

ONE AND THREE

“Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you...”

2 Corinthians 13:14

The doctrine of the Trinity requires us to hold together two truths at the same time: God is one, and God is three persons. Christians do not believe in three gods, nor do we believe that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are merely three names for the same person. Rather, the one God eternally exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, equal in divine nature, power, glory, and eternity.

A helpful way to summarize the doctrine is this: there is one divine essence and three distinct divine persons. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. Yet the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Father. These distinctions are not temporary roles or outward appearances. They are eternal personal distinctions within the one God.

This is why careful language matters. The Father is unbegotten, the Son is eternally begotten of the Father, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father. These terms do not mean the Son or Spirit are created or lesser than the Father. They describe the eternal relationships among the persons of the Godhead. The three are distinct, but not divided; united, but not confused.

Many errors arise when one part of this truth is emphasized at the expense of another. **Adoptionism** denies the eternal deity of Christ by treating him as a man later exalted by God. **Modalism** denies the real distinction of persons by treating Father, Son, and Spirit as different roles of one person. **Arianism** denies the full deity of the Son, making him a created being. **Tritheism** divides God into three separate gods. Each error fails to preserve the whole biblical witness.

The ancient church did not develop Trinitarian language to complicate Scripture, but to guard what Scripture teaches. The Bible reveals one God, and yet it also reveals Father, Son, and Holy Spirit acting personally and divinely. For everyday faith, this means we worship the Father, through the Son, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is not a puzzle to solve, but the living God to know, worship, and adore.

Why is it important to preserve both truths: that God is one, and that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are truly distinct?