

Truly God and Truly Man

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[0 : 00] So let's dive into this paragraph. So I'm going to read the whole thing. You're going to see it's longer than last week. The Son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, is truly and eternally God.

He is the brightness of the Father's glory, the same in substance and equal with Him. He made the world and sustains and governs everything He has made. When the fullness of time came, He took upon Himself human nature.

With all the essential properties and common weaknesses of it, but without sin. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary. The Holy Spirit came down upon her, and the power of the Most High overshadowed her.

Thus, He was born of a woman from the tribe of Judah, a descendant of Abraham and David, in fulfillment of the Scriptures. It continues. Two whole, perfect, and distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one person, without converting one into the other, or mixing them together to produce a different or blended nature.

This person is truly God, and truly man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and humanity.

[1 : 18] So, if you recall from last week, paragraph one summarized by that word plan. If we were to pick one word to summarize paragraph two, that word is accomplished.

Accomplished. And maybe if we want to expand it just a little bit, we could say how the plan would be accomplished. Now, that how itself, we could break down into two parts.

So, there's a lot of breaking down that's happening right now. So, keep following the train of thought. We could break down the how of the plan accomplished into two parts. Who and what.

Who and what. Or, the person of Christ and the work of Christ. Now, often when we think of accomplishing things, even when we think of ourselves accomplishing things, we think of what we do.

So, when we think of how God accomplishes his plans, we might be prone to immediately jump to, what did God do? What did he accomplish? And there's much that we will talk of concerning what he accomplished.

[2 : 25] But first, this paragraph unpacks the who. The person of Jesus Christ. Who he is. That is just as important as what he has done.

And if we don't understand who he is first, then what he has done will make a whole lot less sense to us. So, when it comes to how God accomplishes his purposes, before talking about what Christ has done, we must talk about who he is.

Who before what when talking about how. That could come straight out of a Dr. Seuss book. Who before what when talking about how.

So, this paragraph is all about the person of Christ. And how his personhood relates to the accomplishment of God's purposes. So, let's do this like last week. Let's break this paragraph down into sections.

Three sections this morning. This is the first section. We just read it. I'm not going to read it again. But this paragraph, or this part of the paragraph, this section, teaches us in no uncertain terms that Jesus is God.

[3 : 34] And just to be crystal clear, even though his name is not stated here, this is Jesus Christ that we're talking about. If we work backwards in the confession, we go back to paragraph one.

It begins with these words. God was pleased in his eternal purpose to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus. And then everything else that follows is speaking of him, the Lord Jesus.

So, Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus is the second person of the Holy Trinity. Jesus is truly and eternally God.

Truly and eternally. Truly means in actuality. He is definitively God. He is the true God. It's not just that he is called God, or that some may think him to be God, or it's hypothesized that perhaps Jesus is God.

No, he is God. Those who confess that Jesus is God, they are not mistaken. He is truly God. And he is eternally God.

[4 : 44] Meaning that Jesus is God forever. Before time began. Before time began. And into all of eternity. God. He did not become God.

He did not somehow attain to a divine status. Some have erroneously taught that. That's heresy. He is God.

The confession in very simple terms says eternally God. So think of Hebrews 13. So think of Hebrews 13.8. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Or how about from Jesus' own lips. He declared this in John 8.58. Before Abraham was, I am. That is a grammatically odd statement.

If you think about it. Before something happened in the past, which is Abraham was. Something happened in the present. Jesus is. It would have been a still striking statement for Jesus to have said, Before Abraham was, I was.

[5 : 46] And we would have maybe thought, oh, grammatically correct. Before Abraham was, I was. That is true. But Jesus didn't just exist before Abraham. He has always, the second person of the Godhead, existed.

And that's what he's saying when he uses the present tense. I am. He is identifying himself as well as God. He's repeating the name that God gave in Exodus 3.14 when he spoke to Moses from the burning bush.

I am who I am. Eternally God. The God who exists. And so that name is communicating that. I am. Now maybe you've noticed here.

No references to Scripture in this section of paragraph 2. I'm confused why they didn't have any references to Scripture. Because there are plenty of Scriptures that should come to mind.

And that I think the confession writers had in mind. We just saw John 8.58. That could have been footnoted. How about 1 John 5.20? It certainly seems to be a verse that the writers of the confession particularly have in mind.

[6 : 53] Because 1 John 5.20 hits on both the truly God and eternally God. This is how it reads. Speaking of Jesus. He is the true God and eternal life.

So he possesses eternal life. We know in other places of Scripture that he gives eternal life. Just preceding that verse in chapter 5 of 1 John. He's the giver of eternal life.

And the one who gives eternal life cannot give it unless he himself exists eternally. He has life eternally. And so he can give us that eternal life.

The writers of the confession then go on to really emphasize this truly and eternally God. It's almost as though the next line is unpacking, well, what does that mean to say he is truly and eternally God?

And so they say he is the brightness of the Father's glory. Again, no footnoted Scripture reference. But there should be. It almost feels a little bit like plagiarism. Because it's almost literally word for word Hebrews 1.3.

[7 : 57] So they say here in the confession, he is the brightness of the Father's glory. Hebrews 1.3. He is the radiance of the glory of God. I appreciate how John MacArthur explains this statement from Hebrews 1.3.

It's simply saying he is the shining forth of God. Just as the radiance of the sun reaches the earth to light us, to warm us, to give us life and growth, so in Christ do we sense the warmth and the radiance of the glorious light of God touching the hearts of men.

The brightness of the sun is of the same nature as the sun. It is as old as the sun. And never was the sun without its brightness. The brightness of the sun cannot be separated from the sun, and yet it is distinct.

So, the brightness or the radiance of the sun cannot be separated from the sun itself. The brightness and the sun, you heard that term he used, share the same nature.

That's going to be important for us. We are going to hit on this same nature. Well, so too, the brightness of Christ cannot be separated from the glory of the Father. The brightness and the glory share the same nature.

[9 : 11] God the Son, God the Father, though distinct persons within the Holy Trinity, share the same nature. Or to put it another way, as the confession says of the Son, the same in substance and equal with the Father.

Which, that just means, Christ is the brightness of the Father's glory. The same in substance and equal with the Father. Now, when we talk about substance, we are talking about nature.

The Father and the Son share the same divine nature, and they share it equally. The Father is not more divine than the Son. The Son is not less divine than the Father.

They are both equally God. That's what the confession writers mean by same in substance and equal with Him. And again, the confession writers are not being original here.

They are plagiarizing Hebrews chapter 1. And we see another parallel here, don't we? Hebrews 1 says, He is the exact imprint of God's nature.

[10 : 20] So here's the parallel, the confession. He is the brightness of the Father's glory, the same in substance and equal with Him. Hebrews 1.3, He is the radiance of the glory of God, and the exact imprint of His nature.

So what we have here, in this statement from our confession, is something concerning ontology. Ontology is just the study of existence.

So when we talk about the ontology of God, we are talking about the very nature of God's being. We are talking about His essence. We are talking about who He is.

And sometimes that can make our heads want to explode, to think about God's very existence. The confession, in paraphrasing Hebrews 1.3, is saying, Jesus is divine.

Jesus is God. He is of the same essence, the same substance as the Father. They share the same essential properties.

[11 : 23] They fully share the same divine nature. Now our confession was written in 1689. There are other confessions, even creeds of the Christian faith, that were written far before the 1689.

One of them, one of the earliest confessions or creeds, is the Nicene Creed, written in 325 A.D. And it affirms this ontological unity between the Father and the Son, the unity in substance.

Listen to what the Nicene Creed says. We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only begotten.

That is of the same essence of the Father. God of God. Light of light. Very God of very God. begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father.

So as God, the Son, is not created. He has existed eternally. He was, in fact, just as much present at creation and involved in creation and continues to be involved with His creation as the Father and as the Spirit.

[12 : 47] And so the confession writers continue. They say, He made the world and sustains and governs everything He has made. Just emphasizing once again, Jesus is God.

The uncreated Creator. Not a part of creation. Not coming with creation, but existing eternally before creation. In the beginning was God.

And so too, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We understand. The Holy Trinity existed. So again, the confession writers are stealing, we could say, joking, from Hebrews 1.

Because what does Hebrews 1 say in verses 2 and 3? Hebrews 1 tells us in verse 2 that it was through the Son that the Father made the world. And then Hebrews 1, 3 tells us that the Son upholds the universe by the word of His power.

So we've seen that Jesus is God. We have seen that He has the divine nature. Now, we are going to see that Jesus is also a man.

[13 : 52] That He has a human nature. And that is the next section of this paragraph. Thank you.

I think you're doing it for me, Ollie. All right, let's read this one together again. It's been a little while since we read it. When the fullness of time came, He took upon Himself human nature with all the essential properties and common weaknesses of it, but without sin.

He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary. The Holy Spirit came down upon her and the power of the Most High overshadowed her. Thus, He was born of a woman from the tribe of Judah, a descendant of Abraham and David in fulfillment of the Scriptures.

So, let's break this section down now. There is a contrast that is given to us here. We've already seen Jesus is eternally God.

He has possessed the divine nature for all of eternity, but not so for His human nature. Because what does it say there? God became man. It says He took upon Himself human nature.

[15 : 03] So, God never became God. He has always been, always will be God. But God the Son became a man.

He took upon Himself a human nature and He did it at a point in time. We see that there when the fullness of time had come. So, the one who is eternally God at a particular moment in time, a point in time, became a man.

So, just to be clear, the Son has always been God. But the Son then became also a man. He became a man at a particular point in time.

And you see the detail that's given to that in the confession. They don't just say here that He became a man in history, but they start, they're naming names. They're name-dropping people.

They're saying He became a man having been conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit. We see the details of different individuals that are spoken of here.

[16 : 09] When God took upon Himself human nature, when God the Son, who is eternal and divine, took upon Himself human nature, He became God the Son who is still eternal, divine, and now human.

And that happened when Jesus Christ was born of a woman. And He was born of a woman in the fullness of time. That's taken straight from Galatians chapter 4.

Beginning in verse 4, we read, But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

So when the time was just right, which is just another way of saying, according to God's eternal purpose, chapter 8, paragraph 1, God became a man, conceived by the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary.

And now the question may arise for some, how is it that a virgin can bear a son? How is it that she could have a child? And we see here, by the supernatural power of God. Some people want to overcomplicate the reality of it.

[17 : 23] It is God who brought about such a work, and only God could do that. So the Holy Spirit came down upon her, and the power of the Most High overshadowed her. And in this way, God became man, born of a woman, from the tribe of Judah, a descendant of Abraham and David, in fulfillment of the Scriptures.

So we see Jesus was born of a woman. That is fulfilling the promise of Genesis 3.15, that the serpent would be crushed by the seed of the woman. Jesus was a descendant of Abraham.

That's fulfilling the promise of Genesis 12, that through Abraham, all the nations would be blessed. We read of that fulfillment in Galatians 3. Jesus came from the tribe of Judah and was a descendant of David as well, fulfilling the promise of 2 Samuel 7, that God would send his future Redeemer King for his people, and of his kingdom, there would be no end.

And also, in referencing all of these names, not only are we seeing, yes, God is fulfilling his word, but we're also being reminded that Jesus really, truly exists as a man.

He was born into human history. Here are people that we know of who have existed. They lived. Jesus, also born in human history with the blood of these ancestors running through his veins.

[18 : 54] And so, as the confession says, he took on a human nature. Now, we're going to talk more about that taking on of a human nature and the relationship between his human nature and divine nature in just a few minutes, but briefly, I just want to draw our attention to the fact that the confession says he took on a human nature, meaning he did not give up his divine nature.

He didn't swap out his divine nature for a human nature. It wasn't a matter of subtraction. It was a matter of addition. He added a human nature to himself.

The relationship between that human nature, divine nature, we're going to see more of shortly. But we can't do that until we first talk about what does it mean for Jesus to have a human nature.

And we see that the confession explains it using three phrases. So the first phrase, with all the essential properties. And then the second phrase, the common weaknesses of it.

And then the third phrase, but without sin. So let's break down each of those phrases. First, with all the essential properties. Simply meaning, all that is needed to be human, God the Son became.

[20 : 10] Jesus had a body. Jesus had a mind. Jesus had a will. He had emotions. He had a spirit. He was fully God.

He had all of the essential properties of being a human. And then the confession says, he possessed all the common weaknesses associated with human nature.

Now that word weakness, weakness, I hope it actually gives us pause. I hope that we read it and said, wait, we need to think about that. What does it mean for Jesus to possess the common weaknesses of human nature?

Because it might be natural for us, perhaps maybe subconsciously even, to associate weakness with sin. We might think of weakness, perhaps when people say in a way that maybe isn't the greatest, I had a moment of weakness.

weakness. Sometimes what they're talking about is they sinned. They stumbled. They had a moment of lapse and they sinned. And so we hear weakness and maybe we're thinking, wait, is there something of sin going on here?

[21 : 14] I know it says, but without sin, but what do we mean by weakness? Even in Scripture, we find at least once where weakness and sin do have a relationship.

We actually just saw it last week during the Lord's Supper service. Hebrews 5, 2. If you recall that verse, it speaks of the priests in the Old Testament being able to deal gently with the ignorant and the wayward.

And here's the reason that's given in Hebrews 5 for why the priests can deal gently with the ignorant and the wayward. Since he himself is beset with weakness.

So what the writer of Hebrews is teaching there is the priests of the Old Testament had the same weaknesses of ignorance and waywardness that the rest of the people did. That's why they can deal gently with them.

So weakness in Hebrews 5 does involve sin. There is an element of sin included in that weakness. But there's another kind of weakness that's talked about in Scripture, a weakness that does not involve sin.

[22 : 20] And guess what? That weakness is also found in Hebrews. Not chapter 5, but chapter 4. Perhaps a well-known verse that you could recall describing Jesus as our great high priest.

Hebrews 4.15 says, For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

So you can see there, Hebrews 4.15 teaches Jesus experienced weakness. He can sympathize with us who are weak.

And yet, that weakness is without sin. And so what weakness is is the writer of Hebrews talking about. Weaknesses like hunger. Weaknesses like thirst.

The need for sleep. These are all weaknesses associated with, not the divine nature, but the human nature. And it was human weakness that Satan directly attacked in the temptation of Jesus.

[23 : 29] Satan went after the weaknesses that are common to human beings in his first attack. He came to Jesus after Jesus had been in the desert for 40 days and 40 nights without anything to eat.

Luke draws our attention to this in chapter 4, verse 2. Luke writes, And Jesus ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. So Jesus was physically weak.

And what did Satan do? He attacked Jesus' weakness. He tempted him with the very thought of bread. And so the writer of Hebrews can say Jesus was tempted in every respect as we are and yet without sin.

The devil tempted him with one of the very weaknesses that are common to man. And Jesus did not give in to that temptation. So this Hebrews 4 weakness is the kind of weakness that the confession is talking about.

Not the Hebrews 5 weakness, but Hebrews 4, weakness without sin. Kevin DeYoung helpfully says this in an article that he wrote, The enfleshed Son of God was liable to the weaknesses that come from a human body, but without the moral defects or possibility of moral defects, that come from a human nature.

[24 : 51] Or another writer, Luke Stamps, says this, As a human, Jesus experienced all the ordinary, non-sinful limitations of humanity.

So sin committed? No. Limitations or weaknesses experienced? Yes. Now this could be hard for us to wrap our minds around.

Isn't Jesus God? And God cannot be weak. To be weak for God would be saying something of a deficiency in him.

And so how is it that we can say that even Jesus experienced weakness? Because while Jesus is one person, he has two natures.

He is God and man. So we must think in this way with respect to his divine nature and we must also think with respect to his human nature.

[25 : 49] Let's take just one example together. Suffering. The divine nature of Jesus did not suffer because God cannot suffer. For God to suffer, he would cease being God.

but the human nature of Jesus did suffer. Clearly, just read all that transpired leading up to the crucifixion. Read of the crucifixion and we see clearly Jesus suffered.

The human nature of Jesus suffered. And so we say the person Jesus suffered. Thomas Wainandy, I hope I said his name right, he wrote a wonderful article that's on First Things website and it's entitled Does God Suffer.

And he argues rightly from scripture, no, God does not suffer. And in that article, he addresses this relationship between the divine nature of Jesus and the human nature of Jesus.

This is what he says, since it was the Son of God who suffered, did he not equally experience such suffering within his divinity? No, for suffering is caused by the loss of some good.

[26 : 58] And while as man the Son was deprived of his human well-being and life, he was not deprived of any divine perfection or good. Moreover, to hold that the Son suffered as God would mean that he experienced our human suffering in a mitigated divine manner and thus that he did not truly experience authentic human suffering.

God, in the end, would not truly experience suffering and death as men experience suffering and death. Now, maybe you haven't heard of Thomas Wayne Andy. I hadn't either until I found his article.

Here's a name perhaps you have heard, John Calvin. He wrote this a little bit earlier than our dear brother Thomas did. John Calvin himself helps us to understand the distinction between human nature and divine nature.

Listen to what he says. Calvin here in this quote begins with the human nature of Jesus. He says, his being said to grow in stature and wisdom and favor with God and man, not to seek his own glory, not to know the last day.

His being seen and handled apply entirely to his humanity. Since as God, he cannot be in any respect said to grow, works always for himself, knows everything, and is incapable of being seen or handled.

[28 : 23] So all of this to say, yes, when Jesus took upon himself human nature, that included the common weaknesses of it, as the confession says.

Yet, third qualification, without sin, which is to say, sin is not an essential property of what it means to be human.

You can be human without sin. Sin is not inherently bound up in the human nature. Just go back to Genesis 1. You don't have to go far in the scriptures to read of human beings who were at that point without sin.

Adam and Eve in the garden, no sin in Genesis 1. Go to the end of history. Fast forward all the way to Revelation 21 and 22.

All of redeemed humanity living with God in the new heavens and new earth. Human beings with no sin. So Jesus was born into this world as a human being with a human nature and all of the essential properties and common weaknesses that come with that nature but without sin.

[29 : 31] Human nature, divine nature. Jesus in the one person possesses both. Well now we come to the conclusion of our paragraph and that helps us to understand something of the relationship.

And we'll spend not quite as much time here and we are running short on time. So can we hit the next slide? Two whole perfect and distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one person without converting one into the other or mixing them together to produce a different or blended nature.

This person is truly God and truly man yet one Christ the only mediator between God and humanity. What the confession is describing here has been termed the hypostatic union.

Jesus is the only living being that has two natures in one person. We as human beings, we only have human nature. God the Father, God the Spirit only possess divine nature but God the Son, both human nature and divine which makes this especially hard for us to understand.

it makes it especially hard for us to wrap our minds around because none of us can relate. None of us in this room have experienced this reality. So guess what?

[30 : 57] Much error has crept up in history related to these two natures that the one person Jesus Christ possesses. The confession is guarding against any error by being especially thorough and detailed and particular with their word choice here.

lots of specific terms given to us. Two whole meaning Jesus is not partially God and also partially man.

He's not like half and half. He's not like a senator which is like partially horse but also partially man. That is not true of Jesus. He has two whole natures fully God fully man and perfect in both natures.

Those natures also are distinct meaning that they are not combined together. They're not interacting with each other in such a way as to produce a different blended or entirely new nature called like the human divine nature.

That is not what is going on here. John Ruther wrote the chapter in the exposition of the confession covering Christ the mediator and he helpfully explained the hypostatic union in this way.

[32 : 13] The union of the divine and the human in Jesus Christ was not the creation of a third sort of being in whom divine attributes altered human attributes or human attributes altered divine attributes.

Perhaps you've heard of Archibald Hodge. He was the first principal of Princeton Seminary. Principal being before we started calling presidents presidents.

Princeton Seminary before Princeton Seminary became very liberal and Hodge says this about the two whole natures. Since Christ is both God and man, it follows that he cannot be a mixture of both which is neither.

That is to say if we mixed together God and man, we lose what it means for Jesus to be man, we lose what it means for Jesus to be God. So not a mixture and yet these two natures are brought together in one person.

Or as the confession says, inseparably joined together in one person. Joined in such a way that they remain distinct and joined in such a way that one is not converted into the other.

[33 : 25] One nature does not dominate the other and envelop the other. Jesus is both fully God and fully man. that might have all felt maybe a little academic.

Maybe you felt like really academic like I did not plan to go to school for the day. It is called Sunday school though, let's be honest. So I don't blame you if you're thinking, now remind me again, why does all of this matter?

Here's why. Because only a person who is both fully God and fully man could be our mediator. Remember, a mediator is a go-between.

A mediator is a representative for two parties. Who better to be the representative between humanity and God than the one who is both human and God?

Only Jesus is truly qualified. As a man, he is qualified to represent men, and as God, he is qualified to represent God. And this makes him the perfect mediator between God and man.

[34 : 36] This is just the Savior that we need. Jesus is just the mediator that we need. So yes, it is probably true of most all of us in here, this is hard for us to wrap our minds around because of how unique Jesus is.

And yet, because of how unique Jesus is, this should lead us to worship, to worship the one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, 1 Timothy 2.5 says.

He is worthy of the office, and Jesus is worthy of our worship. Lord willing, next week, we will dive into the next couple chapters here of or paragraphs of our confession, but for today, we are dismissed.

him. Amen. Amen. Amen. ■■ mage notes. ■■