

God's Triune Character

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- [0 : 00] Well, we are talking about the Holy Spirit. We're going through the book, *Delighting in the Trinity* by Michael Reeves. And we are down to the next of the last chapter. We began this chapter last week. We're finishing up this week. We're talking about the Holy Spirit and how he brings us into a delightful relationship and fellowship with the triune God.
- And I hope that in a certain way, this whole class has been eye opening for you, helpful for you, maybe puts a new nuance and new color into your walk with the Lord.
- What is what is life? What is it to have eternal life? What did Jesus say? Remember, we've quoted this verse a lot in this class.
- What did the Lord say? This is what eternal life is. Anyone? Yeah, this is eternal life that they know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.
- Life is not mere existence. Life is truly knowing and enjoying and participating in a relationship with the true God, with the Father and his Son.
- [1 : 29] And it is the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, who brings us into this life. And even more than brings us into this life, he's how we participate now.
- He's how we enjoy the Trinity. He brings the Father's love to us. He puts the mind of Christ into us. So we're going to look at some of those things a little bit later.
- But if you know the book of Galatians, I want you to just sort of turn there in your mind. And I want you to to I would encourage you to read that book of Galatians with that in mind.
- It talks about a lot of things. The most important thing that it's talking about is what does it look like or what is the gospel? Is it is it works plus Jesus?
- And no, he says that brings us into slavery. Instead, it is freedom. I love Galatians 5 one. It says it is for freedom that Christ set you free.
- [2 : 39] It was. God gave you freedom for a purpose. It was that you might enjoy that freedom. God wants you to enjoy the freedom that the gospel gives you the freedom as it's a very particular kind of freedom.
- It's the freedom of the sons of God that you get to live as a child of God and what that freedom is. And he says that's what living by the spirit is.
- That's what being born of the spirit is. And he says, if you live by the spirit, then you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.
- Now, we've we've talked a lot and we've used this sort of definition that the flesh is that inward bent in this.
- That self absorption. Have you noticed that in your life? That you have this inclination that's always with you?
- [3 : 43] That is that takes everything and makes it about you? That your child's problem, instead of being between that child and God, you make it about what that child is doing to you and how that affects you.

Well, that's just one example. The flesh is that inward bent in this and where it's all about me. But the the fruit of living in the Trinity and fellowship with the Trinity of living by the spirit is love, which is outgoing and joy, which is not your world collapsing in on you and depression and despair.

It's peace. Now, the spirit works in us those things. And as we put on these things more and more as we go further into our the fellowship with the Trinity.

Now, that's what we saw last week. God gives us the Holy Spirit and through the Holy Spirit, through his ministry and service and love to us.

He he he catches us up into his life. And to the life of God. Henry Schuyl was a 17th century English theologian.

[5 : 06] And and he called it the life of God in the soul of man. Where God's life, God's love, God's joy, God's peace is living now in the soul of man, not merely existing there, but living there.

And wherever you live, you you have an effect on that place, don't you? So we last year, we moved into our house, our new house.

And when we moved in, it was blank walls and and. And but instantly what started to happen was we began in printing and pressing ourselves upon that house above the in the dining room above the table.

There was some sort of like cliché sort of phrase that the last people had stenciled up there. I don't even remember what it said. And instantly that had to get painted over because that's not us.

And we hung something over our dining room. It's a decoration that my wife made. It says, be thou my vision or my best thought by day or my night.

[6 : 17] I don't even remember what it says. Something like that. It's from be thou my vision. But that reflects us. And the walls got painted because guess what?

My wife doesn't like sunshine, brilliant yellow. She doesn't like that. Well, that got changed. Things got moved around.

Do you see the spirit of God comes and lives in us? He's not just there. He's at work. He's beautifying. He's making the house, the temple like himself.

And the father has always loved the son.

moves in, we begin to love the son. And the son has always loved the father. And the son has always found great delight in doing the father's will. Well, as the spirit lives in us, we begin to have the mind of Christ living in us. So that's really the heartbeat of godliness. Godliness is not adherence, obedience to just a mere objective set of behaviors. The Pharisees had good behaviors.

[7 : 55] Godliness is not having an adherence to good doctrine. To a great degree, the Pharisees had good doctrine. You know, they had good habits. They read and they prayed, but that's not what godliness is. Essentially, Jesus said, if God were your father, you would love me.

The father's very identity is all about loving his son. And so he's the loving, that's who he is. He's the loving father of the son. So how can we say we're godly if we don't first and foremost love the son? You see, you see what's going on there? And you see what the Holy Spirit is, is working in us?

And that's what the spirit creates in us. But at the same time, he puts the mind of Christ in us. Galatians 4.6, because you are his sons, God sent the spirit of his son into our hearts.

The spirit who calls out, Abba, Father. Who is the son? The son essentially is the one who calls to God as Abba, Father.

Who relates to God as Abba, Father. So what is the most, what is most characteristic of the son is this? He knows and he enjoys this relationship with God, the father.

[9 : 32] He loves the father and he lives in a sense of the father's love for him. So, you know, we say and we pray, Lord, I want to be like Christ.

And I think a lot of times what we mean is just mere sort of outward behaviors, which are good. Not, not poo-pooing that at all or not diminishing that at all.

That is part of being Christ-like. Christ obeys. But listen to Michael Reeves at this point. At the heart of our transformation into the likeness of the son, then, is our sharing of his deep delight in the father.

Becoming more Christ-like is growing in delight and in joy of who God is. That's why there are certain people that have all their ducks in a row.

And they do all the right things and they believe all the right things. And yet, when you get near them, there's a certain bitterness and solidness. There's a certain unattractiveness to it.

[10 : 44] When you get near them, it doesn't invite you in because there's no delight there. But, he says this, In our love and enjoyment of the son, we are like the father.

In our love and enjoyment of the father, we are like the son. That is the happy life the Spirit calls us to. Now, last week I said that all sanctification then is personal.

It's relational. It's not adhering to just new objectives or just new behaviors. Those are part of it, but it's always relational.

Sanctification then is at its very core going closer, turning in faith more, repenting more toward God.

It's growing in a deeper relationship with God. It's always more comprehensive. And so, that's what life is, isn't it? If life is to know God, and sanctification then is to come to know God better and turn to him more and live in faith more with who he is, then do you see what sanctification is?

[12 : 03] Sanctification is growing in life. It's growing in joy. It's growing in peace. It's growing in love. We talk about mortification of sin.

That's an important part of sanctification, putting to sin death. But a lot of the theologians used to talk about vivification, which is growing in life.

Are you growing in life? Are you growing in life toward God? Are you turning away from death and turning more toward God in those moments?

Those little moments? We're not talking big moments, but little moments. You're having a conversation and you realize you need the Lord to talk to this person. So you're praying to the Lord.

You're trusting the Lord. A verse comes to mind and you and you talk to God about that, even as you're talking to this person about it. Sanctification is always moving further into eternal life.

[13 : 11] Into knowing God. Let me give you an example. Years ago, I had the opportunity to counsel a man and we'll call him Jack.

You don't know. You don't know Jack. He doesn't know you. I'm not breaking any sort of code here. You don't know him.

Every day, Jack would come home from a kind of a menial job where he wasn't really getting ahead.

And I don't know about you, but how do you feel when you feel like you're locked into a dead-end job? It's easy to feel the way Jack felt.

He'd come home and he was always on edge. He's very impatient and explosive. He'd yell at his wife and they would get in fights and he'd threaten her.

[14 : 19] It was not a pretty situation. And so I'm called into this situation and I'm talking and I'm asking questions.

I'm asking questions about his work. I'm asking questions about his drive home. What was that like? I'm asking questions. What's your feelings about your life in general?

Trying to just figure out what is making Jack tick. And really, what is his functional relationship with the Lord like?

I'm not interested in if he knows all the right things. But functionally, like in those moments that I was just talking about, is he talking to the Lord?

Is he dealing with the Lord? Is he walking with the Lord? What's that like? And it became pretty clear, at least, that one thing that was very near the center of Jack and making him tick was he really never felt like he was enough.

[15 : 23] He was a believer, but he always felt like he was on trial with God. You feel that way? He just never measured up.

And so when he thought of himself, he thought of himself as, I just don't measure up. And then he looked at his job, and it wasn't the kind of job where he got a lot of respect.

He wasn't getting ahead. And in his thinking, he wasn't measuring up there either. Now, complicating all this, his wife didn't help.

There's always complicating circumstances. I just read an interesting, interesting article about, you know, we are living in Vanity Fair. We create idols of our own, but the world creates idols.

Other people create idols, and we sell them our idols, and they sell us their idols. Well, this woman, she had her own idols about what she wanted, and she was selling her husband that, and her husband was gladly buying them.

[16 : 27] Do you get what I'm saying? She wanted more from him, and he knew it. But there's a lot more to the story, but there's the bare bones of his world. God, in his mind, was always saying, you don't measure up.

Come on. Try harder. Keep going. Try harder. And the world said, you're not measuring up to what you could be. Come on.

Look at you. And his wife kind of thought the same, and Jack believed it. And so he lived his life in just this not good enough. And so this is the general tension of his whole life.

He kind of lives with this weight with these glasses on. And you can kind of see why he would act the way he would act.

Because finally it would get to be too much. And he'd snap, and he'd yell, and they'd argue, and they would fight. So he had an idol problem.

[17 : 36] He wanted a good thing too much. It's not wrong to want to be respected, but he wanted it too much. He had a gospel problem. He didn't understand and live in the reality of, you have been justified by faith.

And you're not only, it's not just as if you've never sinned. Jesus has given you a righteousness and a standing where it's just as if you had always obeyed.

And he was still living very much by his performance. Now do you see how all this is reinforcing? So he was angry, and he was miserable, and he was rubbed raw, and he had a hair trigger.

And so what did Jack need? Jack needed some things. He needed to see his idol of success for what it was, his idol of respect for what it was.

He needed to put off anger and impatience and put on gentleness and patience. But, you know, he could only do that.

[18 : 48] As he walked deeper into a relationship with the Lord. His idol had a grip on his heart. Because it was a Jesus substitute.

It was a way that he was trying to save himself, in effect. But if you have Jesus, then you don't need a substitute. So, here's the situation.

Would it be enough for him to just understand that that's his idol? No. No. He can understand he has that idol. Would it be enough for him to say, I'm going to be more patient?

No. He needed to live in the fullness of Jesus' work for him. More than that, he needed to really rely on Jesus more.

Comprehensively. So rely on his righteousness, yes. But, he needed to be going to work with the Lord. He needed to be driving home with the Lord.

[19 : 57] He needed to be having conversations with the Lord as a third person in that conversation. He needed deeper relationship and fellowship with God.

And so, whatever the world said to him, the gospel was saying to him, your work is finished because of Jesus. And you've measured up in Christ. Jesus did enough now.

And now he's saying to you, you're enough. He needed to enter in more fully into his adoption as a son.

As an accepted son. God wasn't constantly measuring him and saying, like he said to Belshazzar and Daniel, meany, meany, tekell, parson.

You've been measured. Found wanting. No, he needed to hear, you're dearly loved. Do you see what I'm saying?

[21 : 01] It's not enough for willpower. It takes more than that. It takes more than just analysis. Like, I'm going to figure out what's wrong with me.

I'm going to figure out my idol. And if I just figure it out, that will solve the problem. That won't work. He needed something relational. He needed for the Spirit of God to take him deeper into a loving, delightful relationship with the Lord.

And when he was living in that living, delightful relationship with the Lord, guess what idols instantly don't have as much power? That idol of success.

That idol of respect. The idols that his wife were selling him and he was gladly buying. All of those things, you don't need them.

So, he needed to turn away from the darkness and the chaos. And it was a journey.

[22 : 08] It wasn't immediate. There was an immediate, oh, I need to do that. But there was a new direction that Jack needed to take.

And Jack did take it. And Jack had a journey in the right direction towards God. Did it take work and effort? Yeah. But that's where the battlefield was.

It was a battlefield away from that inwardness toward the Lord. And the Lord inviting him and bringing him and helping him and strengthening him to new life and to new obedience and to new love.

So, the Spirit was at work in Jack's life. Now, do you see then what is needed in sanctification?

And do you see what the Holy Spirit was doing? The Spirit was doing those things. Like, I could not reach into Jack's mind and heart and say, look, the cross is enough for you.

[23 : 18] Jesus is enough for you. I couldn't convince him of those things. But the Holy Spirit can and does. And so, the Spirit was all about making more of the Father's love.

I couldn't convince Jack. Look, God the Father loves you. You're adopted. Enjoy that. Delight in that. But the Holy Spirit can. And that's what the Holy Spirit does.

And so, by the Spirit, by living in the Spirit and by walking with the Spirit, Jack did begin to grow and to change and to put on and to put off and to tear idols from their thrones.

But that's what the Spirit does. He actually takes the truth of God's Word and makes it real and shines on our hearts and shines on our lives so that we respond.

We respond with faith and love. And he creates desire for God and he brings God to us. And so, we begin to worship God in spirit and in truth. And he turns our hearts to God.

[24 : 28] And then, he turns our hearts to Jesus Christ. And as we look into his face, we're transformed into his image.

Jonathan Edwards said, True religion, in great part, consists in holy affections. Holy affections. True religion, Jonathan Edwards, as he's talking to a very religious group of people there.

Jonathan Edwards' day, if you were going to be a citizen of the Massachusetts colony, you had to be a member of the church. So, it was important that people showed up at church and at least put on the facade.

So, people did the right things. At least, they tried. But, so here he's like saying, You know what? We need to scrape away the facade here.

What is true religion? And he says, It's in the heart. It's holy emotions. It's holy desires and loves.

[25 : 37] And he wrote a whole book called Religious Affections that unpacks what he's talking about. And what Edwards was getting at in his book was that, again, the spirit is not about bringing mere external performance.

But, he's bringing us to actually really, really love God. And want God.

And desire God. Yesterday, we did two interviews for testimonies. And we're actually going to hand those testimonies out to tonight.

But, in these interviews where we're talking and people are telling us about how the Lord saved us, we're always looking for new desires.

So, what's your practice with the Bible, we ask. Now, we don't ask that because, you know, if we're looking for a box to check off. We ask that to say, do you have a new love?

[26 : 43] We ask the question, are these people, do you feel like these people are your people? We ask that because, not because we're looking for a box that says, you've attended church X amount of times.

Or you do per month. We're asking, do you have a new love for God's people? Well, that's what he's talking about. That's what the Holy Spirit does.

And, we do it with delight. The Heidelberg Catechism just captures this so brilliantly. It asks this question, what is the coming of life to the new man?

What is the coming of life of the new man? What is new life in a new man? And, it says this, it's the wholehearted joy in God through Christ and delight to do every kind of good as God wants us to.

I'm going to just read that again. It's the wholehearted joy in God through Christ and delight to do every kind of good as God wants us to. So, the coming of life to the new man, it's the work of the Spirit to change us.

[27 : 54] And, it doesn't just change us on the outside. It changes us on the inside where our delights are, where our joys are. Like, I actually love being with these people.

I actually enjoy the Word of God. Now, the preaching of God's Word is not dull. I delight in it. But, there is a new life that follows it where we delightfully do what God says.

And, now our sins are things we don't delight in. We say, I can't believe I did it again. I don't understand why I'm doing this. You know, we come to our senses.

And, when we come to our senses, it just changes our, like, we say, that, what a wretched man I am that I'm still sinning. And, I just interviewed, well, Grant Cloco.

And, he said, you know, I saw my sin for what it was. And, I didn't like it anymore. That's, that's new life.

[28 : 56] It's like, I didn't, you know, it wasn't, I want to be safe from hell. It's, I want to be safe from this sin. That's new heart, new delight. New obedience comes.

So, again, this is what the Holy Spirit is doing in us. He is in us to will and to act according to his good pleasure. He changes our loves.

He changes our desires. And, so, as we live in these new loves and these new desires, we're drawn to fellowship with God.

We're drawn to enjoy God. We're drawn to, to, to away from the world and, and to him more. Thomas Chalmers was a Scottish preacher.

And, he was actually the most famous and well-known preacher of his day. You know, people, it was one of those situations where the whole church was full.

[30 : 09] And, they had to open the windows and people would sit outside just so they could hear him preach. And, he preached a sermon called the Expulsive Power of a New Affection. Expulsive is obviously an unusual word.

My, you know, spell check in my Word document just didn't like it. No substitute for it. Expulsive means explosive. It blows things out.

It expels things. And, so, the expelling power of a new affection. And, it's a sermon based on 1 John 2:15. It says, do not love the world or anything in the world.

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. So, don't love the world. Don't love the things of this world. It's a good command.

It's a right command. Chalmers would say. But, let me ask you. Is love something that you can just turn on and turn off? So, what can...

[31 : 15] Chalmers asked, like, well, what can we do? What can we do to obey this? Do we just resolve to do better? Do we just, like, try to convince ourselves that the world is not really that attractive?

Or alluring, after all? You know, that's... It's sort of like trying to tell yourself, like, that beautiful woman, she's not really beautiful.

Or that handsome man, he's not really handsome. Or that thing is not really funny, even though I can't help but laughing at it. But, he says this, it's altogether incompetent and ineffectual for nobody can dispossess the heart of an old affection.

If you think that thing is funny, you can't just turn it off. If you think that thing is desirable, you just can't just say, like, I'm going to not desire it.

So, he says, nobody can dispossess, take away the heart of an old affection, but by the power of the expulsive... But by the expulsive power of a new one.

[32 : 26] For we cannot choose what we love, but we always love what seems desirable to us. You're always going to choose what you think is most desirable.

And that's what we do when we obey, and that's what we do when we sin. We choose, in that moment, what we think is most desirable to us.

So, I say a mean word to my daughter. Why do I do that? There's lots of reasons. But, down at the very bottom, I think I can get something I want by saying that.

Maybe it's vengeance. Maybe it's manipulation. Maybe it's, I'm going to cram righteousness into her life by these unkind words.

Whatever it is, we always do what is desirable to us. And so, we go back to Jack, and what does Jack want? He wants respect.

[33 : 31] He wants success. And he wants to feel accomplished. That's what he wanted. That's what he loved. And I couldn't just go in there and say, stop it.

Now, he might agree that he should stop. He might agree that, yep, I am choosing to do these things, and I need to stop doing that. But Jack just couldn't stop loving those things because that's what he wanted.

That's what he most desired, and that's what drew his heart. So, the only thing that could free Jack was the expulsive power of a new affection, a new love.

Something had to get into Jack's heart and life and capture it in the place of that idol. And that's what the Holy Spirit does. He comes in and he captures hearts.

Not just the first time. He does it again and again. Have you seen that in your life? Where you have these patterns of sin. But then, all of a sudden, the Holy Spirit, like, puts a wrench right into it and changes you.

[34 : 35] And all of a sudden, now, what you were comfortable with, what you liked, you don't like anymore. And you start pulling away from it. And you start jerking away from it. And you start turning from it. And you start turning towards God.

Well, that's what the Holy Spirit is doing. And so, we want something new. And so, like Grant said, I saw it for what it was and I didn't want it.

That's what happens a hundred times over. That's what the Spirit does. And he does it through his word. And he does it through our experiences and good things and hard things. But he's changing us.

And he's living inside of us. And he's living inside of us to make us beautiful. And so, he's transforming the house from the inside out.

And so, we have new affections. And, you know, so, in Jack's case, he started drinking in the love of God. And he started drinking in the good news of justification by faith.

[35 : 36] And he started drinking those things then. And guess what? You don't need respect then. You don't need the world's approval.

When you're eating and you're feasting at your Father's table, you don't need to go out and slum it. You don't need to go dumpster diving on the world's landfill.

No. That's what the Holy Spirit is doing. He's moving us towards God. He's always moving us towards God. More enjoyment. More delight.

More appreciation. More worship. More praise. And so, our lives begin to transform and change and become more and more beautiful. It's always relational towards God.

But the Holy Spirit isn't just interested in relational toward God. It's relational towards each other. Faith and repentance always, primarily, yes, is vertical.

[36 : 40] But it always has a horizontal aspect. And it's other people related to. It's moving towards other people. You know, if sin is bending us inward, grace bends us towards God, but it bends us outward toward other people.

And that's what the Holy Spirit is. We're running out of time again. But that's what the Holy Spirit is doing. Very quickly.

Turn to Ephesians chapter 2. Ephesians chapter 2. And I want to squeeze this into the lesson because I think it's a good segue to worship together.

Ephesians chapter 2. Ephesians chapter 2. Verse 15. It says this. God's purpose was to create, or Christ's purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace.

And in this one body to reconcile both of them, that's Jews and Gentiles, to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and he preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.

[38 : 04] For through him, we both have access to the Father by one spirit. Jesus came to bring peace and reconciliation.

Part of life is not just living Godward. Eternal life is something that we're going to enjoy together as a family. And that's what this is saying.

So the Holy Spirit comes and together we have access to one Father. So on Wednesday night when I'm sitting knee to knee with my brother and we're praying, there's unity there that you don't find out in the world.

There's life there that you don't find on the phone or on your TV. And so together we cry out, Abba, Father. And here's the beauty of it.

We're as different as can be. And yet we're unified. Now, we've kind of compared, like, what does it mean that God is triune versus, you know, Allah, who's one?

[39 : 17] I just want you to think, wherever Allah worship goes, what happens to the cultures of those places? Well, you know, Nigeria and Algeria and Persia and Pakistan and Indonesia, they used to be extremely culturally different.

Colorful, beautiful, different ways of dressing, different ways of talking, different ways of praying and thinking and all the rest and relating. But, you know, Islam is a complete way of life for everybody.

And so you pray one way, you marry, you buy, you fight, you relate, you eat, you drink, you dress the same. And more and more, Islam shrinks the colorful world of different cultures down into one black and white thing.

It does. But the spirit maintains diversity. I know we almost have an allergic reaction to the word diversity because it's been just so heightened and abused.

But the spirit does prize and maintain diversity. There are different kinds of gifts, but the same spirit. If the whole body were an eye, then where would this sense of hearing be?

[40 : 35] If the whole body were an ear, where would this are? Yeah, where would the sense of smell be? But as there are, there are many parts, but one body. It's not sameness. It's its unity. It's not monotone.

It's a it's a symphony. And so in the end. In Revelation, the nations are not obliterated. What you have is the nations aren't obliterated.

God doesn't just reduce the whole church to white people in northern Indiana, just like us. It's not that it's every tribe and tongue singing God's praises.

It's every tribe, nation and tongue worshipping the father by the spirit in a pageantry of colors and voices and sounds.

And it's as diverse and as colorful and as beautiful as nature itself. The spirit who filled the earth with beautiful things fills the new humanity with the same sort of color and beauty.

[41 : 40] That's what the spirit is doing. And that's how he gives us life. He puts us into a body where we're different. And there's room here for your oddities.

And there's room here for my oddities. Because the family is big enough for me and for you. And isn't that what we mean?

And when we sing, oh, how good it is when the family of God dwells together in spirit and faith and unity, where the bonds of peace, of acceptance and love are the fruit of his presence here among us.

And so with one voice, we'll sing to the Lord and with one heart, we'll live out his word to the whole earth sees the redeemer has come for he dwells in the presence of his people.

Where God is, there's beautiful unity, diversity, life and love. So our love as a family magnifies God, not in sameness, but in unity and in love and acceptance.

[42 : 54] And so what the book of Galatians says, what Paul says in Galatians is now keep in step with spirit. Keep in step in the spirit that all the things I've been talking about today.

That's what the Holy Spirit is doing. What is your job to keep in step with the spirit to go where he's taking you? Well, we're out of time. We're dismissed.