

Salvation and the Trinity (part 2)

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[0 : 00] We are studying Michael Reeves' book, *Delighting in the Trinity*. You can tell by the title that the Trinity is something more than just something to tuck away into our confession of faith and say, well, we believe that.

But it's something to actually rejoice in and to delight in. This is in line with our confession of faith. The confession of faith, which is just a summary of what the Bible teaches.

It was written in 1689, hence the title of it, by Reformed Baptists that have gone before us. And this is a wonderful statement on the Trinity found in chapter 2, paragraph 3.

Having set forth the three persons of the one God, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, these persons, one infinite and eternal God, not three gods, not to be divided in nature or in being, so we don't divide them up into three gods.

No, they're one God. And yet, they are distinguished in Scripture. Don't you like it when you have an alliteration? Not to be divided, but to be distinguished in Scripture.

[1 : 16] And how are they distinguished from the one from the other? Well, by their personal relations within the Godhead. The Father, in his relationship to the second person of the Trinity, who is the Son, and then the third person of the Trinity, who is the Spirit, and so on.

Those personal relations within the Godhead. And also, they're distinguished by the variety of works that they undertake in salvation, in our lives.

We summarize that as God the Father planning our salvation, God the Son accomplishing that salvation, and God the Spirit applying that salvation in our individual lives.

So, the three persons are distinguished according to their different relations, personal relations within the Godhead, the variety of their works that they undertake, and it's this triunity that is the essential basis of all our fellowship with God, and of the comfort that we derive from our dependence upon Him.

That's saying a lot, and our forefathers meant to say a lot. They're saying that our fellowship with God suffers if we don't fellowship with each person of the Trinity according to their different relations within the Godhead, and according to the things that they do for us that are distinctively their roles.

[2 : 46] And so, as we said last week, that's why we don't thank the Father for dying on the cross for us. He didn't. But we do thank the Father for giving us His Son, and giving us the Spirit.

So, our fellowship with God, our prayer, our praises, our worship, is to be reflective of those distinctions within the persons of the one God.

And it's from those distinctions that we derive encouragement and comfort because of our dependence upon this God. We depend upon Him as a Father.

And aren't there fatherly comforts that come to us because we know that He is a Father to us. And there are comforts that come to us from Christ, knowing that He's our prophet, our priest, and our king, and our shepherd, and on and on we can go.

Unique comforts and encouragements that come to us because we're depending upon Him as our prophet to teach us, as our priest to pray for us, as our king to rule over us and defend us, and so on.

[3 : 56] So, our comforts are derived from these distinctive works of each person of the Trinity. And if we just have this bland idea of God as just being God, without the three persons, our dependence is going to suffer.

Therefore, our comforts will suffer. Our fellowship with God will not be what it ought to be. So, your fellowship with the Father ought to be distinctively different than your fellowship with the Son, and different from your fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

And I just encourage you to start trying to apply that as you read the Word of God, and as you come upon the different members of the Trinity, and you just can't read long without bumping into them, sometimes within the very same verse, to turn it back to prayer and praise, and to thank each member of the Trinity for what His Word is telling us that they're doing for us.

And then you can do the same with our singing and our praises. Notice as we sing the praises of God, the particular persons of the Godhead. It's in this way that we come to enjoy and to delight in the Trinity.

Well, thank you. I guess you could just leave that up there. Ollie, thank you. So, we're considering the Trinity in three different periods. Chapter 1 was the Trinity before creation.

[5 : 23] What was the Trinity doing for endless years, forever and ever eternity past? Well, they were enjoying fellowship with each other. Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

Loving, delighting in one another. Personal relationships together. And then we looked at chapter 2, the Trinity in creation. This love and delight within the Trinity now overflows into the creation that He makes.

And so, especially to mankind, who is the pinnacle of His creation, comes the privilege of reflecting God's own image and being called into fellowship with Him as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

That that wonderful fellowship that's been going on for all eternity is now something that we are brought into, called into, redeemed into, or actually by creation, placed into.

And then we've come to chapter 3, the Trinity in salvation. Before creation, in creation, now in salvation.

[6 : 33] Now, the fact that we use the word salvation implies that something happened, right? It's called the fall. The fall into sin. So, in that fall into sin, by our forefather Adam, we all, all of his descendants, lost something.

We lost fellowship with God. Because sin now has come between us and God and separated us from God. So, this wonderful fellowship that had gone on forever, that we were placed in in creation and could fellowship with this God, that Adam and Eve enjoyed, is now lost.

And it's lost. And it's lost to us. And instead of knowing his overflowing fellowship and goodness and love and basking in that and enjoying him and he, us, we now are under his wrath and condemnation because of sin.

But in salvation, this triune God stoops to his sinful, rebellious creatures to redeem and to restore us back into that fellowship, to call us back into loving fellowship with the three persons of the Godhead.

So, it's in salvation that an even greater demonstration of God's love and goodness within the Trinity spills out as he stoops in Jesus Christ to save not just his creatures now, but his rebellious, sinful creatures.

[8 : 04] But in order to appreciate this love and goodness of the Trinity and salvation, we need to go back to the fall and ask, well, what happened there?

If salvation puts right what went wrong in the fall, we won't appreciate salvation to the extent that we ought unless we really understand what we lost in the fall.

So, it's back to the fall that we go and we're asking the question, well, what happened there? It's important that we understand that.

Well, Adam and Eve sinned against God, you say. They broke his command. Yes, that's true. But that hardly goes deep enough to understand the full story of what happened there.

For in the Bible, sin is something that goes deeper than our outward behavior. Isaiah prophesied, and Jesus says, this describes you Pharisees just perfectly.

[9 : 04] This is true of you as it was of the people of Isaiah's time. In Isaiah 29, 13, these people come near to me with their mouth and they honor me with their lips.

So, there's the outward behavior. It's orthodox. It's right in line. They come to me. They bring their mouth to church and they sing my praises and they pray to me.

And then they say and sing things that are very orthodox. They honor me with their lips. Well, so then, what's wrong? Why does Jesus go on to say that their worship of me is in vain?

It's because their what? Their hearts are what? Far from me. So, they bring their lips and mouth near and they go through all the motions and everything's orthodox and good as to their outward behavior, but something's missing.

There's no love for me in their worship. So, sin is more than just wrong outward behavior. There was something deeper going on when Eve took the fruit and ate it and when she gave it to Adam and he too ate it.

[10:16] There was something more than just the physical behavior of breaking one of God's commandments as serious as that is in itself. According to Jesus, we could do what's right on the outside and be no better than whitewashed tombs.

Tombs that have been whitewashed, the tombstones, but inside are full of all kinds of dead men's bones. He says that about a people, the most religious people of his day, that that's described them.

And so, they were doing a lot of outward behaviors that were right. But God's looking for love. He's looking for the heart, for the affections of man.

Indeed, what is the first and greatest commandment? The greatest duty we have is to love the Lord our God with all of our heart and soul, mind, and strength. So, in all of our obedience, God is looking for love.

He's requiring love for him. Indeed, love is the fulfillment of the law. Not only Godward, but also manward. Jonathan Edwards showed this in the demon that came to Jesus in Luke chapter 8 and worshipped the Lord Jesus.

[11:31] When he saw Jesus, he cried out and he fell down before him. And with a loud voice, he said, What have I to do with you, Jesus, Son of the Most High? I beg you not to torment me.

And Edwards says, the demon was religious. He was worshiping. He prays to Jesus. He's in a humble posture.

He's falling at his feet. He's praying earnestly with a loud voice and with humble words. I beg you not to torment me. And he uses orthodox, respectful, honorable expressions with his lips.

Jesus, Son of God, Most High. Edwards says, nothing was lacking but love. Worship without love. And that love is no small omission because worship without love is empty. They worship me in vain, Jesus says of people that worship that way. And obedience without love is missing the main ingredient.

[12:34] Indeed, Edwards' work on the religious affections makes the proposition that all true religion consists in the affections, in the heart, in love for God and man.

So what went wrong in the fall was far more than disobedient behaviors. God had created man in his own image. What was that image?

It was the image of eternal love flowing out to the other members of the Trinity. God has created us in his image with a love that is flowing back to him and to our neighbor.

That's the way we were made to reflect that image. So in our relationships with others but especially with God and primarily with God, the first and greatest commandment is to love him with all our heart.

And that's how the perfect man lived. Jesus can say in John 14, 31, the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what he commands me to do. So you see those two go hand in hand.

[13:49] It's not enough just to do what God commands but to love him and that's what Jesus says. I love the Father and I do exactly what he has commanded me.

That's more than forced obedience against his will. It's love for his Father that moves him to exact obedience to his commands. And that's what we were created for.

And that's what we lost in the fall. So Adam and Eve were created in God's images outflowing lovers. What went wrong was not that they stopped loving which is perhaps impossible since lovers is what we are by creation.

Rather what happened at the fall was their love was turned. It was twisted. It was perverted. And instead of flowing outward to God and to others it was turned inward upon themselves.

And we all inherit such a turned in heart. Luther described the sinner as the person curved in on himself. Do you see how opposite that is from God and our original creation in his image to reflect that curved outward love that exists within the Trinity?

[15:08] You're familiar with 2 Timothy 3 2 and 4. The last times will be terrible times. You know why there are terrible times? Well he tells us because of the terrible people. And the first thing he says about terrible times and terrible people is that they're lovers of themselves.

People will be lovers of themselves. You see that's the twisted perverted love instead of lovers of God. That's turned in and now they're lovers of themselves.

And what follows is just a manifestation of love turned in on themselves instead of on God.

Horrendous things follow. Terrible things. Terrible times.

But here's the root of it all. They're lovers of themselves rather than lovers of God. He goes on to describe some of them as lovers of money. Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

And all of this was existing with a form of godliness. The outward behavior of godliness. And yet resisting and denying the power of godliness. In verse 5 2 Timothy 3 5.

[16:17] So the outflowing love to God and neighbor was twisted into love of self. And what is love of money? And love of pleasure but just different expressions of love of self.

So love of self is love of ice cream let's say. And love of money and love of pleasure is just two of the 26 flavors of ice cream. But why do we love money?

Because it gets what I want. And why do we love pleasure? Because it gives me the feelings that I want. You see it's all this twisted love centering on myself rather than loving God.

So that's what happened in the fall. And Reeve says it's important for us to get that right if we would come to appreciate what God puts right in salvation.

So we go back to the first sin and there's Eve and she sees that the fruit was good for food and pleasing to the eye and desirable for gaining wisdom.

[17:22] All these things are for her and so she takes some and eats it and her perverted love for herself and what she thought she'd get out of it has overcome and replaced her love for God.

And her behavior of eating the fruit and breaking the command was simply the result of the inward turn of her heart her heart's love away from God and on to self.

She now loved herself more than God and this is what sin flows from. Sin flows from misdirected love this self-love. Reeves says that was the downfall of Lucifer as it's symbolically explained in Ezekiel 28 that he was appointed and anointed by God as a guardian cherub one of those that were close to God and to behold the glory of God and then something went wrong and Ezekiel says your heart became proud on account of your beauty.

Now he was to behold the beauty of the Lord and yet he was made beautiful and his eyes were taken off of the gaze of the Lord's beauty and put upon himself and then you became proud on account of your beauty and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor so his gaze was turned inward and his love was turned inward leading to his fall and then when he comes to foment the same rebellion on earth with mankind he gets Eve as well to shift her loving focus and gaze from her God that gave her exquisite pleasures to enjoy and he himself was the greatest of those pleasures and he plants seeds of doubt about the goodness of God and his motives and saying you can't eat from this tree and gets her to think less of God and turns her love away from God to herself so that's the problem of the fall and we can't rightly understand it apart from the loving nature of the triune

God we were created in the image of a triune God of outflowing love made to find our satisfaction and delight in loving fellowship with him and in outflowing love to him and others just like him just like his love but we've fallen from that God like love by turning it in upon ourselves indeed we all like sheep have gone astray we have what turned each one to his own way so the reason I go my own way is because I have turned my heart away from God and so a wandering heart from God will have wandering feet from God so sin is more than behaving wrongly it's at heart loving wrongly parents you bump into this all the time with your children you can make them share their toys but you can't make them love to share their toys sin is more than just behaving wrongly it's loving wrongly so we need more than just right behavior we need to have our love turned outward again away from ourselves to God and others just like he loves so the Trinity is the model here you see it's because of what we see in the Trinity and their loving fellowship that we really get to the bottom of what went wrong with us who were supposed to be reflecting that it's a love problem sin is a love problem and so we need to have our love turned outward again and that's what

[21:10] God does in salvation now he does more than that we don't have time to go into all the rest that he does but he does not less than that he reverses the fall and centers our love once again in himself so how does God save us from our turned in love how does he turn it back outward to him for one simple answer is John 3 16 that God so loved now when we deserve hell and wrath God so loved this world that he gave his one and only son that whoever would believe in him would not perish but have everlasting life he did it by this shocking demonstration of more love for his

creatures now his hell deserving creatures his shocking love but notice it was a trinitarian thing it was impossible to a single person deity like Allah who has no son no God has a son and he demonstrated his love for us in giving his son to us he didn't spare his son the son he delighted in and loved and fellowshiped with he actually gave him up to the hellish cross for us oh that's something only a trinitarian god can do

I wouldn't give up my son to be tortured and killed for enemies who hated me but he did he did a father son relationship that was sweeter than any father son relationship on earth and he gave him up for us unheard of love shocking love of our trinitarian god far beyond all expectation we we deserved the opposite and instead he gives us his own son and not only pardons our sins but adopts us into his family as his own children that we might share in the same love that the father has for his one and only son so that trinitarian love of the father for his son might now be known by me that he loves me even as he loves his son john 17 23 you have loved them father even as you have loved me no wonder john says behold what manner of love is this what kind of love is this it's the same expression that the disciples used when they were on the stormy sea and Jesus is sleeping and they went and woke him up and scared to death they're going to drown and Jesus just speaks to the wind and waves and it becomes calm and now they're really terrified and they ask this question what manner of man is this that even the winds and the waves obey him john was there that day maybe he said those very words but now in first john 3 1 he's saying behold what manner of love is this that through the father giving up his own son we should become ourselves the children of god and that's what we are luther hated god before he came to see him as father he just saw him as a judge but when he came to see him as father he started loving that god j.i.

packer says if you want to judge how well a person understands christianity find out how much he makes of the thought of being god's child and having god as his! father if this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers his whole outlook on life it means he does not understand christianity very well at all you see he's saying that there should be something in our worship about the father just talking now about the father that is reflective of that do we make much of the fact that this god is our father well he's not just our father because he comes to be our father in salvation he's our father because of those personal relations within the god head that he was a father to his son for all eternity past begotten not created that's what it means that Jesus is the eternal son of God he's always been the son of God in this relationship this loving relationship of father and son and because our God is father we can know him then as a father in personal relationships because he's had these personal relationships from all eternity and he's bringing us up into it!

! look at 1 John chapter 4 you know John's the one that never got over the fact that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved that he's been brought up into this fellowship of the love of the father the love of the son the love of the spirit and so John is called the apostle of love he writes so much about it especially here in his little epistle 1 John chapter 4 and verses 8 and following whoever does not love does not know God why because God is love now what he's going to say throughout this letter is that you cannot be brought up into fellowship with God the father son and holy spirit which is a fellowship of love eternal love you can't be saved and brought up into that fellowship without yourself loving that's what he says whoever does not love obviously doesn't know God does not been brought up into that relationship of knowing

[26 : 50] God why because God's love to know him is to love him and is to love others verse nine this is how God showed his love among us he sent his one and only son into the world that we might live through him this is love not that we love God but that he loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins a propitiation one to pacify God's wrath by taking it upon himself we can't even know what love is a right apart from Trinitarian thought this is impossible to Allah who has no son but to a Trinitarian God who has had a son from all eternity we can know what love is because he gave up that son so great was his love for us and he poured out his wrath that was due us upon his own son that we might be without condemnation and only enjoy the eternal favor of our father in heaven back to chapter 3 in verse 16 1

John 3 16 should be as well known as John 3 16 and they're both about love aren't they here in verse 16 though it's about the savior's love the son of God's love this is how we know what love is Jesus Christ laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for one another if anyone has material possession sees his brother in need but has no pity on him how can the love of God be

in him and so on but notice we can't even know what love is apart from the son Jesus Christ laying down his life for us so what we find is Jesus Christ is in perfect harmony with his heavenly father on this matter of love the father so!

loved us that he gave his son and the son doesn't come dragging his feet forced and twisted into this deal no he comes voluntarily himself with such love and lays down his life no one takes it from me he says but I lay it down willingly of myself and so we see that God the father and God the son are united in this love this demonstration of love to man the father sending the son coming and suffering he came entirely out of who he is and who is he he is the exact image of the father so we should expect his love to be like the father's and indeed it is the father's love is overflowing to who? to undeserving sinners! the savior! Hmm! Interesting isn't it? That his love too is just like the father's! That's because he's the perfect image the exact representation of the father he's as much God as the father is God and so at Calvary we come to know of a God who delights to give himself to us but we can only know it through trinitarian love this is this is the love that has broken every barrier down now to be thine yea thine alone O Lamb of God I come what breaks down the barriers that keep sinners from coming to Christ this love this love this overpowering outflowing love in the atonement of Christ it's a love that begets love and that's what John says in chapter 4 in verse 17 or 19 we love because he first loved us and that prior love begets love in us love for him love for our neighbor so our love is now turned outward how not just by a command love

God and love neighbor that's always been there that's the duty that we have as creatures but our love gets turned outward by the amazing love of our Trinitarian God so we might wonder after the fall is there anything strong enough maybe you've wondered anything strong enough to break this stranglehold of my idolatrous love of self yes it's the infinitely greater love of almighty God father son and holy spirit and his love so overwhelms us that it turns our love outward again back on its proper objects of God first and others self last so it's his love in my salvation that that constrains me to love him and to no longer live for myself but for him who died for me and rose again second corinthians 5 14 and 15 and that wondrous love of God continues to affect me as a believer continues to affect you as a believer

[31 : 48] I never so much lose this love of self and when I'm lost in love and wonder at his love for me it's then that I'm the most spiritually healthy and alive and most in line with my purpose of existence and why he was made I'm hitting on all cylinders when I'm amazed at his love for me because that's when I love most in return and it's that that enables me to be forgetful of this preoccupation with my money and my pleasures and self love so it's a freeing thing it frees us to be what God made us to be look at Hebrews you're right there next door a little bit Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 14 again what what Reeves wants us to sense is that this is not something this great salvation is not something that

Allah or any other God like him who is just a single person God could do it's the work of our trinitarian God in salvation that saves us and it's interesting when we find a verse just one verse that puts it all together and here in Hebrews 9 verse 13 says that the blood of goats and bulls the ashes of the heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean outwardly clean how much more verse 14 how much more then will the blood of Christ who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to God here a reference to the father when you hear the son Christ speaking about God it's a reference to his father how much more will his blood cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death so that we may serve the living God instead of serving ourself this atonement of

Christ who through the eternal spirit sustaining and upholding the man Jesus on the cross to finish our salvation was there being offered to God the father representing the Godhead against whom we had sinned how much more will that turn us outward to now serve him instead of ourselves so salvation is sometimes referred to as people turning to God our love was turned away from him and conversion is called the Thessalonians that they turn to God from their idols and there's no idol greater than the idol of self we give godlike status and preferences to well they turn to God from their idols that's conversion that's the supernatural work of God the spirit in the heart or that familiar text in first Peter you're right there just flip over to it first Peter chapter three and verse 18 for Christ died for sins once for all the righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to heaven to bring you to God to God himself yes yes his death will bring you life eternal life and bring you to heaven but but real eternal life is knowing God the living God and so Christ death for us as unrighteous he the righteous one for us the righteous one was in order to bring us to God himself into this wonderful

fellowship that we had forfeited by sin and lost by sin now bringing us back to God so we're seeing the trinity in salvation any questions or comments you would have before I just conclude our study all right you see the role of the trinity in our salvation and why this salvation would be impossible to a non trinitarian

God so the world's blind they don't know God and the son has come to reveal the father he says in Matthew 11 no one knows the father except the son and those to whom the son chooses to reveal him so this world is in darkness they're blind they don't understand God man by his wisdom could not figure out God but Jesus comes to share his knowledge of God he's coming where from the bosom of God the father the closest most intimate face to face communion for all eternity and he's come down to reveal to exegete the father john 1 18 the fullest revelation of the father and it's not only in his words it's himself the word of God the revelation of God the exact image of the invisible God and so exact is Christ the exact image of the father that Jesus can actually say to Philip if you've seen me you've seen the father because

[37 : 08] I and my father are one we're the one God we share all the same attributes of God distinctive works yes but the same attributes of God and so he reveals what the father is like do you see Jesus caring suffering for sinners do you see Jesus giving himself to the poor and needy he's showing us the father the father cares the father seeks that we might know him and enter into a relationship where we know him even as the son knows him and without the son of God we would never dream how fatherly God is he's the only one who can share with us the true life of knowing loving and being loved by his father this is what I want to close with Jesus prayer to his father in John 17 26 he says to the father I have made you known to them and I will continue to make you known to them in order that the love you have for me may be in them that they might come to share in the same wonderful love father that you have for me so that's especially the work of

Christ coming to reveal that love of God and to bring us by his atoning death into that loving fellowship of the Trinity next week we're going on to the next chapter Pastor Jason on the spirit the work of the spirit in salvation well we're dismissed