life?

Have you ever been in a prayer meeting where people just tell God what He already knows?

“Dear God, You know about Aunt Mary and how she's got a broken toe?

And how it's got all infected and pussy;

And how the dog tries to lick it when she falls asleep in the chair?”

I often get so impatient in those prayer meetings!
 Come on, God already knows – just ask Him to heal the toe!
 And we can all go home!

But in this passage we've just been looking at, Paul is just that:
 telling God what God already knows.
 He's praising or blessing God for being the Trinitarian God that God
 already knows He is!

But here's the point; in our prayers – it's good for us to remind ourselves
 and to remind each other.

And it's good to do this in some detail!

It's not a waste of time – as I'm sometimes tempted to think.

But instead it is supremely useful.

Because, I suspect, of what C. S. Lewis said:

The Trinity is so profoundly true and glorious beautiful and uniquely
 Christian.

And so strange and foreign and bizarre to the non-Christian world.

So for the Christian, it's a great ministry to ourselves and each other,
 to meditate and rehearse the glory and praise of the Trinity in our prayers.

It's exactly what Paul does, as he begins his letter to the Ephesians.

He begins with "blessed be God the Trinity"!

But even when Paul moves to pray asking God for stuff, his trinitarian
 thinking comes through.

Let's take two quick samples from Ephesians of Paul asking God for
 something.

First, a prayer for wisdom: 1:17

[Eph. 1:17](#) I pray that the God [the Father] of our Lord Jesus
 Christ[the Son], [God] the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of
 wisdom and revelation [that is, I think quite clearly, God the Holy
 Spirit of wisdom] as you come to know him,

Lots we can say about this prayer – enough for another sermon!

But let's just notice what difference the Trinity makes:

Paul prays **to** the Father **of** the Son,

for the Spirit's wisdom and revelation to be given in extra measure to the
 Ephesian Christians.

Notice the particularity, the specificity:

He prays **to** God the Father **of** Jesus Christ the Son,

for the spirit to work in the Christians to give us wisdom and revelation.

Let's look at a second prayer; Ephesians 3, from v14 – a prayer for power:

[Eph. 3:14](#) ¶ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, [God the Father]...

[Eph. 3:15](#) from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name.

[Eph. 3:16](#) I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit [God the Spirit],

[Eph. 3:17](#) and that Christ [God the Son] may dwell in your hearts through faith

It's a prayer **to** the Father,
for the Holy Spirit to strengthen believers from the inside out,
and **for** the Son to come and live in believers through faith.

We might apply this together: we pray,
“Father, according to the riches of your glory,
strengthen us Christians in our inner beings with power,
through your Spirit, through the Holy Spirit.”
“Father, let Jesus Christ dwell in our hearts through faith.”
Amen!

Just two examples, but here's some homework for you.
Study of many of the prayers in the New Testament.
How does the Trinity shape them?
How can you pray those prayers yourself?

Well, finally then, how does the Trinity shape our prayers?

I guess if anything my observation is that for many believers
the Trinity has little to do with our prayers.
We kind of assume the Trinity, and get on with praying as we do.
And God is gracious, He hears and answers all our prayers,
even if we get things a bit muddled sometimes;

like the time I heard someone thank God the Father for dying on the
Cross,
and praise Jesus for coming down like a dove.

If God is Trinity, then we ought to relate to Him as Trinity.
If the Trinity is indeed uniquely and gloriously Christian,
then we ought to give it due focus and attention.

My fear is that if we don't, then we begin to lose our grasp on the the other unique and glorious features of Christianity:
 the work of God the Son on the Cross
 the work of God the Spirit in changing lives everyday
 the work of God the Father to bring all of history to a close in Christ.

Well I want to end with a prayer that I try to pray every day,
 a prayer that I stole from a godly Christian man I admire.¹
 It's a trinitarian prayer that helps me to keep myself focussed
 on the profoundly beautiful, wonderfully glorious truth of the Trinity
 who made me, loves me, and is changing me everyday.

Let me pray to close this sermon, and then pray that trinitarian prayer.
 ...

Heavenly Father, we worship you as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe.

Lord Jesus, we worship you, Savior and Lord of the world.

Holy Spirit, we worship you, Sanctifier of the people of God.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever.

Heavenly Father, we pray that we may live this day in your presence and please you more and more.

Lord Jesus, we pray that this day we may take up our cross and follow you.

Holy Spirit, we pray that this day you will fill us with yourself and cause your fruit to ripen in our lives:

love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three persons in one God, have mercy upon us.

Amen.

¹ A prayer of John Stott's.