

Apologetics-Defending the Faith

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Other Prominent Questions About the Christian Faith

The objective of this session is to address the questions concerning the doctrine of the _____, as well as the Bible's teachings about _____, and _____.

The Question of the Trinity:

Is It Possible That God Be Both One and Three?

The most difficult thing about the Christian concept of the Trinity is that there is no way to *perfectly* and *completely* understand it. The Trinity is a concept that is *impossible* for any human being to fully understand, let alone explain. God is infinitely *greater* than we are; therefore, we should not expect to be able to fully understand Him. The Bible teaches that the *Father* is God, that *Jesus* is God, and that the *Holy Spirit* is God. The Bible also teaches that there is only *one* God. Though we can understand *some* facts about the relationship of the different Persons of the Trinity to one another, ultimately, it is *incomprehensible* to the human mind. However, this does not mean the Trinity is *not true*, or that it is not based on the *teachings* of the Bible.

Explanation of the Trinity

While the word "*trinity*" is not found in the Scriptures, the *concept* is found there from beginning to end. It is a basic principle of our biblical faith that there is only one God:

"Hear, O Israel! The LORD our God, the LORD is one!" (Deuteronomy 6:4).

However, another term which is referenced in Scripture is "_____." The term "Godhead" is found *three (3) times* in the King James Version (Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9). Three different Greek words are used, but each one means "_____." The concept of the Godhead is that God is one yet God is three; that God is one in divine _____, yet possesses three eternal _____.

Those distinctions seem best described as _____, known as the *Father*, the *Son*, and the *Holy Spirit*. The three Persons of the Godhead possess identical *attributes*, and therefore are one—not merely one in *mind* and *purpose*, but one in _____. Because they are one in *substance* and one in *essence*, they are one God. Biblical teachings concerning the Trinity are:

- 1) There is _____ “God” (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 8:4; Galatians 3:20; First Timothy 2:5)
- 2) The Trinity consists of _____ “Persons” (Genesis 1:1, 26; 3:22, 11:7; Isaiah 5:8, 48:16, 61:1; Matthew 3:16-17, 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14)
- 3) The members of the Trinity are _____ one from another in various passages:

In the Old Testament,

- “*LORD*” is distinguished from “*Lord*” (Genesis 19:24; Hosea 1:4)
- The “*LORD*” has a “*Son*” (Psalms 2:7, 12; Proverbs 30:2-4)
- The “*Spirit*” is distinguished from the “*LORD*” (Numbers 27:18) and from “*God*” (Psalms 51:10-12)
- God the “*Son*” is distinguished from God the “*Father*” (Psalms 45:6-7; Hebrews 1:8-9).

In the New Testament,

- “*Jesus*” speaks to the “*Father*” about sending a Helper, the “*Holy Spirit*” (John 14:16-17).

- 4) _____ of the Trinity is God.

- The “*Father*” is God (John 6:27; Romans 1:7; First Peter 1:2)
- The “*Son*” is God (John 1:1, 14; Romans 9:5; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:8; 1 John 5:20)

- The “*Holy Spirit*” is God (Acts 5:3-4; First Corinthians 3:16)

5) There is _____ within the Trinity. This is an *internal* relationship and does not deny the deity of any Person of the Trinity. Scripture shows that the *Holy Spirit* is subordinate to the Father and the Son, and the *Son* is subordinate to the Father; concepts which our finite minds cannot understand concerning the infinite God.

- Subordination concerning the *Son* (Luke 22:42, John 5:36, John 20:21, 1 John 4:14)
- Subordination concerning the *Holy Spirit* (John 14:16, 14:26, 15:26, 16:7, 16:13-14)

6) The individual members of the Trinity have different _____. The Father _____ all of these things. The Father is the ultimate source or cause of the following works:

- the *universe* (1 Corinthians 8:6; Revelation 4:11)
- *divine relation* (Revelation 1:1)
- *salvation* (John 3:16-17) and
- *Jesus’ human works* (John 5:17; 14:10)

The Father does all these things through the _____, who functions as His _____. The Son is the *agent* through whom the Father does the following works:

- the *creation and maintenance* of the *universe* (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16-17);
- *divine relation* (John 1:1, 16:12-15; Matthew 11:27); and
- *salvation* (2 Corinthians 5:19; Matthew 1:21; John 4:42)

The Father does all these things by the _____ of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the *power* by whom the Father does the following works:

- the *creation and maintenance* of the *universe* (Genesis 1:2, Job 26:13; Psalm 104:30);
- *divine relation* (John 16:12-15; Ephesians 3:5; 2 Peter 1:21);
- *salvation* (John 3:6; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:2); and
- *Jesus' works* (Isaiah 61:1; Acts 10:38)

Evidence of the Trinity

While the primary emphasis of the Old Testament is on the *unity* of God, the indications of His triune nature are clearly seen even there. We need not read very far to find the first one: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). *Elohim*, the Hebrew name for God in this verse, is _____. This definitely points to more than one Person in the Godhead. There was no other logical reason to choose a plural name for we read further in Genesis 1:26, “Let *us* make man in *our* image.” The plural pronouns could not refer to *angels* because they were never associated with God in His creative activity. Consequently, *more than one* divine Person was clearly involved. The plural pronouns make no sense otherwise (Gen. 3:22; 11:7). John reiterates this truth when, speaking of Jesus, he declares, “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:3). Clearly, Jesus was both _____ and _____ in the act of creation, even though Genesis 1:1 declares that “God created the heavens and the earth.”

The undeniable biblical testimony to the Trinity is simply that all three Persons are referred to as _____. First, the Father is called God. He is referred to as “God the Father” (Galatians 1:1), “God our Father” (Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2), and “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). His deity is unquestioned. But the Son is likewise referred to as God. He possesses the attributes of deity such as *eternality*, *immutability*, *omnipotence*, *omniscience*, and *omnipresence*. He bears the names of deity such as *Jehovah*, *Lord*, *Immanuel*, and *the Word*. He even permitted Thomas to call Him “*my Lord and my God*” (John 20:28). He exercises the prerogatives of deity such as *forgiving sins*, *raising the dead*, and *judging* all men.

Jesus claimed that He deserved the very same reverence that was reserved for God the Father (Luke 18:18-19; John 10:30). The Father Himself addressed His Son as God (Hebrews 1:8). Paul further explains that “in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9). The Greek word translated “godhead” is *theotēs* which means “divinity,” so the totality

of divinity (God) is in Jesus. The prologue to John's Gospel tells us one reason Christ came to earth: *to make the Father known, to reveal God to men* (John 1:18). We can know more of what God is like by examining the Person of Jesus Christ. He was God in *flesh*. As we explore Scripture and seek to discover who God is, we cannot neglect the *earthly life* of Jesus Christ. He is God the Son.

But the Holy Spirit is also part of the Godhead. His name is "the Spirit of *God*" (Genesis 1:2). He, too, possesses the attributes and performs the works of deity. While He is the Spirit who proceeds from the Father (John 15:26), He is at the same time called "the Spirit of *Christ*" (Romans 8:9). He is _____ with both the Father and the Son. The Apostle Peter clearly viewed Him as God when he said to Ananias, "Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the *Holy Spirit*? . . . You have not lied to men, but to *God*" (Acts 5:3-4). If the Father, the Son, and the Spirit all _____ the names of God, _____ the attributes of God, and _____ the works of God, then there is no alternative but to acknowledge that our one God exists in three Persons. The concept of the Trinity is more concerned with the _____ issue of the Deity. Thus, we view the Trinity as a $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$ relationship rather than a $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$ representation.

Over the years, there have been many attempts to develop *illustrations* of the Trinity. However, none of the popular illustrations are completely accurate. While some illustrations may present a way to view the Trinity, the portrait *breaks down* at some point. This is because an *infinite* God cannot be fully described by a *finite* illustration. The *Father* is God, the *Son* is God, and the *Holy Spirit* is God—but there is only one God. That is the *biblical doctrine* of the Trinity. Nevertheless, the reality of the triune Godhead cannot be denied. We believe in the Godhead not because we *understand* it, but because God has _____ it. God is a *totally different* kind of being; an infinite being whom our finite minds cannot fully comprehend.

However, it is necessary for us to accept this revelation of God if we hope to grow in our understanding of His nature and being. *There can be no full or final revelation of God apart from the Trinity* (Hebrews 1:1-3). General revelation can never reveal a Trinitarian God.

*If I seek to understand the Trinity in its fullness, I might lose my mind,
but if I seek to deny the Trinity and its fullness, I lose my soul. (A.W. Tozer).*

The Question of Evil:

Why Does a Good God Allow Evil to Exist?

The Bible describes God as *holy* (Isaiah 6:3), *righteous* (Psalm 7:11), *just* (Deuteronomy 32:4), and *sovereign* (Daniel 4:17-25). These attributes tell us the following about God:

- (1) God is _____ of preventing evil, and
- (2) God _____ to rid the universe of evil.

So, if both of these are true, why does God *allow* evil? If God has the *power* to prevent evil and *desires* to prevent evil, why does He still allow evil? Perhaps a practical way to look at this question would be to consider some *alternative ways* people might have God run the world:

- 1) God could change everyone's _____ so that they cannot sin.
- 2) God could supernaturally _____ whenever people chose to, or were on the verge of committing evil actions.
- 3) God could _____ and _____ those who choose to commit evil acts.

The attempt to justify the actions of God in light of the existence of evil is called _____. A theodicy tries to show God's actual reasons for allowing evil. While the Bible has a significant amount of material dealing with the nature of evil and its remedy, it does not explicitly reveal _____ God allows it.

According to the Bible, neither humankind nor the world was made in a state corrupted by evil. God created all things and called them "*very good*." God also provided in abundance everything that Adam and Eve, creatures made in His image, could ever need. As creatures made in God's image, they were endowed with moral ability, the freedom to choose between *good* (adhering to God's will) and *evil* (violating God's will). How long this good state lasted is unknown, but at some point, Adam and Eve freely disobeyed God by violating God's one commandment. Because of Adam's choice to sin, the world now lives under the curse, and we are all born with a *sin nature* (Romans 5:12). Thus, evil was introduced into

the world by the free choice of morally accountable creatures. Hence, evil was not created by God. God made evil _____, but people made evil _____. If God is omniscient, then *He knew all along* that people would sometimes choose evil. Because we know God is morally perfect and benevolent, then He must have a *good reason* for allowing evil, and this is all we need to know. The specific reasons God permits evil are *not given, nor are they required* in order for Christianity to be logically consistent! However, God does _____ and _____ some acts of evil. This world would be *much worse* were not God restraining evil. At the same time, God has given us the ability to choose good and evil, and when we choose evil, He allows us, and those around us, to suffer the *consequences* of evil. Rather than *blaming* God and *questioning* God on why He does not prevent all evil, we should be about the business of proclaiming the cure for evil and its consequences—Jesus Christ!

The Question of Fate: *Divine Sovereignty or Human Freedom?*

When we talk about the concepts of *divine sovereignty* and *human freedom*, we usually define it by saying that God is the sovereign ruler over the universe and all human affairs and human beings are responsible before God for the moral choices and actions they make. However, the Bible teaches both divine sovereignty and human freedom, and both are *true*! (Genesis 45:4, 8; 50:20)

Divine Sovereignty

Another term which is often used to define the phrase *divine sovereignty* is the word, _____.

Divine providence is the means by and through which God *governs* all things in the universe. The doctrine of divine providence asserts that God is in complete _____ of all things, which includes:

- The _____ as a whole (Ps. 103:19),
- The _____ world (Matthew 5:45),
- the affairs of _____ (Psalm 66:7),
- human _____ and _____ (Gal. 1:15),
- human _____ & _____ (Lk. 1:52),

- the _____ of His people (Ps. 4:8)

The *purpose*, or *goal*, of divine providence is to accomplish the _____ of God. To ensure that His purposes are fulfilled, God governs the affairs of men and works through the *natural* order of things. The laws of nature are the *rules* and *principles* that God set in place to govern how things work. God also sometimes works directly to accomplish His will. These works are what we would call _____. A miracle is God's circumventing, for a short period of time, the *natural order* of things to accomplish His will and purpose. God's providential will is *absolute*, *universal*, and *effectual* (Daniel 4:35). The doctrine of divine providence stands in direct opposition to the idea that the universe is governed by *chance* or *fate*. Even what we would normally call "chance" or "fate" is under God's control (Prov. 16:33). In other words, God does not take a "*hands-off*" approach to running the world. Everything that happens in the world is made to work out according to God's purpose. Evil exists, but it is not allowed to thwart God's plan:

- God uses even *sinful men* for His purposes (Proverbs 21:1).
- God worked in the hearts of the *Egyptians* to bring about His purpose (Exodus 12:36)
- God worked in the heart of *King Artaxerxes* to bring about His purpose (Ezra 7:27)
- God worked through the hearts of *evil men* to secure salvation (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28)

The primary means by which God accomplishes His will is through _____ causes (e.g., laws of nature, human choice, etc.) Two (2) examples from the book of Acts highlight God _____ and _____ working to accomplish His will:

Acts 9 (*direct intervention*) - Paul's conversion experience was direct and supernatural

Acts 16:6-10 (*indirect intervention*) - Paul's intended missionary plans were providentially altered by the Holy Spirit on two (2) occasions (Proverbs 16:9)

Human Freedom

God is sovereign, and His sovereign control is called "*providence*." However, He has chosen to give humans a *free will*, and He has created a moral universe in which the law of *cause-and-effect* is a reality. Now there are those who contend that the concept of God directly or indirectly *orchestrating* all things destroys any possibility of free will. That is, "*If God is in*

complete control, how can we be truly free in the decisions we make?" In other words, for free will to be meaningful, there must be some things which are *outside* of God's sovereign control. However, it is important to understand that divine providence does not _____ our freedom; rather, it is what enables us to _____ use that freedom. The Bible teaches that Man was created with the ability to make _____ choices and that he is responsible for those choices. The Fall of Man was not a *pre-determined event* in which Adam and Eve were hapless victims of a puppet-master God. On the contrary, Adam and his wife had the ability to choose _____ (with its attendant blessing) or _____ (with its consequent curse). They knew what the result of their decision would be, and they were held _____ (Genesis 3).

In like manner, we sin because we choose to. We can't blame fate! Interestingly, many people who choose to sin are annoyed by the negative consequences of their actions. However, Proverbs 19:3 states that "a man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against God." When a man foolishly wrecks his life, he may insist on blaming God, or perhaps "Fate." Nevertheless, each person will be judged according to their deeds (Revelations 20:13).

God's Sovereignty and Human Freedom Working Together

In a very real sense, we are not free to choose or act apart from God's will. Everything we do and everything we choose is in full accordance to God's will—even our _____ choices (Genesis 50:20).

The bottom line is that God is sovereign in our *choices* and *actions* (Gen. 45:5; Deut. 8:18; Proverbs 21:1). However, the exercise of His sovereignty neither _____ our responsibility as free moral agents, nor does it _____ the reality of our choice. Thus, the doctrine of *divine providence* in relation to *human freedom* can be succinctly summarized this way:

"God in eternity past, in the counsel of His own will, ordained everything that will happen; but in doing so has not removed the freedom of choice from human beings."

It is impossible for us to fully understand the dynamics of a holy God molding and shaping the will of man. Scripture is clear that God knows the _____ (Matt 6:8; Ps.

139:1-4) and has total sovereign control over all things (Colossians 1:16-17; Daniel 4:35). The Bible also says that we must *choose God* or be *eternally separated* from Him. We are held responsible for our actions (Romans 3:19; 6:23; 9:19-21). How these facts work together is *impossible* for a finite mind to comprehend (Romans 11:33-36).

People can take one of two (2) *extremes* in regard to this question. Some emphasize the sovereignty of God to the point that human beings are little more than *robots* simply doing what they have been “*providentially*” programmed to do. Others emphasize free will to the point of God not having *complete control* and/or *knowledge* of all things. *Neither of these positions are biblical.* The truth is that God does not violate our wills by choosing us and redeeming us. Rather, He changes our _____ so that our _____ choose Him (1 John 4:19; John 15:16).

What are we to do then? First, we are to _____ in the Lord, knowing that He is in control (Proverbs 3:5-6). God’s sovereignty is supposed to be a *comfort* to us, not an issue to be concerned about or debate over. Second, we are to live our lives making _____ decisions in accordance with God’s Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17; James 1:5). There will be *no excuses* before God for why we chose to disobey Him. We will have no one to blame but ourselves for our sin. Last but not least, we are to _____ the Lord, praising Him that He is so wonderful, infinite, powerful, full of grace and mercy—and *sovereign*.