



Let's Talk (Part 4) – Enjoying the Triune God

JT English – July 16, 2017

Good morning. My name is JT English. I'm one of the pastors here. I serve as the pastor of The Village Church Institute, so I help us oversee our classes, training program, and residency. I get the opportunity to preach from time to time, and I'm really excited to preach in this sermon series in particular, because this is a bit of a different or perhaps a more rare sermon series, where we actually sent you an email and said, "Hey, what would you like to hear about?"

Rather than just tell you what we want to say, we said, "What would you like to be equipped on? What would you like to learn about?" You brought us back tons of practical topics of how we could equip you in the Word, things like marriage, singleness, evangelism. We'll be doing sanctification in the next few weeks, and then this topic, Trinitarianism, the most practical of all. When we saw this list, we were kind of stunned, because you asked. This is you. You asked to hear about Trinitarianism. You get what you pay for here, so here comes a sermon on Trinitarianism.

I'm pumped to preach about this. I think this is a super important topic for our lives as Christians, and I'm excited to preach on it today. If you have a Bible with you, open up to Ephesians, chapter 1. If you don't have a Bible, there's one in the seat in front of you underneath. If you don't have a Bible at home, please take that as a gift from us to you. Ephesians, chapter 1. We're going to be in verses 3-14 this morning. Paul as he writes to the church in Ephesus writes these words:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved."

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory."

I've been thinking about a set of questions over the last few weeks. I've had a reflective few weeks, and I'll tell you why in a minute. I think life is full of us trying to answer sometimes small questions, things like, "Will I ever be able to retire? What am I going to do for a living? What's my job going to be?" to maybe more significant questions. "Who will I marry? Will I be able to have a healthy marriage? Will I ever get married?" or things like, "Will I get out of this season of intense suffering? Is there ever going to be a light at the end of the tunnel?"

Perhaps some of you have been in long seasons of suffering, and you're trying to figure out how to answer that question. There are other questions like, "Am I going to be healthy? Am I going to have the onset of some kind of illness or sickness or disease? Will my kids be healthy? Will my spouse be healthy?" Some of us might be entering a season of asking the question, "How much longer will my parents be healthy? When will I start taking on responsibility to care for them?"

There are all of these questions that life is littered with that we ultimately are trying to figure out how to give an answer to or an account for, but I want to convince you of this this morning. I think there's one question that's more important than any of these other questions, one question that kind of governs all of life's questions. The most important question you're ever going to answer is the question of...*What do you love?*

Let me tell you why I think that's the most important question. What you love really gets at the gut level or the heart level that shapes and forms every single one of your instincts. It shapes and forms the way you view the world. It shapes and forms the way you're going to live your life, and it shapes and forms the way you're going to try to answer the rest of these questions. What you set your

affections on, what you set your desires on, and ultimately what you set your love on governs every single part of your existence.

I've been thinking a lot about this question in particular lately, because I've had a really reflective few weeks. On Friday night, my wife Macy and I celebrated our 10-year wedding anniversary. It was a fun night of celebrating and recounting all that God has done in our lives. We thought about all that he did before we were married. We dated for about three years. We thought about the wedding ceremony and the rehearsal and all that God did to bring people into our lives in that season to care for us and love us and celebrate with us.

We recounted and celebrated fun things from each one of those years that demonstrated God's faithfulness to us, but the most important thing I celebrated that night is my love for my wife, that she is everything to me, that she is my best friend. She's who my affections are set on, at least in this earthly life. We also got to celebrate what God has done in our family. We have a little boy, Thomas, who's 2, but then two and a half weeks ago we welcomed our little girl into this world. Bailey Elizabeth English is here. I have a little daughter now.

So the last three or four weeks or so I've been thinking about God's faithfulness to us to give two new human beings, Thomas and Bailey, who we get to love and care for and who love us and care for us. So when I'm thinking about this most important question in the world, "What do you love?" one of the ways I would want to answer that question is "My family. My wife, my daughter, and my son."

If I were wanting to describe Macy to you, the list would be long. There are so many things about my wife that I would want to tell you about why I love her, things like I love her long brown hair. I love that she's a stay-at-home mom and that she hangs out with our kids. I love that she's short. She's only about five-two. I love her personality. She is one of the most introverted people I've ever met in my life. As a matter of fact, she would be terrified if any of you ever walked up to her. She just would back away slowly.

But here's the reality. If you know Macy, you know I'm lying through my teeth right now, because that doesn't describe my wife in any way, shape, or form. In fact, my wife is five-eight. She has beautiful blond hair. She isn't a stay-at-home mom; she works for a social media company, and she is the definition of an extrovert. In fact, we took a personality profile a few months ago, and rather than giving you a color or an animal for what personality you are, it gives you a name.

My wife is literally named "Party in a Box...If You Can Keep Them In the Box." I said, "Amen!" That has been my experience. I've always tried to communicate that to her, like, what she puts me through as an introvert. Introverts, can I get an "amen"? I try to communicate to her, "This is what you make my life like. I'm always going to need a cup of coffee. I'm always going to need some kind of other supplement, and I'm just going to be dragging behind you. You're going to have to put me on a leash, because I'm just simply not going to make it." I think she's starting to get that more.

Here's the thing. If I love my wife, if my affections are set on her, I should be able to describe her ultimately perfectly with precision, with love and care. You should be able to hear it in my voice, and it would be an accurate representation of who she actually is. The same thing about my little baby girl. She has this little button nose. Literally, when I held her for the first time... If you want to see somebody unravel, watch a dad hold a daughter for the first time.

I thought I was composed for the first 30 minutes or so of her birth, and then I just fell apart. I was taking in every single part of her face and her body and asking God to give her faith and hope and love, because these are two things that now have my love. As I answer the question, "What do you love?" I would say, "My family: Macy, Thomas, and Bailey." But for the Christian, ultimately, we would also want to answer that question by saying, "We love God."

The Bible says that God and God alone is our highest good, that our affections and our desires are placed solely on him. A.W. Tozer, one of my favorite Christian authors, says it something like this: "The most important thought that you ever think is what you think about when you think about God, because what you think about when you think about God determines every other part of your existence."

One of the main questions we need to consider this morning is what we think about when we think about God. Does it match up with who he is? Does what you think about when you think about God match up with who he has revealed himself to be in his Son and in his Word? You see, sometimes I think we allow our affection for God to be a license to not think rightly about God. We think, "Well, I love him. I'm off the hook for needing to think rightly about him."

In fact, our affection for God should fuel our desire to think rightly about God, the same way my affection for my wife, my daughter, or my son fuels me wanting to know them the way they truly are. So the most important question any of us are ever going to answer is the question of... *What do*

you love? I want to convince you this morning that for the Christian, and really for anybody, if you're here as a non-Christian, the Bible would ask you to set your affections and desires on the triune God. So we're going to talk about the Trinity.

Before we really get going into what the God of the Trinity is, I want to address two misconceptions that I think are important to address in any kind of sermon like this. The first misconception is this idea that somehow *doctrine* and *doxology* are at odds. Let me describe those two words. *Doctrine* basically means Christian teaching, things that we think are true, things like what we think about the Bible, what we think about Jesus, what we think about forgiveness of sins, what we think about the gospel. Those are doctrine.

Sometimes we think those get in the way of worship. *Doxology* ultimately means worship, giving God glory, honor, and praise. Far too often, I hear Christians say things like, "I don't really want to know God more or better. I just want to love him. I don't need to study *that* part of who God is. I just want my affections to be guided toward him." We kind of create this competitive relationship between knowing God better and loving God.

Here's a small example in *my* life. When I decided to go to seminary, I had dozens of people tell me things like, "You really need to be careful when you go to seminary, because when you go to seminary you're going to learn a lot about God, and you're going to love him less." Just think for a minute how crazy that sounds. "The more you know the Creator of the universe and what he has accomplished on your behalf, the less you're going to love him."

Here's what I want to convince you of this morning: it is a misconception that the more you know God the less you're going to love God. I want to convince you this morning that the more you give yourself over to the thought and study of who God is, the more your affections will be inflamed *for* him. Jesus says something exactly like this in John 17:3 when he says, "**And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God...**"

If you think I'm wrong, if you don't think this is a misconception, if you think I'm misguided in thinking this is a misconception, here's my challenge for you. I've given this challenge every service. Nobody has met it yet, so let's see if you guys can be the first to do it. I think theology (and by *theology* I mean doctrine teaching, just basic words about God) is the most practical thing in the world.

If you can come up with something you think is more practical than knowledge of who God is, the Creator of the world, come tell me about it, because I will lay down my job today and go do whatever is more practical. I want to be an intensely practical person. I have zero desire to live in the clouds and live in some white tower. I genuinely want to do things that are practical, and I know of nothing more practical than a right knowledge and worship of God. That's my hope today: that you would believe that.

So that's the first misconception. The second is this. This one is a bit more specific to Trinitarianism. There's this misconception that Trinitarianism, out of all Christian teaching, is the teaching that's most inaccessible. Whenever we bring up the idea of the Trinity, our first thought is, "Oh man, that's so mysterious. I have no idea about that." And it *is* mysterious, while at the same time it's at the very foundation and bedrock of our faith.

Please hear this. Too often, the Trinity is presented as a problem to be solved not a God to be worshiped. Too often, we think about the Trinity as some problem we have to get past, not a God to be worshiped. The Bible would compel us to not see the Trinity as a problem that must be solved but rather a God who deserves our affections. The entire Christian faith stands or falls on what we're going to hear today. The entire Christian faith stands or falls on the idea that God is Father, Son, and Spirit.

Augustine, one of my favorite theologians, when he discusses the Trinity, says it something like this: "Nowhere is a mistake more dangerous or the search more laborious or the discovery more advantageous than when we consider God the Trinity." I can tell you after years of studying the Trinity and trying to give myself over to this that this is absolutely true. A mistake here is absolutely detrimental for our faith and for our life in God.

It's also going to be incredibly challenging. There are parts of the Bible that are going to challenge us. It's going to force us to ask questions and to dive deeper in and ask *more* questions, but I can promise you this, out of anything I could promise you today: there is nothing more advantageous to our faith than considering beholding and worshiping the triune God. The Trinity is for our salvation and for our joy.

Here are my two goals for the sermon today, the two things I'm hoping to accomplish. The first is that each and every one of us would leave here having at least a slightly better understanding of what it means that God is Trinity. We're going to walk through the Trinity in Ephesians, chapter 1.

The second is I hope you could have at least a better understanding of why it matters. So we're going to talk about what the Trinity is and why the Trinity matters.

We're going to start with a definition. This is my definition for *Trinitarianism*. I think it's going to be helpful for you. God eternally exists as one God. There are not multiple gods. There aren't several gods in the world. There's only one God. God eternally exists as one God, yet three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, each of whom is fully God. They don't split up the Godhead. It's not one-third, one-third, and one-third.

There's no gradation, one being more God and one being less God. Each is fully God, worthy of worship and being called *Lord, God, and King*, yet there is only one God. Did you get that? Pretty simple, right? Everybody got it down? Great. We're going to take a test after this. *God eternally exists as one God, three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, each of whom is fully God, yet there is one God.*

Any visual learners out there? That's me, for sure. This is the best representation of our understanding of what God is. We want to say that God is one. There's only one God. God *is* God the Father, God *is* God the Son, and God *is* God the Holy Spirit, yet the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Father. We want to say that God eternally exists as one God, yet three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, each of whom is fully God, yet there is only one God.

So let's walk through this definition a little bit and think about how Paul explains this to us in Ephesians. The first thing I want you to consider about God's triune nature is the *oneness* of God. We want to say that God eternally exists as one God. Deuteronomy, chapter 6, verse 4, is one of the most important passages for Israel as they're coming out of the exodus and having this new national identity shaped and formed in them. Deuteronomy 6:4 says, "**Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.**"

This might not sound like a radical claim for some of us, because we have grown up in this understanding that there is only one God. It's something that's just a part of our cultural identity, but in the ancient Near Eastern context when this was written, when Israel was being shaped and formed as a nation in the Old Testament, this was a hugely radical claim. It's because they were growing up and living amongst peoples who don't worship one God but worship dozens and sometimes even hundreds of gods.

There are gods over agriculture, over the sun, over the moon, over the stars, over gender and sexuality. There's really a god for everything in life, and Israel comes on the scene and says, "No, no, no. There are not multiple gods. There's only one God, and he has entered a relationship with this one family. He is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Everything else you're worshiping as god is not a god." Trinitarianism's first instinct is that there is only one God, and it's rejecting any other claim to deity.

But then, of course, Trinitarianism goes on to talk about the "threeness" of God, and this is where we're going to spend a bulk of our time in Ephesians, thinking about, "How is God the Father God, God the Son God, and God the Spirit God, wholly and fully?" The first thing I want to consider is God the Father. What does it mean that God the Father is God? Look back to Ephesians, chapter 1, verses 3-6. Paul says, "**Blessed be the God and Father...**" He's addressing specifically this one person of the Godhead.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he [the Father] predestined us for adoption to himself as sons [and daughters] through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he [the Father] has blessed us in the Beloved."

I want to give you one word to describe who the Father is. He is the one who *initiates* all divine action. He is the one who initiates everything, even in the Godhead. He initiates our salvation, ultimately, is what Paul is saying here. You can see it in the language Paul uses. What does the Father do? He blesses us in Christ. He chooses us in Christ. He predestines us in Christ to be sons and daughters.

Verses 6-8 say that he lavishes grace upon us. Verses 9-10 say that he makes his plan known to us. Verse 11 says that he accomplishes all things according to the purposes of his will. He is the origin and source of salvation. It's really important to pay attention to the very specific words the Bible is using here to describe God the Father. Let me tell you what it *doesn't* say. Sometimes in order to see what the Bible *does* say you need to think about what it's *not* saying.

The Bible does *not* say, "We were holy and blameless, so the Father chose us." Rather, it says, "He chose us before the foundation of the world so that we *could* be holy and blameless." It does *not* say that he loved you because you are a son or a daughter. Rather, it says you were a slave, and God loved you and purchased you out of slavery to *make* you a son and daughter.

The definition for *grace* is God doing for us that which we could never do for ourselves. In his grace, God the Father shows us you do not initiate your salvation. God has been gracious to initiate your salvation. Just look back at the text. I'm not making this up. He blesses you. He chose you. He predestined you to be a son and a daughter. He lavishes his grace upon you. He has initiated a relationship with you.

If you hear anything about God the Father, I want you to see that there is absolute freedom in realizing that you are not the source of your salvation. You are not the source of your relationship with God. You do not take the first step. God isn't sitting back passively waiting to see what you're going to do. God the Father, in his love for you, initiates a relationship with you. He steps forward and engages a relationship with you. When you weren't looking for him, he stepped in and invaded *your* life.

Here's the thing. God the Father initiates salvation, but he does not accomplish or apply your salvation. God the Father does not become incarnate. God the Father does not die on the cross. He does not send himself. Rather, "For God so loved the world that he *sent* his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Let's think about God the Son. If God the Father *initiates* salvation, God the Son *accomplishes* salvation. Look back at the Bible with me. Look at verse 7.

"In him [in Christ, in the Son] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he [the Father] lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he [the Father] set forth in Christ [the Son] as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him [the Son], things in heaven and things on earth."

If God the Father *initiates* salvation, God the Son is the one who *accomplishes* salvation. What does it mean that God the Son accomplishes salvation? Well, Paul says it right here. He says that he has redeemed you through blood. Redemption in this passage has a lot of echoes in Scripture. This is a

word that's used all the way back in Exodus. This is exactly what Paul has in mind. This word *redemption* has the connotation to be bought out of slavery.

This is the story we just spent almost a year in, that God's people were slaves under the tyrannical force of Pharaoh, representing Satan, sin, and death. What Paul has in mind here is that a second exodus has happened in Jesus Christ. In Exodus, we see that God the Father buys slaves out of slavery in Egypt and begins to call them a family, sons and daughters. He destroys Pharaoh, because what do the Israelites do? They put the blood of the lamb over their houses, and they have their sins forgiven and are allowed to enter into the kingdom of God.

What Paul has in mind here is that there's no forgiveness without the shedding of the blood of the lamb, and God is the one who always provides a lamb. There must be forgiveness of sins, because men and women apart from Christ are dead in our trespasses and sins, Ephesians 2 says, and we are in need of divine forgiveness. So what does it look like for your salvation to be accomplished? You are redeemed back out of slavery, you are called a son or a daughter, and you have your sins wiped away. You are no longer like crimson, but you are white as snow.

The Bible also says in Ephesians that we obtain an inheritance. Do you know who *doesn't* obtain an inheritance? Slaves. Do you know who *does* obtain an inheritance? Sons and daughters. Slaves don't receive an inheritance, but God's sons and daughters do, and through the work of God the Son, because he has accomplished salvation on your behalf, you're no longer a slave; you are a son and daughter, and you receive the son's inheritance.

Your treasury is the son's treasury. The gifts the Father is going to give to you are the same gifts he gives his own Son. I want you to look at one more passage with me, Colossians 1:15-20. This more fully describes the work of the Son on your behalf and what it means that he has accomplished all things and accomplished your salvation.

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church."

He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent." This is key for Trinitarianism. **"For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and**

through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."

The first thing I want you to see in this passage is that Jesus is described as the image bearer of God. Genesis describes you and me as image bearers of God. It says that we are supposed to represent God, represent his rule and reign over the world. All of creation should be able to look at you and me, humanity, and see what God is like, but of course, in Genesis, chapter 3, we realize that we have become rebels.

There are rebels in God's kingdom, and we're not representing God the way we should, so God sends another image bearer so that we can see what God is like. The actual word that's used here in Colossians describes Jesus as the *icon* of God. If you want to see what God is like, look through Jesus Christ. Look at him.

I want to tell you this morning that if you have a view of God that is in any way inconsistent with who Jesus Christ is, you have a misunderstanding about the God of the Bible. The Bible is not saying that the Father is a certain way, the Son is a different way, and the Spirit a different way. It's saying that if you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus Christ. The author of Hebrews would say it this way: "In him we see the exact imprint of his nature."

If you want to have a view of what God is like, how he wants to interact with *you* and come into *your* life, look no further than the person and work of Jesus Christ. Colossians describes it this way continually. It says that through him all things were created, through him all things hold together, and, so important, through him all things are reconciled in heaven and on earth, making peace by the blood of his cross.

If God the Father *initiates* your salvation (you need to know that you are not the one who initiates your salvation), God the Son *accomplishes* your salvation. I want us to just sit in this for a second. How many of you are at war within yourselves, trying to accomplish something on God's behalf? You know that God the Father has initiated something for you, and you're grateful for that, but you started with grace, and now you're trying to work your way back into God's favor.

You have to see in this beautiful text this morning that in him you have been redeemed, brought back. You were in slavery. You're now a son or daughter. Not only that. He is lavishing his grace

upon you. You have obtained an inheritance in Jesus Christ. You are now, in God's eyes, a son or a daughter, seated with Christ in the heavenly places.

Where in your life right now do you not believe that? Where in your life are you at war, thinking that you can somehow accomplish or add to the salvation that God has so richly given to you? I want to beg and plead with you this morning to lay that down. The beauty of the gospel is that God the Son has accomplished salvation on your behalf. He has done it. What does he say on the cross? "It is finished."

Brother or sister, there is nothing God is looking for you to accomplish. He simply has set his affections on you and called you a son or a daughter, and he wants to be and exist in a relationship with you. God the Son is the person of the Godhead who accomplishes God's activity. So God eternally exists as one God in three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son, and now God the Holy Spirit, who is himself fully God. Look back at the text with me at verse 13.

"In him [in the Son, in Christ] you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory."

Here's the first thing the Spirit does. He is the one who *applies* salvation. If God the Father *initiates* salvation, if God the Son *accomplishes* salvation, God the Spirit is the person of the Godhead who *applies* Christ's work to you, gives it to you fully and freely in his grace.

How does this happen? Look at verse 13. It's when you hear the word of the truth, the gospel, and believe. The person and work of the Spirit is tied to the person and work of the Son. Sometimes I feel like I hear language around the person of the Spirit that actually directs us *away* from Christ. Sometimes when we talk about the Spirit we'll kind of attribute any spiritual activity to the work of the Spirit, but I want you to realize the Bible never does that.

The ministry of the Spirit is directly connected to the ministry of the Son and to the ministry of the Word. Let me show you that I think Jesus says this exact same thing in John 15:26-27. Jesus is talking to his disciples and says, **"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me."** The Spirit doesn't have another word to give to you other than the person and work and ministry of Jesus Christ. "He will bear witness about what I've done."

Then what will happen? "**And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.**" John 16:13: "**When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears** [from the Father and Son] **he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.**"

If we're involved in any spiritual movement that is not centered around the person and work of Jesus Christ and the proclamation of his gospel, I can assure you a spirit is working, but it's not the Spirit of God. If you are involved in any spiritual movement that is not promoting the person and work of Jesus Christ, I can assure you you *are* a part of a spiritual movement, but you're not a part of Christ's movement.

The person and work of the Spirit is the one who seals and applies the work of Christ on our lives. The Spirit demonstrates a profound boldness in never promoting himself but promoting Jesus Christ. The Spirit never promotes himself. He never says, "Look at me. Look at what I'm doing." What does he say? "Look at the Son. Look at what Christ has done. Look at what Christ has accomplished."

There is a serious danger in attributing anything to the Spirit that is not Christ centered. The ministry of the Spirit is to carry forth the ministry of the Son, not start his own ministry. It's important to note that the Spirit does not replace Christ or take over for Christ, but rather the Spirit's work is to carry forward the ministry of Jesus. How does he do that? What is he doing? What is his work in our lives? Look at verse 13.

The first thing it says he does is he seals us. What does it mean to be sealed with God the Holy Spirit? If the Father has initiated salvation and the Son has accomplished your salvation, what does it mean that the Holy Spirit applies? Well, the first thing he does is seals. The imagery in mind is like a king who has a ring on and gives his insignia on some kind of a stamp to say, "You have been sealed with a seal that will never be broken, because God's seal is unshakable and immovable. There's no way for this seal to be broken."

Paul goes on further and says he's the guarantee of our inheritance. Banks and governments are in the business of guaranteeing loans or investments all the time. Paul is using some kind of an analogy here. What he's trying to say is that the Spirit is like a down payment or guarantee for your future inheritance, but there's no bank or government that can give the kind of guarantee that God

can give. If you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit... Paul is pleading with you. He says you can never be lost.

If you are in Christ, if you've heard the gospel and have believed the gospel, regardless of whatever you're walking through now, the Spirit will keep you. He is your seal. He is your guarantee. I know, because I know a lot of you in here, there can be a lot of struggle around this idea, specifically around whether we can lose our salvation or whether we can be assured of our salvation. How can I really know that I'm saved, and how can I really know that I'll be kept in this salvation?

R.C. Sproul has a fantastic quote in his commentary on Ephesians. He basically says, "I believe that if we were left to ourselves it would not only be possible for us to lose our salvation but I wonder if it would be possible for anybody to persevere in salvation." In other words, what he's saying is this *has* to be true, because if it's not true, none of us will stay. My perseverance in the faith does not rest in my own ability to persevere.

My conviction that no Christian is ever lost is based upon the promises of God and on statements like this from Ephesians, that when we believe in Jesus Christ, God the Holy Spirit is sealed on us, and our souls are marked indelibly as the children of God. If that's not good news this morning, I don't know what is. Not only do you not initiate your salvation, not only do you not accomplish your salvation, but it's accomplished by Christ on your behalf. God, who started this good work in you, will keep you until the end.

If you're struggling with assurance this morning... Perhaps you came to faith in Christ and you were walking with him and you had a joyful walk with him, but then things started going haywire in your life. You got sidetracked. Your eyes got sidetracked. Your mind, your heart, your affections got sidetracked. You started walking in some ongoing sin, and you're struggling. "Did God really do this? Did God really save me back then?"

If you believed and hoped in the gospel and you've been sealed with the Holy Spirit, you cannot be lost. Why? Because God the Holy Spirit is God, and he will keep you. Perhaps that's not you, but perhaps you're just struggling with assurance in general. Perhaps you're struggling with this idea of, "I'm not sure that I really believe. I doubt, JT. I have struggles in my life. There are parts of the gospel I believe. There are parts I'm not so sure about. I feel like I walk through life, and one day I believe, the next day I don't."

Ephesians, specifically verse 13, would tell you if you've heard the word of the truth, the gospel, and believed, you have been sealed. This is great news for you this morning if you struggle with doubt. It's not the strength of your faith that saves you; it's the strength of the *object* of your faith that saves you. You are not saved by how strongly or firmly you believe or how much you know. You are saved when you place your faith in the strongest object of our faith, Jesus Christ.

If you have heard the gospel and believed the good news, regardless of whatever you're struggling with right now, regardless of whatever you're walking through, you can be assured that God the Holy Spirit has sealed you, and if he is in your life, he is the guarantee of your future inheritance. It's part of the gospel to believe that the Spirit applies salvation.

Far be it from us that we would think God the Father initiates salvation, God the Son accomplishes our salvation, and we're left to ourselves. Salvation is grace and grace alone, from beginning to end, and that's the good news that God is Trinity. God has initiated, accomplished, and applied salvation to you. What does it mean that the Holy Spirit has applied what Christ has done for us? Let me read a few verses to you.

First, *Christ's past is your past*. Paul makes this incredibly audacious claim in Galatians 2. He says, "**I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.**" If you're not stunned by reading that passage, I'm not sure what passage will stun you.

He said, "I have been crucified with Christ." He's saying, "I was somehow on the cross with Jesus. When he died, I died with him. It has now been applied to me by the Spirit. Christ's crucifixion has now been applied to *me*. It's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me," because Christ's past is now your past.

Christ's present is your present. He says in Ephesians, chapter 2, "**But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved..."** Catch this. This is incredible. "**...and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places...**"

You are certain presently in this auditorium. I'm not going to try to convince you that you're not here, but you also, in the eyes of God the Father, are a son or daughter sitting at his right hand,

reigning and ruling in the heavenly places. It said it right here. You have been raised up with him and seated with God. Christ is there presently, and you are with him.

Christ's future is our future. First Corinthians 15 says, "**For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.**" Here's what that means. What Paul is trying to convince you and me of is that there's nothing unique about Jesus' resurrection.

It sounds kind of bold to say, but there's nothing unique about Jesus' resurrection other than that he got to go first. If you are in Christ, if God has initiated your salvation, accomplished your salvation, and is now in the process of applying your salvation, you can rest absolutely assured that whatever befalls you in this life, whatever sickness, whatever darkness, whatever wickedness, the death that can feel like it's creeping on all of our doorsteps... I know all of our families are facing it, and one day, Lord willing, if he tarries and delays, we will all face death.

We can be assured that our resurrection will be just like Christ's. He is simply the firstfruits. Christ's future is *your* future. You will one day rise and burst victoriously out of the grave and reign and rule and live with God forever, leaving everything that beset you and befell you in this world behind. To the beauty and glorious praise of his name, you will live forever with God, because Christ's future is your future.

You have been sealed with the work of Jesus Christ. God the Father initiates your salvation, God the Son accomplishes your salvation, and God the Holy Spirit applies your salvation. This is the good news. You do not have to initiate a relationship with God. He has initiated one with you. He is willing to call you a son or a daughter through what his Son has done on your behalf. He has accomplished your salvation. Not only that. He will keep you in this salvation.

If this is news to you, if perhaps you're new to The Village or you haven't heard the gospel preached like this, it probably sounds like it's too good to be true. It is. This is incredible. This is the best news in the world, that God has initiated, accomplished, and applied salvation to you. God is the means of your salvation, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. That's why the Trinity is important.

There's one more reason the Trinity is important. I think the Trinity exists for your joy. It's not just that God saves you, but you now get to walk and operate in a joyful fellowship and relationship with

each person of the Trinity. I've tried to argue that the most important question you're ever going to answer is the question of...*What do you love?*

The goal of Christian discipleship is the love and worship of the triune God. Why do we love God? First John would say, "Because he first loved us." The Christian life is nothing less than living unto the Father, through the Son, and by the power of the Holy Spirit. You now get to live unto the Father, through the Son, by the power of the Spirit.

As you think about applying the teaching of the Trinity to your life, what I hope you would walk away with is that you now don't have a relationship with some far, distant God, but you get to enjoy communion, deep relationship, fellowship, with each person of the Godhead. To God the Father you relate as a son or daughter. To God the Son you relate as a coheir, somebody who has given you his inheritance. To God the Spirit you get to relate as somebody who now walks in power and might and joy because God the Holy Spirit dwells within you.

It's like God the Father, Son, and Spirit has said, "Pull up a seat to the table. Enjoy fellowship and communion with us, the triune God." This is the good news. You have been adopted. You've been given an imperishable inheritance. You've been given redemption and the forgiveness of sins, and the Holy Spirit is sealing and applying and guaranteeing this for you.

I want you to look at the last line of Ephesians 1:14, and then we'll pray. Paul says, "**[He] is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it...**" The Christian life still has this instinct of an "already, not yet." God has accomplished salvation on our behalf, yet we're still waiting. We're still eagerly longing for all of this to be completed for us. The book of Revelation gives us a wonderful picture of this.

After the Bible has told the beautiful story of all that God has done for you, the book of Revelation ends with this note: "Come quickly, Lord Jesus." "Would you come quickly and end this madness? Would you come quickly and end this pain, this struggling, this strife that is besetting me on a daily, weekly, monthly, yearly basis? Would you come and end this madness and make all things right? Would you set everything to rights again?" That is our hope until we acquire possession of it, but until then you have a guarantee that you are a coheir and a son or a daughter of God. Let's pray.

To you, Father, and to the Son and to the Spirit, we offer all honor and all glory and all praise. You are God, and there's no other God other than you. This morning we see you as beautiful and

glorious and worthy of worship and majesty. We praise you, God the Father, because you have blessed us in Christ. You have lavished grace upon us, your sons and daughters. We who were once slaves are now a part of your family.

We praise you, God the Son, because you have accomplished salvation on our behalf. You have poured out your blood for our redemption, and you have forgiven us, that we might share in your riches and inheritance. We praise you, God the Holy Spirit, because you have come on behalf of Christ to seal us with all that he has accomplished. You are our guarantee and our inheritance, and we love enjoying fellowship with you. To you, our triune God, we offer all praise, all honor, and all glory, amen.

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