

INTRODUCTION

I know many of you have a better memory than me. You should be able to recall that at the beginning of year I told you that the main theme for our Sunday sermons of this year is called “The 4G of Christian Life.” In case you have forgotten let us have a quick revision. The 4G are Grace, Growth, God and Glory. I know the connection may not be that obvious as sometimes we have other speakers who preached on different subjects. Even when I am preaching I have to be mindful of special occasions like Easter or baptism. Regardless, as we are coming into August we have completed the first and second G: “What a Wonderful Grace” and “What an Amazing Growth.” Then later on in the fall we will discuss “What a Splendid Glory.” Beginning from today I will cover the third G, which is “What a Marvelous God.” We will get to know more about the nature and attributes of God. Our topic for today is: The Trinity God.

“What do you believe?” Brothers and sisters: I wonder if someone asked you this question before. Your answer may be that we believe in Jesus Christ who died on the cross for our sins and rose again on the third day. Other than that I wonder if the trinity of God may come across your mind as a possible answer. The Bible tells us that there is only one true God. **Deuteronomy 6:4** says: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. However, the Bible also indicates that the Heavenly Father is God, Jesus Christ is God and the Holy Spirit is also God. In trying to reconcile the two truths, theologians coined the term “trinity” to describe the nature of God. There is only one God not three Gods, but He exists in three persons. In our human logic this concept is incomprehensible because one cannot be three and three cannot be one. We may think that complex issue like that should be left to the Bible scholars, rather than ordinary believers like the majority of us. After all, it seems that we have other important things in life like work, school or kids to take care of. However, as a pastor put it: theology is the study about God. The doctrine of trinity is fundamental to our faith because it draws a line distinguishing between true Christianity and cult. A Mormon or Jehovah’s Witness may have knocked on your door before to share their gospel with you. The common and core unbiblical doctrine about these two belief systems is that they both deny that Jesus is God. If you indicate that you are a Christian they may react with excitement that they are Christians too. If you admit Jesus to be God a Mormon may tell you that he agrees with you. But to the Mormons Jesus is a god created by God the Father. If you claim that you believe in the doctrine of trinity a Mormon or Jehovah’s Witness would immediately challenge you that the term “trinity” is not found in the Bible. You may be confused over who is right and who is wrong. Therefore, it is very important to know the right doctrine so that your faith would not be shaken by false belief.

It is true that the term trinity is not in the Bible. But the concept is there. The first hint of the trinity in the Bible is in **Genesis 1:26**, which says: Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness...” Notice the use of plural pronouns “us” and “our” in this verse. It does not point to a triune God conclusively because plurality only means there are more than two persons. The triune nature of God is more evident in the New Testament when the work of Jesus and the Holy Spirit became obvious. Let us look at two examples that show the three persons of the trinity are equal in their standing. In the well-known Great Commandment in **Matthew 28:19** Jesus gave His disciples this charge: Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing

them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Also, before our worship adjourns we often quote **2 Corinthians 13:14** to bless the congregation. The verse reads: May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Both verses put the three persons of the trinity on the same level. With all that in mind we will consider each member of the trinity by looking for Biblical support that all three persons are God. Then we will ponder what it means to us when we accept all three persons to be God.

EXPLANATION

1. 天父是神 Heavenly Father is God

First, let us study the truth that our Heavenly Father is God. Among the three persons of the trinity there should be the fewest doubt that the Heavenly Father is God. Throughout the Old and New Testaments God revealed Himself as a fatherly figure. In **Deuteronomy 32:6** Moses convicted the Israelites by prophesying that in the future they would rebel against God: Is this the way you repay the Lord, O foolish and unwise people? Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you? If we claim God to be our Father then we are His beloved children. **1 John 3:1** reads - How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. John says that our Heavenly Father pours out His love on us. Among the many blessings the Father has given us He grants us the utmost privilege to be called His children.

What are the significances when the Bible addresses God as our Heavenly Father? When I first became a dad I felt a huge sense of responsibility. I realized that those yesteryears drama series were right. Even if I have nothing to eat I have to make sure that my kids have food. I try to give my children the best I can. As a father of my kids I am limited in many ways and I can be self-centered at times. However, our Heavenly Father loves us with perfect love. First, God is our Provider. **James 1:17** reads - Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. Everything we enjoy – breath of life, health, food, etc. is from God. Not only that our Father is the Provider, He is also our Protector. Jesus assures us in **Matthew 10:29-30** that: 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. 30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. No harm can come to us without the Father's permission. In God's protection He also protects us from going astray. However, if we act in disobedient God would use discipline to bring us back. **Hebrews 12:10** tells us - Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. Our Heavenly Father disciplines us not because He does not love us. On the contrary, He disciplines us because He loves us so much that He does not want us to go down the wrong path.

When we think of God as our Heavenly Father we should give Him our praise and thank. We praise Him for creating the universe and all that is in it. We praise Him for His sovereignty over everything. We thank Him for providing for all that we need, and His protection over danger and Satan's attack. We ask Him for forgiveness when we sin and grieve His heart. We give thanks to Him that He loves us enough to use discipline to guide us back to the right track.

2. 耶穌是神 Jesus Christ is God

Not only that the Heavenly Father is God, the Bible also tells us that Jesus Christ is God. Jesus is the second person in the trinity. How can we know that Jesus is God? First of all, Jesus exists eternally with the Father. **John 1:1-2** say – 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. This “Word” refers to Jesus. There is a wealth of meaning by describing Jesus as the Word. It means a principle from and a pathway to God. In order to refute the deity of Christ the Jehovah Witnesses have to twist the interpretation of John 1:1. Their New World Translation renders it “the Word was a god” (with a small “g”). In the Greek text there is no article before the word “God.” It means that the Word, Jesus Christ, was THE God. Jesus exists eternally with the Father. In **John 10** Jesus professed that He was the Good Shepherd. He gave eternal life to those who believed Him. In that teaching Jesus equated Himself with God the Father. He said **verse 30**: I and the Father are one. On hearing that the religious responded in **verse 31**: Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him. Why did those Jews become furious? Continue to read **verse 33**: "We are not stoning you for any of these (meaning, Jesus' performance of miracles)," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God." According to the Law of Moses blasphemy against God was punishable by stoning to death. Jesus knew exactly what He was saying and the Jews understood the meaning behind those words, viz. Jesus claimed to be God. Jesus said so because He is.

Through His work Jesus proved to be God. He performed miracles to heal the sick and cast out demons. In **Mark chapter 2** before Jesus healed a paralytic He openly professed that He forgave the sins of this patient. **Verse 7** records that the religious leaders at the scene protested in their hearts right away: "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Jesus responded in **verse 8**: 8 Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? Then skip down to **verse 10**: 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins... Jesus showed that He was God because He had authority to grant forgiveness, and He also knew what the religious leaders was thinking in their hearts. Besides the above evidences another important proof of Jesus' divinity is His resurrection from the dead. Paul says in **Romans 1:3-4** that: 3 regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, 4 and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus had the power to conquer death because He was God.

What does it matter to us when we know that Jesus is God? Because Jesus is God He deserves our worship. When we sing praises to Him we are not remembering a wonderful teacher or religious leader. We are bringing glory to God. We should also give thanks to Jesus for His salvation work. Jesus who was fully God became a man like you and I and died on the cross for our sins. Just think about it: God died for you and me! When we accept Jesus into our hearts He is willing to forgive our sins just like He forgave the paralytic. We give thanks that Jesus has risen from the dead. One day we will all be resurrected. Though we still face struggles in life we live with hope because we know that Jesus will come back to redeem us. On that day He will usher us into eternity, judge the world and put an end to the problem of sin. Jesus is our Savior and He will save us to the end.

3. 聖靈是神 Holy Spirit is God

The Heavenly Father is God and Jesus Christ is God. Thirdly, based on the Bible the Holy Spirit as the third person of the trinity is also God. We have to admit that traditionally Chinese churches teach relatively little about the Holy Spirit. Somehow we are afraid that if we put too much emphasis on the Holy Spirit we may go to the extreme of becoming charismatic. When I first became a Christian in Hong Kong my home church did not teach about the Holy Spirit. I mistakenly thought that the Holy Spirit is just an impersonal force from God like the force in the Star Wars movies. What does the Bible say about the divine nature of the Holy Spirit? In Acts 5 a couple named Ananias and Sapphira lied to the apostle that they donated all the money to the church after they sold their possessions. In **verse 3** the apostle Peter condemned Ananias by saying: “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?” Peter said Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit. Compare that to the **next verse**: “Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God.” Peter told us that the Holy Spirit was God. Ananias lied to God because he lied to the Holy Spirit. Another example is in Matthew 12 when some religious leaders despised Jesus, saying that He drove out demons by the authority of the prince of demons. Jesus responded in **verse 31** and says: And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Jesus was saying that even though the religious leaders clearly saw the power of God at work, they attributed that power to the demons. Therefore, such blatant blasphemy against God would not be forgiven. In making such statement Jesus claimed that the Holy Spirit was God.

The Holy Spirit is God and He is working in the life of Christians. In **Ephesians 1:13-14** Paul also tells us that the Holy Spirit is a proof of our salvation: 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession - to the praise of his glory. The Holy Spirit comes into the heart of a believer at the moment when he receives Christ. Through His indwelling it were as if God put a stamp of ownership pledging our future acceptance into heaven. In God's salvation plan the Holy Spirit did not come until after Jesus' resurrection from the dead and ascension to heaven. At the Last Supper, Jesus knew that He would be going to the cross. He comforted His disciples in **John 16:13** by promising them the coming of the Holy Spirit: But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. While anyone who is literate can read the Bible but only Christians can discern the meaning of it. It is not because Christians are smarter than ordinary people but it is because of the Holy Spirit who lives in them. Jesus told the disciples that the Holy Spirit has a specific name called “the Counselor.” The Greek term refers to someone who serves as an advocate that stands in defense like a lawyer for the person He serves. The Holy Spirit comforts us in time of need. Paul tells us in **Romans 8:26-27** that the Holy Spirit even prays on our behalf: 26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance

with God's will. The Holy Spirit gives us strength when we are weak. Being God, the Holy Spirit understands the will of the Father perfectly. Therefore, the Holy Spirit knows how to pray for us.

The Holy Spirit is God. Just like we praise the Father for His love toward us, and we praise Jesus Christ for His work of redemption, we should learn to praise the Holy Spirit of His ever-presence in our lives. Sometimes we may have doubt about our relationship with God. But the Holy Spirit gives us security in our hearts that once we are saved we belong to God forever. We should also thank the Holy Spirit for illuminating our hearts to help us understand the Bible and guide us to walk in the truth. When you are wrestling and praying for solution about a problem, all of a sudden a Bible verse comes to your mind. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. Besides, we should also thank the Holy Spirit who serves as an alert system to warn us of temptation. He convicts and nudges us to repentance when we fall to sin. We thank the Holy Spirit that He knows our weakness when we are overwhelmed with burdens in our hearts. Through prayer He brings our needs to the Father.

CONCLUSION

The three persons of the trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – are God. There are other passages in the Bible about the nature and work of the trinity God. I hope that this concept of three persons and one God can sink into your mind. Whenever you read the Bible and come across the three names you understand that you are reading about God. No matter what analogy we use to describe the triune God the concept of three in one is humanly incomprehensible. Theologians called it a mystery. Something that we cannot fully understand does not necessarily mean that it is not true. There are many things in this world that we cannot comprehend but they are true. The question is, are we humble enough to admit that God's wisdom is far higher than ours?

In the book of Romans after Paul deliberated the wonderful salvation plan of God he could not help but fascinate at God's wisdom and knowledge. In closing let us read **Romans 11:33-36** together and echo with Paul: 33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! 34 "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" 35 "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.