

# **Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Theology Proper, Session 9, Doctrine of the Trinity**

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This is Dr. Robert Peterson and his teaching on theology proper or God. This is session 9, Rounding Out the Trinity.

Our goal in this lecture is to round out the doctrine of the Trinity. But before we do that, let us seek God in prayer. Gracious Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we acknowledge that you alone are God.

We rejoice in our identity as your creatures and as your redeemed creatures in Christ. Bless us, we pray. Lead us in your truth.

Encourage our hearts, we pray, we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Sometime back, we said there were seven points that we wanted to make in the doctrine of the Trinity.

We began what the Bible does in the Old Testament with the fact that there is one God. The New Testament never undercuts that, but rather reinforces it, as we saw in James 2 and 1 Timothy 2:5. Then we said the Father is God and demonstrated that. The Son is God, giving proofs for the deity of Christ.

The Holy Spirit is God. Now, we round out this doctrine with three other principles. The three divine persons are inseparable because God is a tri-unity.

But they are distinct. That is, we never separate the persons, but we don't confuse the persons. We acknowledge their distinctness.

Number two, astonishingly, the Bible says the divine persons indwell one another. They are in one another. And that has tremendous implications.

As a matter of fact, the seeds of the doctrine of the co-equal deity of the persons is right there. It's amazing they indwell one another. And lastly, scripture teaches they exist in unity and equality.

Once again, taking us by the hand and pointing us in the direction of God eternally existing as one God in three persons. The Father, Son, and Spirit are inseparable but distinct. The one living God eternally exists in three ways, three persons, three modes.

The Father, Son, and Spirit. Furthermore, because there is only one God, these three are inseparable. There are not two gods or three gods.

There's one God. All three persons are inseparable. We see that in that all three persons take part in creation.

All three persons take part in redemption as well. All three persons take part in creation. The Father, Genesis 1:1, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

The Son, the New Testament in a number of places teaches that the Son was the Father's agent in creation. John 1-3, all things were created through him and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. That is comprehensive language.

That is comprehensive language. Apart from him not even one thing was created that has been created. In other words, he created all things that says positively and then it denies the negative.

Nothing was created that was not created through him. Colossians 1 says the same thing in different words. Colossians 1:15, he the Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation for the highest one over all creation.

Psalm 89:27, I will make him my firstborn, the great descendant of David, the messianic king. I will make him my firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. He's the firstborn of all creation because for by him all things were created.

Now, in different language than John's, once again, comprehensiveness of creation is clear. All things were created in heaven and on earth, an allusion to Genesis 1:1. That is all there is.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Visible and invisible things, would you suggest a third category? No, that's all there is. Things you can see, the earth and the sky and the animals and the plants, and things you can't see, angels and God himself.

Further, it amplifies what invisible things are, whether thrones or dominions, rulers or authorities. That is, it's some kind of distinctions, perhaps ranks, we're not sure, among the angels. Those words are used in Paul, of angels, sometimes of rebellious ones, but always, not always, but a combination always of angels.

It could be used of earthly rulers, for example, one of these terms by itself. But the combination, especially in this context, and then in some other ones where Christ defeats them and so forth, they indicate here angels as created by God. They had not rebelled.

All things were created through him and for him. It is an inclusion. By him all things were created, the beginning of 16, all things were created through him, the end of 16.

It's hard to be more emphatic than that. The son is the father's agent. The son has a role in creation, which is a role only God performs.

Hebrews 1, right away, says the same thing. After calling the son the great and final prophet of God, it says, that is, in these last days, God has spoken to us by his son, his son whom he appointed the heir of all things. He will inherit everything in the end.

So, he is the end, but he's also the beginning. He's the omega, he's also the alpha. Because he says, whom he appointed the son, whom God appointed heir of all things, through whom also God created the world.

Scripture in these places, and more, that important passage in 1 Corinthians 8:6, teaches that the son takes part in creation. What I'm trying to say is that all three persons of the Godhead participate in the work of creation. Angels do not do that.

Human beings do not do that. Angels and human beings are creatures. The creator-creature distinction is basic and consistent in Scripture.

We will never be the creator. We will always be creatures. We'll be glorified, sanctified, totally redeemed, resurrected, transformed creatures on the new earth.

But creatures, we will remain. As a matter of fact, that creator-creature distinction is an important aspect of our beginning to understand how eternity will never be enough time, so to speak. We will never exhaust the knowledge of God or the wonder of God because of that creator-creature distinction.

And unlike some skeptics' criticisms, heaven, that is, resurrected life on the new earth, will not be boring. God is infinitely interesting. The Holy Spirit also takes part in the work of creation.

You see, the persons are inseparable in their being and in their operations. The Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters, Genesis 1:2. Job says, the hermeneutics of Job is difficult.

My pastor preached Van Lee's Covenant of Grace in St. Charles, Missouri. Preaches from the whole Bible. He took some months to do representative sermons from Job.

Along the way, I said, what is hermeneutics here? How do we relate to this in terms of the doctrine of revelation and so forth? Everything in Job is what God wanted to give us, but what about normativity? What about theology? He agreed with me that

when Job speaks or God speaks, we can take that as bona fide biblical teaching. When the friends speak, not so much. I'm not saying it's identical, but the Bible accurately sometimes records Satan's or demons' speech.

I'm not saying Job's friends are Satanic or anything like that, but it doesn't mean Satan or the demons' teaching is true. Sometimes it is, actually. Ironically, their theology seems to be better than the disciples at times during Jesus' earthly ministry, but surely they're not a reliable source.

So, inspiration and inerrancy means God accurately records what they say. So it is with Job's friends, but we can't take to the bank the theology of Job's friends. Really, it's questionable.

But when God speaks, of course, as in the final chapters, it is not only accurate, but it is true. And the same for Job. He, as a prophet of God, speaks the truth of God.

And here we have Job 33:4, the Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life. As in Greek, in Hebrew, the word for breath, wind, or spirit is the same. At least one word does duty for all three, ruach.

And that is used here. The Spirit of God has made me, Job said, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life. The Holy Spirit was involved in Job's creation, even in his mother's womb.

How about Psalm 104 and verse 20, quote, when you send forth your spirit, they are created, all the creatures, the Psalm is enumerating all the animals, and you renew the face of the ground. That verse blurs between creation and providence, and that's a good thing. That is fine.

God is the author of both. So, our point is that the three persons are inseparable. They all take part in creation.

And yet, they are distinct. We don't confuse them with one another. So, we don't say, oh, the Son is the first person, and the Father creates through Him.

No, no, the Father is the first person. The three persons are equally God from all eternity, equal in power and glory and deity. But the Father is the first person, and He creates through the Son, by the Son.

The New Testament uses prepositions like that. And likewise, the Spirit is the Father's worker in creation. All three persons, furthermore, take part in redemption.

Listen to Peter. To those chosen, living as exiles, dispersed abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. I'm going to just turn to the ESV.

1 Peter 1:1 and 2. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in five Roman provinces in Asia Minor, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. According to, that is, elect exiles, elect 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. May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

All three persons take part in salvation now, redemption. The Father foreknows, the Spirit sanctifies, and the Son's blood sprinkles, cleanses believers. All three do the divine work of redemption, salvation.

No angels or human beings do that, and only God does that. Hence, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are God. Nevertheless, consistently in scripture, the Father is the foreknower.

The Son is the only one who became incarnate, who shed his blood, and who died a sacrificial death. The background for the blood of Christ is the blood of bulls and goats, and lambs in the Old Testament. That is, it speaks of His violent death, which is the supreme sacrifice.

The sacrifice of all sacrifices, which, according to Hebrews 9:15, gives efficacy to Old Testament sacrifices. Yes, I check because I don't want to give wrong proof text forever on tape, it's to videotape, that's terrible. So, the Spirit, although all three persons actually sanctify in scripture, the Spirit here does the work of sanctification.

Can we specify the meaning of these works? We have said they're all ways of talking about salvation. The Father foreknows, the Spirit sanctifies, the Son's blood sprinkles and cleanses. Sure we can.

Foreknowledge here is not merely foresight or God knowing facts beforehand. Let's be clear: God knows all facts beforehand. God has perfect foresight, perfect simple knowledge, philosophers call it.

But that's not what's talked about. As in Paul's writings, when Paul deals with salvific foreknowledge, it means for loved. It doesn't mean simply choosing; it means God set His love upon His people beforehand.

It is a covenantal foreknowing if you will. God marking out His people, setting His love on them. That is these exiles.

And by the way, it's very Jewish language, but chapter four early on indicates that these are Gentile readers. Every commentary I've ever looked at in 1 Peter says the lifestyle there, the depraved lifestyle in 1 Peter 4 early on, does not fit 1 Peter 4:3.

For the time that has passed suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. Nobody says that's Jews.

Thus, the Jews, in quotation marks, in 1:1 and 2, are it a way of talking about the church as the new Israel, as the New Testament frequently does. Perhaps most famously in all of scripture, in 1 Peter 2:9 through 10, Old Testament key designations of Israel, going back to Exodus 19, which is right before the giving of the law in Exodus 20, are taken right over to identify the Christian church as the spiritual Israel. This does not decide the question as to whether God is done with Israel.

My understanding of Romans 11 is that God is not done with ethnic Israel, with descendants of Abraham and Sarah, but that He saved large numbers of them in between the advents of Christ, that's the already, and He'll have a great harvest closer to the time of the return of Christ. In that way, all Israel, all blood Israelites will be saved. The question as to whether the New Testament teaches something about the nation of Israel is a more debated one.

I think it does not. I respect those who think it does, but surely the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable, 1 Corinthians 11. God is not done with His people.

Ethnic Israelites are being saved and will be saved even in greater numbers toward the return of our Lord. The Father foreknows the elect exiles. He foreloves them.

Only God does that. That is a word of salvation. God sets His love upon them, and you can be sure, therefore, that they will be saved.

Romans 8:30 and 31. Those whom God foreknew, He also predestined. Those whom He predestined, He also called.

He effectively summoned them to Himself through the gospel. Those whom He called, He also justified. He declared righteous in Christ.

Those whom He justified, He also glorified. This is a figure of speech, and I've lost the name of it, but Judith Gundry Wolf shows in her book, Paul and Perseverance, Climax, it's called. It reaches back.

Those whom? It reaches forward. He also. It's like links in a chain, as the Puritans used to say.

Actually, that's not bad. That's not wrong. God is the author.

He foreknows, predestines, calls, justifies, and glorifies. All put in the simple past tense, indicating these works are as good as done in God's plan and that those whom He foreloved will not fail to be glorified. The Father foreknows the people of God.

He foreloves them. He sets His covenantal love upon them way before they ever believe. This gives the order for people to come to faith.

It doesn't give the redemptive historical order of Father choosing, Son redeeming, Spirit applying, because Father foreloved the recipients, the believing recipients of 1 Peter, but they came to know Jesus, not when He died, but when they heard the Gospel, and the Holy Spirit sanctified them. In the sanctification of the Spirit, sanctification is initial, progressive, and final. Here it is initial.

The Spirit set apart those whom the Father had foreloved so that they believed in the Son. The Spirit constituted them as saints when they believed the Gospel. You say, where does it say believe the Gospel here? The words in the sanctification of the Spirit, for, the word for means resulting in obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling with His blood.

The Gospel is a command, and Peter, even as Paul does sometimes, refers to faith as obeying the Gospel. I don't have time to show the places where obey and obedience means belief and faith, and disobey and disobedience means disbelieve and unbelief in 1 Peter, but the clincher is 1 Peter 4:17. Even as in the Old Testament, God reserves the worst judgments for His own people because He loves them. It is time for judgment to begin at the household of God, 1 Peter 4:17. And if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the Gospel of God? A believing response to the Gospel is sometimes indicated in Scripture, not only in Peter, but also in Paul, 2 Thessalonians 1; those who don't obey the Gospel are going to be condemned when Jesus comes back as disobedience, disobeying.

So, the contrary is true. The Spirit sets people apart, the people whom the Father foreloved, He sets them apart for obedience to Jesus Christ as He is offered in the Gospel. Our whole point really is, I get lost in the exegesis, which I love, but the whole point is the three persons all do the work of salvation, but they have separate roles.

The Father foreloves, always only the Father, the Spirit sanctifies, it is not true only the Spirit, the Father, and the Son sometimes do that, but here the Spirit is the sanctifier in initial sanctification, which results in faith in Christ, obedience to the Gospel, whose focus, of course, is Jesus Christ, and for, with the result that people are sprinkled with His blood. So, here is the whole of it. The Father foreloves the people, the Spirit sanctifies them, He sets them apart, that they might believe the Gospel, obey Jesus as He is offered in the Gospel.

The Gospel is a command: believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you'll be saved, and they do. The result of their faith is cleansing, purification, the forgiveness of sins, the sprinkling with Jesus' blood, the application of the once-for-all sacrifice of the Lord, and the atoning sacrifice of Christ to those who believe. Father foreloves, Spirit sanctifies, the Son's blood cleanses, sprinkles.

The persons are inseparable; they are one God, but they are distinct; we don't confuse them; there's no such thing as sprinkling of the Spirit's blood; the Spirit doesn't have blood, or the sprinkling of the Father's blood, it's ridiculous. I mean no irreverence with those expressions, I simply want to show the foolishness of talking like that, which underlines the fact that the Bible distinguishes, it does not confuse the persons. Really quickly, Ephesians 1 is the most famous place where we see some of these roles, Ephesians 1:3 to 14, one giant sentence in Greek, is dominated by union with Christ, and it speaks of the salvation of God's people.

If you ask me, what is the purpose of Ephesians 1:3 to 14? The answer is that God might be glorified and praised, Father, Son, and Spirit, for their work, for their roles in saving the people of God. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, verse 3. To the praise of the Father's glorious grace, verse 6. Twelve, to the praise of his glory, 14, to the praise of his glory. The purpose of the passage is that God might be glorified.

So, if we have our theology perfect, which none of us do, but even if we did, and it didn't lead us to give praise to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, our theology would not be so perfect, and we wouldn't be living and applying the purpose of doctrine. Boy, years ago, reading a book called Scripture and Truth, D. A. Carson had, Don Carson had a piece on the unity of the Bible and the possibility of systematic theology, in which he showed when the critical study of the Bible developed in the 1800s, and people no longer believed, automatically came with believing presuppositions to the text, a number of things happened. The Testaments were severed terribly, and it got bad enough, it gets bad enough, that systematic theology is impossible.

If the Bible is not one word of God in two big installments of the New Testaments, there can be no systematic theology. So, it's no surprise that liberal seminaries have courses like this. The problem with Colossians is that the study of individual books, or even going under the guise of biblical theology, is a substitute for the Bible's teachings.

There is no such thing in their minds as a coherent, unified teaching, because the possibility of systematic theology is dependent upon belief in an inspired Bible of Old and New Testaments. So, sometimes you have courses in these same places, like this. Lukan theology, all right, which studies Luke, and perhaps acts, and draws theological



principles, with no possibility in the professor's mind that those things cohere with Johannine, or Pauline, or Petrine theology, for example.

We reject all of that. We would respect them as human beings made in God's image. We could learn from their writings, and we do.

But at the end of the day, we do believe it's systematic theology, because we believe 2 Timothy 3, 16, 17, all scripture is God-breathed, it's given by God, and it is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. It is profitable for teaching. We can study God's inspired word to understand the teaching he has given to us.

And in Ephesians 1:3 to 14, the purpose of this great teaching is the glory of God, the praise of God, and we see the three persons do the work of salvation. They perform different roles. The Father's role is election.

God chose us in Christ, before the foundation of the world. The Father's role is predestination. In love, he predestined us, verse 5, for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ.

My temptation here is to do a complete exegesis, which is not the purpose right now. We're trying to show that the three Trinitarian persons are inseparable, but they are distinct. It is not said here the Spirit elects or predestines, or that Christ elects or predestines.

As a matter of fact, toward the middle of John 15, the Son does elect at one place in the Bible. You did not choose me. I chose you and ordained you that you should go and bear fruit.

You don't belong to the world, but I chose you out of the world. D. A. Carson, in his book *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*, shows that is one of John's three themes of election, the other two being the Father giving people to the Son, and the antecedent or prior identity of God's people, even before they believe. You do not believe, John 10, Jesus tells his enemies, because you are not my sheep.

Now, it is true. They're not his sheep because they don't believe, but that's not what he's saying there. They don't believe it because they are not his sheep.

My sheep hear my voice and they follow me and I give them eternal life and so forth. That is, it is one theme, not even the major theme. Faith occurs 99 or 100 times, but one theme is, and it's a predestinarian theme, there are sheep and goats, I'll call them, and they have those identities before they believe or don't believe, which faith or unbelief actually manifests their prior identities, which are hidden in God.

Anyway, in Ephesians 1:3 and 4 and 5, the Father elects, and the Father predestines. The Son, in him, verse 7, he's called the Beloved in the previous verse, in him we have redemption through his blood. The Son sheds his blood and the Son redeems.

The Father doesn't shed his blood, the Father doesn't have blood, only the Son became incarnate. The Spirit doesn't redeem. The Son dies on the cross, rises again on the third day, and the Son redeems with his sacrificial death.

The Spirit plays a role, that is, he is the seal of God. Verse 13, in Christ also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, you were sealed. In him, you also were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

The Spirit is both the guarantee, the *arabone*, Aramaic loanword, the deposit, and he is the seal, the *sphragis*, the seal. Again, it means something like guarantee. It means God has sealed his people.

This doctrine of sealing is a minor chord in Paul. It occurs in 2 Corinthians 1:19 and 20, Ephesians 4, 30, and here, Ephesians 1:13, only those three places. It does have an undertone of ownership, but its major idea is preservation.

God keeps his people saved, he seals their union with Christ, and he seals them with the Holy Spirit. The Father is not the seal, the Son is not the seal, the Holy Spirit is the seal. Thus, summarizing and teaching on this passage, the three persons are one God, because God alone saves, and they save.

They are thus inseparable, and in their work, they're inseparable, but they're distinguishable. They must be distinguished. We don't confuse the three persons.

They have separate roles, and here, the Father chooses the Father's predestines. He chooses unto sanctification, for reasons I don't want to explain right now, parallel with Colossians 1, its final sanctification. He predestines for adoption.

Likewise, I think it's for final adoption that is in view. The Son redeems with his blood, with his violent death on the cross, and the Father seals believers. He seals their union with Christ, and the seal is the Holy Spirit.

The seal is a person of the Godhead. So, once more we see, Father, Son, and Spirit are inseparable, but distinct. People sometimes cite Jesus' loud cry of abandonment on the cross as an exception.

Matthew 27, 46. If I say it right, I weep, so I don't say it right. It was a shriek.

My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? Why have you deserted me? Why have you forsaken me? The word means. Matthew 27:46. Isn't that a separation? Yes.

Isn't it an ontological separation between the person? No, that is impossible. God is a tri-unity. He is three in one.

That is what it means for God to be God. This cry does indeed point to a separation between the Father and the Son, but it does not occur on the order of being, on the order of ontology. It does not occur ontologically or metaphysically.

It's a temporary separation of fellowship when the Son bore the world's sins. I'm not trying to dilute it or make it less horrible than it is. This is incredible.

From all eternity, the Father and the Son loved each other. And now, as the song says, the Father turns his back on the Son. That is incredible.

That is incomprehensible to us, that God loves us like that. But he did. And it is not a separation of being, but it is a temporary separation of fellowship.

And he who cried out in agony, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Hours later says, Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit. The horrible alienation, the horrible separation of fellowship, is temporary. And God, mysteriously, in a finite period of time, through the person, through an infinite, finite person, accomplishes an eternal redemption.

And Christ suffers the true equivalent of eternal punishment in three hours on the cross. It doesn't compute. We can't fully understand.

The alternative is he would still be on the cross and be an eternal curse and could save no one. No. There's a twofold substitution.

Jesus dies in the place of his people, and God takes the temporal suffering of his divine-human son as the true equivalent of the eternal suffering of all who reject him. We see this in the image of the cup. Revelation 14 says those who don't believe in Christ will drink the cup of God's wrath and suffer day and night forever and ever.

Jesus drank the cup of God's wrath on the cross, again, in a limited time span. Otherwise, he would still be there, and no one would be saved, and he would be an eternal curse. In fact, though only Jesus was crucified, we do not confuse the persons.

Even then, the three persons were not separated. For in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself. 2 Corinthians 5:19. God was doing it in his son, through his son.

And furthermore, at least one time, the spirit gets in on the atoning work. Spirit doesn't die on the cross, but he makes Jesus' sacrifice absolute. Christ, through the eternal spirit, offered himself without blemish to God.

Hebrews 9:14. Confuse the persons. Never. Distinguish the persons. Always. Emphasize the unity of the persons. Yes, and amen.

Although we do not separate the three persons, we distinguish and do not confuse them. The son becomes incarnate, not the father or the spirit. The son dies on the cross, not either of the other two persons.

All three persons are at Jesus' baptism. When he comes out of the water, the spirit descends on him, and the father speaks from heaven. Matthew 3:16-17. When the Trinity does the work of salvation from beginning to end, scripture does not confuse the persons.

The father plans salvation. Ephesians 1:4. And I didn't even read verse 11. That is a powerful statement. In Christ, 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.

The father plans salvation. Ephesians 1:4. And 11. The son dies to accomplish it. Verse 7. He redeems sinners with his blood, and the spirit is God's seal, protecting believers until the day of redemption. Ephesians 1.13.14. Ephesians 4.30. There's one God.

The father is God. The son is God. The Holy Spirit is God.

The three Trinitarian persons are inseparable but distinct. And next, we have to say the father, son, and spirit indwell each other. This is such an overwhelming teaching.

It is no wonder the church struggled to formulate the doctrine of the Trinity because the Bible gives us, it takes us by the hand and leads us in that very direction. A Biblical theme stresses the oneness of the three Trinitarian persons. They are in one another, or they mutually indwell one another.

In John's Gospel, Jesus says that the father and the son indwell, or live, in one another. Let me say right away, it is John's habit. He does believe in the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, in the farewell discourses, says certain important things about the spirit. He teaches some important truths, like the spirit will indwell God's people. The spirit is even active earlier in the Gospel of John.

But when John formulates things like this notion of mutual indwelling, he leaves the spirit out. He generally views the spirit as post-Pentecost, as taking up his major work after Pentecost, which is true. But we need to systematize John's thoughts sometime and move his teaching of a Binity, the Father and the Son, to a full-blown doctrine of the Trinity.

This is a task of systematic theology. It has to be done carefully, but it should be done because John doesn't take us all the way, although he does remarkable things. In John's Gospel, Jesus says the Father and the Son indwell one another or live in one another, or they are in one another.

These are synonymous expressions. Jesus says the Father is in him, and he is in the Father. John 14:10. Don't you believe, Philip, that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me? The words I speak to you I do not speak on my own.

The Father who lives in me does his works. John 14:10. Jesus prays to the Father in John 17:22-23. I have given them the glory that you have given me. That's a remarkable statement.

You say, these bumbling, half-hearted disciples. Peter, who wants to keep Jesus from going to the cross? So that Jesus says, Satan, get behind me. Jesus has given his glory to them.

That's what he says. That is, their merit is not a consideration. And even as Israel was a stubborn and stiff-necked people, the disciples are, one's actually a traitor, but the disciples are halting, hardly believing.

And when Peter does say, who do you say that I am? Jesus says, you're the Christ, the Son of a living God. Jesus does not say, Peter, you are a smart man. You are spiritually above your peers.

No, he says, flesh and blood did not reveal this to you. But my Father who is in heaven, Peter spoke as a prophet. Peter spoke the word of God through him better than he knew.

John 17:22-23. Jesus prays to the Father. Father, I have given them the glory you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one. He's talking about the people of God.

I am in them, and you are in me, so that they may be completely one, that the world may know you have sent me and loved them as you have loved me. I am in them and you, Father, are in me. The Father is in the Son, even in the Incarnate Son.

What we're going to say by way of extrapolation is, this mutual indwelling, this perichoresis, this... I'm forgetting some other terminology. It'll come if I don't try. Peri is Greek, perichoresis.

The Latin would be circumcission. Circumference around circumincision or perichoresis is an eternal function of the Holy Trinity. The persons eternally indwell one another.

The persons eternally are in one another. Not only is the Father in Jesus, John 17:22-23, but Jesus also teaches that he is in the Father and that he and the Father are in one another. I'll say it again.

John leaves out the Spirit. Systematics has to say something like this. John doesn't say it, but even based upon all that he teaches about the Spirit, it would be a fair deduction from his teaching to say that the Father and Son are in the Spirit, and the Spirit is in the Son, and the Spirit is in the Father, like that.

Jesus says he and the Father are in one another. John 14.10 and 11. Don't you believe that I'm in the Father, and the Father is in me? The words I speak to you I do not speak on my own.

The Father who lives in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me. Otherwise, believe because of the works themselves.

If this doctrine is too heavy for you, believe in me anyway because of the miracles and the words that come out of my mouth. But the truth of the matter is, I am in the Father. This is a man speaking on earth.

Oh, but he's never a mere man. From the moment of his conception, he is the God-man. He's the God-baby in Mary's womb.

That's an amazing thing. Uh, I am in the Father, and the Father is in me. As we read, actually, we didn't read John 17:20 and 21 before the verses I read earlier, I pray not only for these, my 11 disciples, but also for those who believe in me through their word.

May they all be one as you, Father, are in me, and I am in you. May they also be one in us so that the world may believe what you sent me. There's a corollary here, and that is believers are caught up in this mutual indwelling.

This is not the course to pursue this in great measure. That is the course, also on [biblicalelearning.org](http://biblicalelearning.org), of the Holy Spirit and union with Christ. But I will just mention, Jesus here compares the mutual indwelling of the Father and himself to the mutual indwelling of believers and us.

Believers and the Father and the Son. This is, uh, incredible. Obviously, there are similarities.

There is a sense. We can understand the Trinity dwelling in us. That's the doctrine of indwelling.

We especially think of the Holy Spirit. But if we looked at all the Bible said, twice it says the Father indwells us, about half dozen times Jesus indwells us, about eight times the Holy Spirit indwells us. The persons are inseparable.

The Trinity indwells believers. The difficult part is, in what sense do we indwell God? Well, it is certainly in a creaturely sense, and God indwells himself. The Trinitarian persons indwell one another, but by nature, that is who God is.

We indwell the Trinitarian persons by grace. So, it speaks of us partaking of the very, not only the love of God, but we partake of the life of God. You see, we have underestimated what eternal life means.

In any case, the mutual indwelling of the divine persons is unique. We do not become divine, but the divine Trinity shares with us their love and their life. The Father, Son, and Spirit live in one another, or said differently, they are in one another.

Scripture says both. They mutually exist in one another. By the way, I have made a systematic move, I try to say that.

John never says this, but surely we would say, do the Father and the Son only indwell one another and don't indwell the Spirit? That's absurd. Is the Spirit not part of the divine life? That's absurd as well. So, John doesn't say it.

We're moving beyond the explicit statement of John. Nevertheless, guardedly, carefully, exegetically, we draw this deduction. The Father, Son, and Spirit live in one another.

They are in one another. They mutually exist in one another. You understand? God is a Trinity.

That's who God is. He is not a solitary being. I do not look down on anyone or demean anyone when I say our fellow monotheists, that is, Jews and Muslims, correctly teach that God is one.

But in denying the doctrine of the Trinity, they have assumed that God from all eternity was lonely. God has not been lonely from all eternity. God didn't create

Adam and Eve out of a sense of need, but out of his own goodness, out of his own generosity.

From all eternity before creation, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit loved each other, communicated with each other, fellowshiped with each other, and shared divine life and joy. God is not lonely. God is three in one.

The three persons share the divine life. Each person of the Trinity then, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is holy God. That is why Jesus says, seeing him means seeing the invisible Father.

Don't you understand? I am in the Father, and the Father is in me. When you see me, you see all there is of God. The same could be said for other persons because God is one, and they mutually indwell one another.

The fact that God eternally exists in three persons is a mystery that surpasses human understanding. The mutual indwelling of the divine persons is a mystery of the Holy Trinity. Theologians call it perichoresis, Greek, circumcission, or co-inherence, both from the Latin.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit co-inhere in the divine essence and in one another. They mutually indwell one another. Do I understand fully what I have just been taught? I do not.

As a matter of fact, I'm not a very good apologist. I'm a simple exegetical theologian trained in historical theology who tries to be aware enough of philosophy to see where philosophical assumptions affect systematic theology. But no human being made this up.

This is how God is. This is how God eternally has been and will be. As we wrap this session up, the next session will be our last one on the Holy Trinity, in which we will say the Father, Son, and Spirit exist in unity and equality.

And then we will draw matters to a conclusion.

This is Dr. Robert Peterson and his teaching on theology proper or God. This is session 9, Rounding Out the Trinity.