



G O D  
I S



A Devotional Guide to the Attributes of God



MARK JONES



“In twenty-seven concise chapters, *God Is* invites, equips, edifies, comforts, and challenges God’s people to know God better and love him more. This is Mark Jones at his best, combining his theological breadth and depth with his pastor’s heart.”

**Rosaria Butterfield**, former professor of English, Syracuse University;  
author, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*

“Most treatments of God’s attributes are like vast mining operations that use massive theological machinery to plumb the depths of divine revelation. Mark Jones hands us the diamonds of God’s perfections, already mined, cut, and polished, to enrich our souls immeasurably. Study this book, read it with your family, discuss it with your small group, teach it to your church class, and give it to your neighbor. This is a gem indeed!”

**Joel R. Beeke**, president, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary,  
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“Written in the tradition of J. I. Packer’s *Knowing God*, Jones’s work is an extremely helpful and needful primer on our great God and his all-beautiful character. Highly recommended as a tool for personal devotion or group study.”

**Michael A. G. Haykin**, professor of church history and biblical  
spirituality, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Mark Jones has offered the church a real gift in this book. His methodology is governed not only by the wise conviction that theology and application go together but also by the unwavering belief that to know God one must gaze upon his fullest self-revelation in Christ. In this light, he offers an accessible treatment of the divine attributes written not for academics but for faithful laity seeking to consider the wonder of God.”

**Kelly M. Kopic**, professor of theological studies, Covenant College,  
Lookout Mountain, Georgia

“Given the preoccupation in some evangelical circles with discovering the ‘practical’ outcome of every text, it is refreshing to have a book that enables us to simply contemplate and consider the nature and attributes of the God who is there. Never has evangelicalism been so confused or divided over that One who is the center and substance of our confessed faith. Never has there been such a clear need for every believer to sit down and examine and worship what has been revealed of the God who has saved us through his gospel.”

**Liam Goligher**, senior minister, Tenth Presbyterian Church,  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; author, *The Jesus Gospel*

“God is strangely absent from much contemporary Christ-centered preaching. This absence reflects not only a theological deficit but also a truncated view of Christ and the gospel. Mark Jones’s devotional guide to the attributes of God is therefore a welcome contribution to the libraries of both pastor and layperson. *God Is* reliably unfolds the perfections of our triune God as revealed in Holy Scripture and confessed by the church, and it traces the various rays of God’s perfections as they shine forth in the face of Jesus Christ.”

**Scott R. Swain**, president and James Woodrow Hassell Professor of Systematic Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando, Florida

“While the Christ-centered characteristic of historic Reformed theology has been well documented in contemporary scholarship, Mark Jones is, to my knowledge, the only Reformed dogmatician of our day to have offered a thoroughly and explicitly Christocentric account of the divine attributes in ordinary language and pastorally applied this theology proper to the mundane spiritual life of the believer. If any contemporary book deserves the status of a sequel to Packer’s *Knowing God* and the author’s own *Knowing Christ*, this is it.”

**Shao Kai Tseng**, research professor, Department of Philosophy, Zhejiang University; author, *Karl Barth’s Infralapsarian Theology*; contributor, *Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century Christian Thought*

“Mark Jones continues to prove to be an especially reliable, pastoral guide in doctrine for the broader church. In the spirit of the great Puritan tradition—from which he so ably quotes—Jones once again melds depth and devotion, precision and passion, further proving J. I. Packer’s axiom that ‘true theology is for doxology.’ Read *God Is* slowly, meditatively, with prayer, with others—and see if your thoughts of God are not greatly enlarged, reinvigorated, and warmed. It is a book I will suggest, give away, and return to myself for years to come.”

**Ryan Kelly**, pastor of preaching, Desert Springs Church, Albuquerque, New Mexico; council member, The Gospel Coalition

G O D I S



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A Devotional Guide to  
the Attributes of God

MARK JONES

*God Is: A Devotional Guide to the Attributes of God*

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Published by Crossway  
1300 Crescent Street  
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

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Cover design: Jorge Canedo Estrada

First printing 2017

Printed in the United States of America

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All emphases in Scripture quotations have been added by the author.

Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-4335-5562-6

ePub ISBN: 978-1-4335-5565-7

PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-5563-3

Mobipocket ISBN: 978-1-4335-5564-0

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**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Names: Jones, Mark, 1980– author.

Title: God is : a devotional guide to the attributes of God / Mark Jones.

Description: Wheaton : Crossway, 2017. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017005040 (print) | LCCN 2017017633 (ebook) | ISBN 9781433555633 (pdf) |

ISBN 9781433555640 (mobi) | ISBN 9781433555657 (epub) | ISBN 9781433555626 (hc)

Subjects: LCSH: God (Christianity)—Attributes. | Reformed Church—Doctrines.

Classification: LCC BT130 (ebook) | LCC BT130 .J66 2017 (print) | DDC 231/.4—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017005040>

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Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

VP	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17				
15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

To Kevin and Patricia Jones, loving parents.  
To Darren and Lara Jones, loving siblings.



Dogmatics, in each and all of its divisions and subdivisions, with every one of its questions and answers, with all its biblical and historical assertions, with the whole range of its formal and material considerations, examinations and condensations, can first and last, as a whole and in part, say nothing else but that God is.

Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*

How foolish are they who know not God! So many good things before their eyes, yet *Him Who Is* they fail to see.

Augustine, *The Confessions*

In Christ do we behold the wisdom, goodness, love, grace, mercy, and power of God, acting themselves in the . . . efficacious accomplishment of our redemption and salvation. This gives to us an unutterable lustre unto the native amiableness of the divine excellencies.

John Owen, *Meditations and Discourses  
on the Glory of Christ*

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# PREFACE

We believe that thou art a being than which nothing greater can be conceived.

Anselm, *Proslogion*

Whoever has seen God and has understood what he saw, has seen nothing.

Maximus the Confessor, *In Epistula Dionysii*

The majesty of God is too high to be scaled up to by mortals, who creep like worms on the earth.

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

The true and living God is too much for us to bear, to handle, to conceive, to adore, to know, to trust, to understand, and to worship. The Incomprehensible One is simply too much for us in every conceivable way.

However, that the Son became flesh makes our human nature appear lovely to God. But he also makes God appear lovely to us.<sup>1</sup> Take away Christ, the God-man, and we are reprehensible to God and he to us. But in Christ, God is well pleased with us and we with him.

We look at God through Christ, who makes the attributes of God more delightful to us. As Thomas Watson says,

Christ clothed himself with our flesh, that the divine nature may be more pleasing to us. The human nature is a glass, through which we may see the love and wisdom and glory of God clearly represented to us. Through the lantern of Christ's humanity we may behold the light of the Deity. Christ being incarnate makes the sight of the Deity not formidable, but delightful to us.<sup>2</sup>

God so desires that we delight in him that he sent his Son into the world to be like us in every way yet without sin. I hope this book will help you, the reader, to that end: that in Christ, you should have exceeding delight in God. More importantly, I earnestly desire that in Christ, you should worship God, for the aim of any book on him is to bring us to such a place. And by that I mean not merely a place of private worship but also one of corporate worship, where our knowledge of God becomes clearer, better, and richer. As a result, in our worship as the church gathered, we shall know God better in order to worship God better.

At the age of twenty-seven, Jonathan Edwards preached a sermon in which he told his listeners that the “redeemed have all their objective good in God,” because

God himself is the great good which they are brought to the possession and enjoyment of by redemption. He is the highest good, and the sum of all that good which Christ purchased. God is the inheritance of the saints; he is the portion of their souls. God is their wealth and treasure, their food, their life, their dwelling place, their ornament and diadem, and their everlasting honor and glory. They have none in heaven but God; he is the great good which the redeemed are received to at death, and which they are to rise to at the end of the world.<sup>3</sup>

We shall have God as our highest good only in Christ: “the sum of all that good which Christ purchased.” We shall see and know

God but only in and through Christ. We shall have our reward from God but only from his Son.

Read on about your “great good,” your “highest good,” in the knowledge that God is indeed all these things to you in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, through the power of the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9).



# INTRODUCTION

Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.”

Jeremiah 9:23–24

Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD.

Hosea 6:3

## Knowing God

What can we say about God? What must we say about God? These two questions are related but not identical. Even the Scriptures, the very words of God about himself, do not exhaust what can be said about him. Indeed, as finite (limited) creatures, we shall never be able to say everything about our infinite (unlimited) God even in our perfect eternal state in heaven. We study God not as he is in himself but as he is revealed in his Word. As James Henley Thornwell says,

God is at once known and unknown. In His transcendent Being, as absolute and infinite, though a necessary object of faith, He



cannot be an object of thought. We cannot represent Him to the understanding, nor think Him as He is in Himself. But in and through the finite He has given manifestations of His incomprehensible reality, which, though not sufficient to satisfy the demands of speculation, are amply adequate for all the ends of religion.<sup>1</sup>

For us today, these “manifestations” are summed up in God’s Word, which dictates what we must say about him. We must affirm only what God has said about himself, which includes deducing truths about God by good and necessary consequence. In this life, we may not understand all that the Bible tells us about God, but we must aim to believe and communicate as much as we can about him. We must press on to know the Lord (Hos. 6:3), a difficult but rewarding task (Heb. 11:6). Worship without knowledge is idolatry.

All true theology depends on God. He is the principle on which our theology is constructed. As a personal, gracious God, he freely revealed himself to us. All other topics of theology (e.g., man, salvation, Christ) are held together by the doctrine of God. Hence, theology always remains to some degree the study of God.

The doctrine of God has fallen on hard times. Many are far more concerned about personal salvation than they are about God. Books on marriage abound, but books on the doctrine of God are few and far between. This is regrettable since nothing can ever really make sense to us in this life unless we have a good grasp of who God is.

To know God, we must love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind (Luke 10:27). Our knowledge of God can never be limited to that which is merely grasped cognitively or academically. This book aims to help you love God with your mind but also with a great deal of strength, so that you can say with purity of heart (Matt. 5:8; 1 Tim. 1:5), “I know God.” Eternal life is to know God (John 17:3). Charles Spurgeon, in a sermon on the immutability of God, says,

The most excellent study for expanding the soul, is the science of Christ, and him crucified, and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity.<sup>2</sup>

Do you want your soul expanded? Listen to Spurgeon, who surely knew something about such expansion. But before you read on, note that he rightly connected the science of Christ with the knowledge of God as the way to make one spiritually healthy. The revelation of God shows Christ, who in turn discloses God. God created all things in order to glorify his Son (Col. 1:16), and the Son comes to reveal the Father (Matt. 11:25–27; John 17:5–6, 26). By the Spirit we enter this world of supernatural revelation, in which we can joyfully declare that through Christ we know God, which is eternal life.

Christ exists as the sacred repository of all truth. He manifests himself as the sum and center of God’s revelation. He mediates not only through his saving work for the church but also by communicating between God and fallen humanity. His great aim on earth was to reveal God the Father (Matt. 13:35; John 1:18). In fact, Christ had a unique ability and capacity to give us knowledge of God (Prov. 8:22; John 1:3–4; 3:13; Heb. 1:2). What Christ received from the Father in terms of knowledge and grace he bestows freely on his bride. He does not wish to keep us ignorant. He delights to know God, and he desires the same joy for us.

## **Aims of the Book**

Many of the greatest theologians in the church have written extensively on God. When I think of Augustine, Anselm, Abelard, and Aquinas—the “A Team”—I think of men who wrote majestically about a majestic God. Many after them have also written on the attributes of God. From what I can tell, the treatments by able, solidly orthodox theologians number in the hundreds. Beginning

in the early church to the present day, we have been gifted with many excellent treatises on God, as well as many memorable sayings about God that have become entrenched in the annals of church history, such as Anselm's saying "We believe that thou art a being than which nothing greater can be conceived."<sup>3</sup>

Most of these treatments on the doctrine of God, however, are found in the middle of even larger works on dogmatic or systematic theology. And many of the best expositions of God's attributes come from the pens of men who wrote either in Latin or in an older English that at times makes for very difficult reading today.

In addition, the famous yet mammoth work *The Existence and Attributes of God* (1682) by the Puritan Stephen Charnock requires the sort of time and effort that very few have. As brilliant as the work remains, not only for its theological insight but also for its pastoral reflections, most people who honestly desire to know God better will never read his work from cover to cover.

As a result, my goal here is to provide a brief, simple, and clear book on the attributes of God that readers can (hopefully!) read from cover to cover. With a few exceptions, I avoid Latin, Greek, and Hebrew words or quotes as I diligently seek to make the doctrine of God simple (pardon the pun, and if you do not understand it, I hope you will by the end of the book).

Today, several theologians are defending various aspects of the doctrine of God in a way that continues the orthodox tradition handed down to us by the early church. Individuals such as Paul Helm, James Dolezal, Thomas Weinandy, and Stephen Duby, for example, are writing very good material on God's attributes, and I have very much appreciated their work. At the same time, their books can be rather heavy for the layperson who has read little in the doctrine of God. Because few things are as difficult as making the doctrine of God accessible, those with the ability, time, and desire should aim to be always instructing the church in the deep truths of the Christian faith with brevity

and clarity (so Calvin). That is what I have attempted to do in this book.

I am also aiming to do something a little different from most treatments of the attributes of God. Not all books adequately apply the attributes of God to the Christian life. Perhaps the most notable example of a practical treatment of the doctrine of God remains J. I. Packer's monumental work *Knowing God*. His book has profoundly affected so many because it makes theology both easily accessible and eminently applicable. In this book I strive for such emphases and trust that the reader will find few things as practical for Christian living as studying God and his attributes. In each chapter I offer one or two selective (definitely not exhaustive!) points of practical application.

One further aspect of this study on the doctrine of God that I hope will distinguish it from others is its specific focus on Christ. Apart from Christ, the attributes of God remain meaningless to us. In Christ alone can we understand the true and living God, for Christ makes God's attributes beautiful and accessible to us as he rescues us from spiritual darkness and terror of God. Any so-called supernatural revelation of God apart from Christ is a lie, and any study of God's attributes is true only when it comes with a connection to his Son (Col. 1:16). We live and learn as Christians fixing our eyes on Jesus not just when we struggle with sin and temptation but also when we approach God in the Scriptures. To that end, no chapter on an attribute of God will omit reference to Christ, from whom alone comes an adequate understanding of such attributes.

In connection with this focus, the Puritan theologian Thomas Goodwin makes an important point:

There is a glorious image of all God's attributes, which shines in the person of Christ . . . and in the works which Christ hath done for us, and in the fruits and benefits that redound thereby to us: or in the works of Christ . . . in us, now he is in heaven, leading us into communion with himself. And they all make a complete

image, and that more perfect, of the riches of God's glory: and this the gospel treats of.<sup>4</sup>

This study thus seeks to give you a sight of God and Christ and of how God's attributes affect your Christian living. To the degree that I can actually do this, as well as make complex theological concepts plain, I will regard myself a most blessed teacher, namely, one helping people know and love God in a better, clearer, and more informed way. The object of this book is to cultivate "in Spirit and truth" worshipers—the very kind God seeks (John 4:24).

A book of this size cannot say everything about God and does not deny a place for more detailed treatments on the attributes of God. I am by no means seeking to silence debates over the attributes in an age when orthodoxy has come under attack, even from within evangelicalism and the more broadly Calvinistic camp. Here I take much for granted that has been treated in greater detail elsewhere.

In addition, I have purposely chosen not to get too bogged down with classifying the attributes. Many are familiar with the incommunicable-communicable distinction. While that distinction has some value, I do not prefer it. When it comes to classifying God's attributes, I use the absolute-relative distinction. But in a book of this nature, those distinctions and discussions are unnecessary.

With these preliminaries in mind, along with my obvious dependence on Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, and post-Reformation Reformed theologians such as Stephen Charnock, Edward Leigh, and John Owen, I hope that this book will help us know and enjoy God better.

Works on our great God should bring us joy, satisfaction, and a renewed appreciation for him. If this book does not do that, may it be cast aside and forgotten. Learn about and enjoy, I pray, the God you will spend eternity knowing and enjoying, through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

# GOD IS TRIUNE

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

2 Corinthians 13:14

## Doctrine

Before we discuss the divine attributes—for God’s triunity is not technically an “attribute” of God—we must keep in mind that when we speak of God, we are speaking of the Christian God, who is triune.

Christians are monotheists. We believe in the one true living God (Deut. 6:4; 32:39; Isa. 44:8; 1 Cor. 8:6). But that does not mean that all monotheists believe in the same God. When we speak about God, we must relate his entire identity. Thus, while attesting to the “singularity” and unity of the Godhead, we also affirm just as strongly the triunity of the Godhead (Matt. 28:19). The God who is one is at the same time three in persons. We embrace both “the One” and the “Splendor of the Three,” echoing Gregory of Nazianzus, who famously mused,

No sooner do I conceive of the One than I am illumined by the Splendor of the Three; no sooner do I distinguish Them than I am

carried back to the One. When I think of any One of the Three I think of Him as the Whole, and my eyes are filled, and the greater part of what I am thinking of escapes me. I cannot grasp the greatness of That One so as to attribute a greater greatness to the Rest. When I contemplate the Three together, I see but one torch, and cannot divide or measure out the Undivided Light.<sup>1</sup>

In the Godhead, there are three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. But God is one, and this one God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We cannot deny this doctrine of the Trinity. We must hold to the unity of the divine essence (i.e., God’s “what-ness,” or being) as well as the distinction of persons.

The Bible attributes deity to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit:

1. The Father (Rom. 15:6; 2 Cor. 1:3–4; 1 Pet. 1:3)
2. The Son (Acts 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Titus 2:13)
3. The Holy Spirit (Ps. 95:3, 8–9 [cf. Heb. 3:7–11]; Acts 5:3–4)

Because the Scriptures ascribe divinity to three persons but also emphatically affirm that there is one God, Christian theologians in the early church spoke of what has become the Christian theological term *Trinity*. What is abhorrent to Jews and Muslims is most precious to Christians.

Whatever is said about the attributes of God is true of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, if we say that God is omnipotent, we are saying that the three persons are all equally omnipotent. The same is true for all the divine attributes, which is why we use “essence-appropriate” language to speak of them. The same essence means the same power, wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and so forth, in the triune God. It also means the same will. Whatever God does toward himself or toward others is a result of his single divine will. Therefore, the persons never

“submit” to each other in their eternal, necessary relations, because they share one will, not three distinct wills.

In addition to essence-appropriate language, we also use “persons-appropriate” language. So, for example, the Son, not the Father, became incarnate. The Father eternally begets the Son, but the Son does not eternally beget the Father. The Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, but the Father and the Son do not proceed from the Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity means that there is no distinction of essence but rather a distinction of persons.

Throughout the history of the church, orthodox theologians have had to use extrabiblical language to analyze and discuss concepts found in the Bible. At various times over the centuries, heretics who only wanted to use biblical terminology criticized the orthodox for using the word *Trinity*. How did the orthodox respond?

According to John Owen, Christians must confess that God is one in “respect of his nature, substance, essence, Godhead, or divine being.” At the same time, we affirm that this one God, “being Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, [subsists] in these three distinct persons or hypostases.”<sup>2</sup> But in using this language, Owen employs words not found directly in the Bible.

Owen responds that to affirm the truth of the Trinity is to affirm a meaning or sense of such from the Scripture even when the words we use do not directly occur there. We envision the Trinity in our minds by thinking in terms of words such as *person*. To deny Christians this privilege is to make “brutes of ourselves.” Thus, “in the declaration of the doctrine of the Trinity, we may lawfully, nay, we must necessarily, make use of other words, phrases and expressions, than what are literally and syllabically contained in the Scripture, but teach no other things.”<sup>3</sup>

Importantly, if words other than those used in Scripture accurately convey its truth, then such words are “no less true and divine” than what was “principally revealed and directly



expressed” in the Scriptures.<sup>4</sup> The true meaning of God’s Word is divine truth.

Regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, then, Owen concludes that

when the Scripture reveals the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to be one God, seeing it necessarily and unavoidably follows thereon that they are one in essence . . . and three in their distinct subsistences . . . , this is no less of divine revelation than the first principle from whence these things follow.<sup>5</sup>

Here Owen is defending what the Westminster Confession of Faith calls “good and necessary consequence[s] . . . deduced from Scripture” (1.6). In other words, the doctrine of the Trinity is good in that it is biblically sound and necessary in that it is essential to believe as part of the whole counsel of God revealed in Scripture. The content of the phrase “God is one essence in three persons” is infallibly and inescapably true because it is deduced from the written Word of God. That is, we believe not only the *words* of God but also the *meaning* of God’s words to us.

In sum, Francis Cheynell provides a helpful summary of the doctrine of the Trinity by affirming a number of the points mentioned above:

We do believe that God is one, most singly and singularly one, and an only one: The unity of the Godhead is . . . a most singular unity. . . . All three Persons have one and the same single and infinite Godhead, and therefore must needs mutually subsist in one another, because they are all three one and the same infinite God[,] . . . united in their one nature, not confounded in their distinct subsistences; nay though their subsistence is in one another, yet their subsistences are distinct, but the nature most singularly the same.<sup>6</sup>

And the Westminster Confession of Faith gives us an excellent synopsis of the doctrine of the Trinity:

In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; God the Father, God the Son, and

God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son. (2.3)

## **In Christ**

In Christ, the triunity of God is revealed. The Trinitarian workings of God are stamped all over Jesus's life in the pages of the New Testament. While all outward works of God can be attributed to each of the three persons, certain outward works of God—depending on what they are—can be attributed more particularly to one of the three persons. In the incarnation of the Son of God, for example, we see a beautiful Trinitarian work.

The Father is not only the person who sent the Son of God to earth to redeem sinners but is also the master architect behind the type of body the Son assumed: “A body have you prepared for me” (Heb. 10:5). At the same time, the actual forming of the human nature of the Son through the flesh of the Virgin Mary was the work of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). But the decision of taking into subsistence with himself a human nature was a prerogative that belonged to the Son, who must do all things freely and willingly. As Christ says, “I have come down from heaven” (John 6:38). In other words, while it is true that the Father sent the Son, the Son came willingly, apart from any coercion. The Son assumed a human nature.

Trinitarian emphases are literally everywhere in the ministry of Christ. Beginning with his baptism, whereby the Son hears the words of his Father and receives a special anointing of the Holy Spirit, we are faced with the workings of the triune God (Matt. 3:16–17). In his temptation, the Spirit thrusts Christ out into the wilderness (Mark 1:12), where he has to commit himself to believing the words of his Father. Would Christ believe what the Father had said at his baptism, or would he perform a miracle in order to prove his sonship (i.e., his messianic identity)? Even at his death,

we see the Son of God offering himself up by the Spirit of God (Heb. 9:14) to God the Father (Luke 23:46). All this is to say that Christ's life was a revelation of the Trinitarian working of God.

Similarly, Paul brings out the Trinitarian focus of salvation in the first chapter of Ephesians. The works of God toward us are grounded in the Father's eternal love toward us in Christ, in which he elects us (Eph. 1:3–6). The Son becomes incarnate, and we are saved by his work for us in our stead (v. 7). And the Holy Spirit applies the work of Christ to us, endowing us with all spiritual blessings in Christ (vv. 13–14). In addition, the epistle of 1 Peter begins, "To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion . . . , according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood . . ." (1 Pet. 1:1–2). Elected by the Father to be obedient, by the Spirit, to Jesus Christ in light of his sacrificial death—that is Peter's summary of salvation.

The Scriptures do not hide the constant Trinitarian workings of God. In the power of the Spirit, Christ reveals the Father. In the power of the Spirit, we love the Father through Christ. Indeed, the Christian life is meant to be lived with constant reference to the three persons. A truly Christian life will seek to be thoroughly Trinitarian in its theology and piety.

## **Application**

Whether private or corporate, communion with God is Trinitarian communion. Thomas Goodwin speaks of how our communion can sometimes be with one person of the Trinity and sometimes with another:

. . . sometimes with the Father, then with the Son, and then with the Holy Ghost; sometimes his heart is drawn out to consider the Father's love in choosing, and then the love of Christ in redeeming, and so again the love of the Holy Ghost, that searches the deep things of God, and reveals them to us, and takes all the pains with us; and so a man goes from one witness to another

distinctly. . . . We should never be satisfied till all three persons lie level in us, and all make their abode with us, and we sit as it were in the midst of them, while they all manifest their love unto us.<sup>7</sup>

We commune with the Father in love, thanking him and praising him for his eternal, free, life-changing, saving love (John 16:26–27; Rom. 5:5–6; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 John 4:8–9). Owen expands on these terms, which are worthy of our reflection:

Eternal. It was fixed on us before the foundation of the world. Before we were, or had done the least good, then were his thoughts upon us. . . .

Free. He loves us because he will; there was, there is, nothing in us for which we should be beloved. . . .

Unchangeable. Though we change every day, yet his love changes not. . . .

Distinguishing. He has not thus loved all the world. . . . Why should he fix his love on us, and pass by millions from whom we differ not by nature?<sup>8</sup>

The Father loves us, though he is in himself all-sufficient. He is eternally and infinitely happy with his own glorious excellencies. He receives the love of the Son and the Spirit. Indeed, as Owen notes, “He had his Son, also, his eternal Wisdom, to rejoice and delight himself in from all eternity.”<sup>9</sup> So we respond to this love with our own love for the Father, who has always loved us and who shows his love for us by giving us his Son to redeem us.

In relation to the Son, we commune with him in grace: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Cor. 13:14). The one who is “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14), the Lord Jesus Christ, is the one who showers us with his grace: “For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace” (John 1:16). We enjoy Christ, the God-man, and we meditate not only on

the grace given to us because of his work but also on the grace given to us because of who he is (i.e., his person). The greatness of Christ's person far excels even the benefits we receive from his work for us.

In the Lord's Supper, which is a Trinitarian activity, we receive grace from Christ in our communion with him. The gift of the body and blood is a gift given to us by the Father; the body and blood represent the now-resurrected Son; and we receive Christ into our hearts afresh through the work of the Spirit. The gospel is preached visibly to us, and by faith, in the power of the Spirit, we enter into communion with our Savior. He comes to us anew to comfort us with his promises and to stir up in us faith, hope, and love.

We also commune with the Spirit as he comforts, or helps, us: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever" (John 14:16). This verse carries a clearly Trinitarian accent: the Son asks the Father for the Spirit (i.e., the Helper) to be with his people.

We receive the promised Holy Spirit by asking in faith (Luke 11:13; John 7:37–39; Gal. 3:2, 14). There are many ways in which the Spirit helps or comforts believers. He glorifies Christ to us; he pours out the love of the Father and the grace of Christ into our hearts; he witnesses to us that we are children of the Father (Rom. 8:16); he produces faith and repentance in us; he generates in us "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22–23).

The Spirit is also a guarantee for the believer, because God has "put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee" (2 Cor. 1:22; see also Eph. 1:13–14). He thus assures us that we will receive what God has promised to us, which is why the Spirit has been appropriately called "Comforter."

Finally, the Spirit brings us into communion with the Son and the Father (1 John 1:3). Apart from the Spirit, we would be as lifeless as the chairs we sit on. Owen writes,

All the consolations of the Holy Spirit consist in his acquainting us with, and communicating unto us, the love of the Father and the grace of the Son; nor is there any thing in the one or the other but he makes it a matter of consolation to us: so that, indeed, we have our communion with the Father in his love, and the Son in his grace, by the operation of the Holy Spirit.<sup>10</sup>

In our prayer life, then, we are also faced with our triune God. As children we come to our Father in the name of Christ by the power of the Spirit. We need all three persons in our life, for our life has the Trinity stamped all over it.

God has revealed many things about himself in his Word. But God's manifold attributes shine most clearly in his Son, Jesus Christ, who came to reveal his Father. Through Christ's saving work on the cross, we are able to know and worship God rightly.

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