

LD 8; Mt. 3:13-17; II Cor. 13:14 “Which God is Revealed?” I. The Doctrine of the Trinity II. The Application of this Truth

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, how important is the doctrine of the Trinity? Would we agree with the church fathers who said that without the Trinity, salvation would be impossible? In our consideration of true faith last week we saw that every Christian believes certain things. And this doctrine- this body of knowledge- is contained in the Apostles Creed and is presented as a summary of the Scriptures. So if the Apostle’s Creed is a summary of the gospel- we next come to an outline of the Apostles Creed. And you will note- that the summary of the AC focusses on the three Person. So you could say that the Trinity can be used to summarize the entire Bible! Each person- the Father, Son and Holy Spirit along with their respective work- is a bird’s eye view of the entire Bible and is summary of what we believe! Think upon this- every passage that we read in the Bible falls somewhere in the realm of God’s work in creation, redemption or sanctification. It is interesting that of all the doctrines that the church embraces- of all the truths could be taught and summarized- it is the doctrine of the Trinity that is first set before us as the message that needs to be believed. But the Catechism in outlining the Apostle’s Creed presents us with a problem. Is God one or is God three? Well, today we see that our Triune God reveals Himself for our comfort. Now this teaching is very important- who is this God upon whom we call? Who is the true God? Is it the god of the Muslims- the god of the Jehovah’s Witness- the god of the naturalist? The atheist says there is no god- the pantheist says that everything is god. How are we supposed to know who is the One, True God?

### **I. The Doctrine of the Trinity**

We begin by looking at this doctrine- what does it mean that we confess a Triune God? It is important for us to remember that we are considering a doctrine- a teaching concerning a specific aspect of our God. Even before we begin to look at this truth- we have to confess our limitation. We are considering a teaching- studying a truth as God has revealed it and the church understood it. We cannot, by the nature of our limitations, fully understand and grasp the greatness of our God. God’s ways are not our ways- He is so high above us that our limited minds cannot comprehend the sheer grandeur of our God. We cannot put God under a microscope nor can we dissect Him. We cannot fully grasp this truth- God is

incomprehensible! God is a profound mystery! So children, you can take heart in that these things are difficult to understand. The most gifted theologian still struggles with this great truth! But having said that- we are not left standing in the dark. Although a comprehensive knowledge of God is impossible- we do still have a right knowledge of God. Limited but true understanding can be received because God has revealed Himself! We know God as He has shown Himself- as QA 25 says- we speak of God as 3 in 1 because that is how God has revealed Himself in His Word! So although it is difficult- we must not shy away from believing and confessing these things to be true. We also note that this LD is not as comprehensive as other doctrines in our confessions. For example, a more fulsome defense of the Trinity can be found in the Athanasian Creed- remember that our Athanasian Creed was written to refute the heresy of Arius who denied the deity of Jesus Christ.

So, to begin with, we must confess that God is one. As Dt. 6:4 says- Hear O Israel the LORD our God, the LORD is one. Dt. 6:4 is sometimes called the Shema- and every Jewish boy or girl is supposed to memorize these words even today. God specifically tells us to listen- to believe that The LORD is one. Or as I Cor. 8:4 says, there is no God but One. It is beyond a doubt that there is but One God. By the very definition of Deity; it must be that there is only One who is supreme over all! This is radically different than the teaching in many parts of this world- where there is a conflict between the gods or a balance between good and evil found in many eastern religions such as Yin and Yang. Just think of the many gods in Greek mythology- or the Egyptian pantheon. Even today- in the eastern religions and New Age teaching- we are all gods or we become gods when we are enlightened. But the One God whom we serve is also radically different from the one god- Allah- of the Muslims. Allah is one as well- but he is pictured as an abstract; as unknowable and unmoving. He is seen more as a power- even unconcerned and unattached; having little or nothing to do with this world. But the one God who is alone the true God is and remains One. He is knowable- He has revealed Himself to us- and we can be in a relationship with Him. All of the things created are made by Him- and there is no other God besides Him. Besides me, there is no other as the LORD says in Isaiah 45. Now being one God does not mean that God has only one name. He is Elohim- the sovereign, creator God. He is also Yahweh- the covenantal God who is. He is the LORD our God as Exodus 20 states- and as such we are to worship Him as God alone. So as

Christians, we stand against the world! The world says- there is no God! We confess with a heart of faith- God is! There is a God and He has revealed Himself to us!

We, however, serve the One True God who is not only One but also Three. He is the One God who is three in persons. One God- Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As we find in Mt. 3- the three distinct persons present and acting at the baptism of Jesus. The Father speaks, the Son is baptized and the Spirit descending. We also have the Triune, Baptismal form- baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in Mt. 28. Or even the Trinitarian Benediction- the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all- II Cor. 13. These prove that God is 3 distinct persons- yet there still remains One only God! God does not lie nor does He change! He is and remains ONE- and yet the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God. This means that God is not some abstract singularity, but a communing person who has a relationship within Himself and therefore with His creatures as well. As QA 24 outlines, each person has their own unique name, identity, person and work. The Scriptures reveal God the Father and our Creation, God the Son and our Redemption and God the Spirit and our Sanctification. But although there are 3 persons- there is but One God who is united in His purpose and work. So we do say that God the Father is our creator- but He creates by the Son through the operation of the Holy Spirit. And although the Son is our deliverer, He was sent by the Father who loves us and His work is applied by the Holy Spirit. The Work of God is triune- God is one in His purpose and plan but the specific work of each person is unique and specific. As the Athanasian Creed clarifies- the Father is God, the Son is God and the Spirit is God. But there are not three gods but One! But this One God is not confused or mixed together- each person has a unique role and there is even communication between these 3 persons. The Father can send His Son and the Son can pray to the Father. As we read in Mt. 3- the Father can speak, the Spirit can descend and the Son can be baptized. The Father begets the Son, the Son is sent by the Father and anointed by the Spirit- and the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. The Father did not take on flesh- it was the Son. Just as the Son was not poured out upon the churches at Pentecost- it was the Spirit's work to dwell in the church and in our hearts.

So to summarize our first point, we must be clear in that we believe in One God who is three in person- Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We do not believe in 3 gods- that is heresy! Nor do we believe this One God takes on different modes or change of faces at different times. God was not the Father in the OT- the Son in the NT and the Spirit in the church today. God has always been Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Eternal and unchanging- the Three in One. God has three distinct persons- and yet He is the One, True and Eternal God who is and was and is to come. Now you might be thinking- this is all good but why is it so important? Why does our salvation depend on the necessity of the Trinity? As we move on into the second point, we begin to see that this doctrine is not only true- but it is good and beneficial- even needed in order for us to be saved!

## **II. The Application of this truth**

The Trinity- three persons united in their work for us and our salvation- brings great comfort to the people of God. Not only is this doctrine important because God does not want His glory going to another- as Isaiah 42 says- I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols. This is an important truth because God wants us to know and praise Him rightly! But this doctrine is also for our comfort- our assurance! God is committed to us- and our salvation. QA 24 is intensely personal- our creation, our deliverance and our sanctification. Each person, although distinct, is perfectly united and committed to this goal- the salvation of His people! Remember, as we saw last week- true faith not only believe that God is revealed in the Bible- but we have placed our faith IN this God who is revealed! In Scripture, we find a 3-fold plan unfolding for our good- Salvation planned, purchased and applied! The promise of deliverance is firmly planted in a God who ordains, obtains and maintains. At each point in our salvation- from beginning to end- we find our God! Each person stands ready to carry out this One desire of God! As the Father loved and chose us- so the Son died for us and saved us- so the Spirit secures and sanctifies! This truly is for our comfort! The One who ever lives and is supreme over all- who changes not and rules all things- He in His perfect plan has seen fit to secure and save His chosen ones! Understanding and believing this truth brings great comfort to the Christian. Not only so that we think rightly- but so that we might grow in our appreciation and love for our Triune God! Having only one God, we avoid the confusion of knowing which God to call upon. It was common in ages past for

people to worry about which god was angry- or which god needed to be appeased. There were gods for everything- and they were each waring against the others. But having one, true God means that we always know Who it is that we are to call upon and serve! In fact, the Trinity is a necessity if there is going to be any communion between God and man. The relationship between the 3 persons sets the stage for God's relationship with man. Knowing and appreciating each person adds to our assurance. When we ponder that we are one with God in Christ- chosen by the Father and indwelt by the Holy Spirit- when we remember and meditate on these truths- we are given ever more reasons to rejoice! At every point in our salvation; at every moment of our lives- there stands God in His work of grace! Because of the three persons and their work, we can now enjoy this ever flowing exchange of spiritual benefits. Listen again to II Cor. 13- the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. We receive blessings- gifts from each person. Think on it- God's love seen in the Father's choosing us and sending His Son. The Son's love for us in His taking on our flesh and dying in our place. The Spirit's love for us in His searching the heart and teaching us the deep things of God- even in the giving us the mind of Christ! Each person- each work- another reason to marvel at God's goodness and grace!

To conclude, we should not be ashamed of the great truths revealed in God's Word. This doctrine needs to be embraced- and defended by us even today. Muslim and Jews still deny the exitance of the 3 persons. While New Age and Buddhist reject the singular God. Yes, some of these things are hard- but remember that we are learning something about God! If it was easy- if we could grasp and fully understand everything, than God would not be very great at all! Our Triune God reveals Himself for our comfort. Even the fact that we can pray is due to God's Triune work- the Spirit enables us to pray to the Father and according the His will through the blood of the Son! Even our prayer penetrates to the heart of the Trinity! Right doctrine should stir our hearts and fan into flame our affections for the One True God- Father, Son and Holy Spirit. So glorify Him as He has revealed Himself- the One God who is forever blessed.