



Lecture 4

The Trinity

Perichōrēsis : Mutual Indwelling

In previous lectures we have studied the term “Trinity,” chosen and used by theologians in an attempt to explain the paradox of one God in three Persons. The Greek word, *perichōrēsis*, is another term biblical scholars employed to describe the nature and function of the triune God as revealed in Scripture. In Greek the word means “going around” or “encompassing”. Though the word does not occur in the Greek New Testament, it describes the complete mutual indwelling that exists within the relationships of each Person of the Trinity. While each Person remains in Himself as Father, Word/Son and Spirit, they exist at the same time, wholly (completely) in the other two Persons of the Godhead.

We see this expressed in Jesus’s words in John 14:10-11,

“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me;” (Wuest translation)

The intention of the word is to help us to develop a dynamic (active), rather than a static, understanding of the indwelling relationship of the Father, Son and Spirit. This *perichoresis* or “mutual indwelling” expresses perfect fellowship between the Father and the Son. It is absolute intimacy.

What is profoundly significant about this aspect of the nature of Trinity, is that Jesus compares the oneness of this indwelling which exists within the Trinity to the oneness of the unity and fellowship that each believer - “united in Christ” - now shares with Himself and also with each other, as “one body with many members” (Romans 12:4-5).

John 17:20-23, *Wuest translation*

²⁰ But not concerning these only am I making request, but also concerning those who believe on me through their word, ²¹ in order that all might be one, even as you, Father, are in me and I in you, in order that they themselves also might be in us, to the end that the world may be believing that you sent me on a mission. ²² And as for myself, the glory which you have given me, I have given them, in order that they might be one even as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, in order that they, having been brought to the state of completeness with respect to oneness, may persist in that state of completeness, to the end that the world might be understanding that you sent me on a mission and that you loved them even as you loved me.

What are the practical implications of this truth for our lives as believers?

John 15:4-5, *Wuest translation*

⁴ Maintain a living communion with me, and I with you. Just as the branch is unable to be bearing fruit from itself as a source unless it remains in a living union with the vine, so neither you, unless you maintain a living communion with me. ⁵ As for myself, I am the vine. As for you, you are the branches. He who maintains a living communion with me and I with him, this one is bearing much fruit, because apart from me you are not able to be doing anything.

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A vine and a branch are one plant: the vine, and therefore its life and nutrient supply, is as wholly “in” the branch as the branch is “in” the vine, that is, connected into the vine. This is *perichōrēsis*. Mutual indwelling. Through Christ, the perichoretic relationship which exists within the Trinity, now exists between every believer and their Saviour. The problem is we do not see ourselves in this light and therefore, oftentimes, do not “maintain a living communion” or live conscious of the ‘living union’ which was bought for us at Calvary. This is especially true of Western believers who, culturally, think, behave and identify as independent beings.

By Grace, we have been made pure and righteous and given perfect, living communion with our Vine. We, however, must appropriate by faith what Grace has provided: the onus is on us. “[You] maintain a living communion with Me,” Jesus commands us.

If we are to genuinely maintain a LIVING communion with Jesus Himself, we must first SEE ourselves not as independent beings seeking to reach out to and connect with a distant God; but rather, as “perichoretically connected” beings. At one time, both indwelt by, and indwelling. I am “in Christ” and He is “in me”.

The practical ramifications of truly grasping this spiritual truth are massive!

Do you have a failure, or an area of weakness you struggle to overcome? How you see yourself, as God’s child, will affect your victory over that struggle. As the saying goes, “Right believing leads to right living”.

In the very things in which we battle (pride, anger, procrastination, fear, anxiety, bitterness etc) we need to see ourselves not as independent beings who are trying to move an external God to effect a supernatural change in us; but as a branch actively and permanently connected to the Vine. As branches connected to our Vine, Jesus, **the supply (in every area of lack) is already there**, present within us, because Christ is in us. Our supply flows from Him. All the humility, patience, boldness, peace, forgiveness or grace (etc) we long for (in the natural) Jesus already possesses within us: our supply is already there!

We will bear “MUCH” fruit, without strain or self-effort, as we learn to maintain a living union with the Source. Think about it: Jesus, in all His deity, fullness and supply, is IN me (and I am in Him). As we live conscious of, and dependent upon, this incredible union, His life and nourishment and supply will flow through us and produce His fruit. It does not matter how big our failings or weaknesses seem, we will never come to the end of His resources nor ever exhaust His limitless supply.

1 Corinthians 6:17, *Wuest translation*

But he who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit [with Him].

Note, the word translated “one” in this verse is the Greek word εἷς (*heis*) meaning “a singular one to the exclusion of another”. It is much deeper than mere similarity, such as being joined together as “one” in purpose; *heis* speaks of complete union. In your spirit, Paul writes, you are completely one with Jesus!

John 1:16, *Wuest translation*

“for out of His fullness as a source we all received, and grace in exchange for grace.”

Hebrews 3:14, *Wuest translation*

“for we have become participators of Messiah and as a present result are participators of Him, [and that is shown] if we hold the beginning of our assured expectation steadfast to the end.

Colossians 2:9-10, *Wuest translation*

“⁹ because in Him there is continuously and permanently at home all the fullness of absolute deity in bodily fashion. ¹⁰ And you are in Him, having been completely filled full with the present result that you are in a state of fullness, in Him who is the Head of every principality and authority,”