

The Triune God Eph. 1:3-14

There is a difference between contemplation of God as abstract and God in action on our behalf: one yields information the other leads to salvation. **“Whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him.”**

Never is this more evident than when we come to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Many think that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is abstract and even unnecessary. This is very wrong for three very good reasons:

- Departure from the doctrine immerses the entire Bible in a mass of unsolvable contradictions.
- If we are, in fact, invited to a Trinitarian faith walk with God we have not fully entered into this relationship apart from a grasp of this doctrine. Apart from knowledge of this truth interaction with God will, in some respects, be uninformed and imbalanced.
- The actual individual processes of redemption are clearly distributed amongst the three persons of the Godhead. Therefore we do not rightly understand our salvation apart from knowing the way in which it comes to us. Viz. As a blessing from the three person of the Holy Trinity.

When we think of God as Trinity we generally think in one of two categories:

- We think of the *ontological* Trinity. This is God as He is Triune in His eternal being.
- We think of the *economic* Trinity. This is God as He reveals Himself in action in creation and redemption.

Paul is concerned to demonstrate and lead to us to praise and appreciate the economic Trinity in the work of redemption in Eph. 1:1-14. This is evident in two ways: **(1)** the salutation and **(2)** the structure of the passage itself. **Vv. 3-6** is devoted to the work of the

Father, **vv. 7-12** the role of the Son, **vv. 13-14** the work of the Holy Spirit.

1. **The Work of God the Father. Vv. 3-6.** God is set forth in terms of the two relationships He sustains with Christ. **V. 3.** As He was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob this denotes both the *terms* of our interest in Him and the *basis* of our confidence in God.

Paul draws attention to three aspects of His work:

- a. **His divine decree.** The Father is set forth as the primary rights holder and dispenser of blessing. **V. 3.** The section as a whole cannot be understood apart from the idea of an eternal purpose in God that is executed in creation and providence. **Cf. Vv. 6, 9-10, 12, 14.**
- b. **Election to holiness and Predestination to Sonship. Vv. 4-5.** In the same sense that Israel was chosen in Abraham we were chosen in Christ. Our covenant union with Christ **(1)** is the source of all these spiritual blessings we partake of and **(2)** was determined by God prior to the creation of the world. **Cf. 3:11; Ro. 8:17.**
- c. **The controlling Motive of love and the desire to showcase of the glory of His grace. Vv. 5-6.** **“Glorious grace”** weakens the language. The goal of redemption is the display of divine grace in such proportions that it eternally fills the hearts and minds with wonder and all lips with praise. It results in glory to God and eternal BLISS to His redeemed creatures.

2. **The Work of God the Son. Vv. 7-12.** All the redemptive purposes of the Godhead are centralized here. Note that that His involvement permeates the functions of the other two. **“In Him...” Cf. v. 4, 13.** Two aspects of the work of the Son are emphasized:

- a. **His Atoning sacrifice. Vv. 7-8.** Four things are highlighted. It is **(1)** undeserving (trespasses) **(2)**

redemption (3) through blood that (4) is the supreme display of the wisdom and riches of the Father's grace. Hodge describes it as, "the overflowing abundance of unmerited love, inexhaustible in God, and freely accessible through Christ."

b. **The Total Reclamation of the Creation. Vv. 9-12.**

Here is a picture of the Father and the Son working together to establish a new order, a new creation, of which Christ is the head.

i. **V. 10.** He is already acknowledged head of the Church (v.22); one day He will be acknowledged head over a regathered, renewed universe.

ii. **Vv. 11-12.** Through Christ we receive the inheritance. As God divided up Canaan for Israel under Joshua we receive spiritual blessings in the heavenlies through the conquest of Christ of the kingdom of darkness, over sin and death.

3. **The Work of the Holy Spirit. Vv. 13-14.** He is specifically responsible for the application of Redemption. He is called the Holy Spirit of Promise. He (1) is the actual agent that makes us "*blameless before Him*" (2) He is the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham and preached by the prophets. **Cf. Joel 2:28.** Two figures are used to describe the significance of His presence:

a. **Seals the work.** Seals were used three ways. They (1) authenticated as genuine (2) rendered secure and (3) denoted ownership.

b. **Guarantees the work.** Behind guarantee is the idea of a legal deposit or down payment, a first installment. The same word is used in modern Greek for an engagement ring.

comes from heaven is born of the Spirit's power (Lk. 1:35). In the ministry of the Son, He is publicly declared by the Father and just as publicly empowered for service by the Spirit's power at the same Baptism (Matt. 3:16-17). The Son makes satisfaction to the Father through the eternal Spirit (He. 9:14). The Resurrection of the Son from the dead is the sovereign act of the Father (Ro. 6:1-3), but simultaneously the Spirit's public designation of the Son's divinity (Ro. 1:4).

It is a source of great joy and comfort to the saint to have a scriptural basis for the ongoing experiences every Christian must undergo to enter the celestial city. Every believer must first be redeemed, and subsequently adopted, sanctified, preserved, and finally glorified. It is a comfort to be able to intelligently worship the agents of so all-important a work.

Apart from a right understanding of the objective basis for the various aspects of the workings of grace, it is not possible for the believer to intelligently cooperate with the Spirit's work of sanctification. The ground of the believer's justification is the love of the Father, while the means is the satisfaction of the Son. These are inseparable from the respective persons of the respective divine acts. How can one ever truly rest upon and draw comfort from these acts, when under trials, apart from a clear conception of these distinctions?

In the final analysis most all heresies and deceptions are reducible to a failure to recognize the divinity of one party of the Godhead or another. Can there be anything more destructive to the faith and spiritual health of the believer than a habitual denigration of God's person?

To not rightly recognize the distinctive nature of God and His acts on behalf of the believer is to wrongly read the word of God. There can be little soul happiness derived from ignorance of the Bible's most exalted themes.

The work of redemption is clearly revealed as a three-fold endeavor. The Father gives the Son to the world (Jn. 3:16), the Son who