THE NEW SHOFAR

I vow and consecrate to God all that is in me: My memory and my actions to God the Father; My understanding and my words to God the Son; My will and my thoughts to God the Holy Spirit. **St Francis de Sales**

TRINITY

The Father sends the Son to save people through the power of the Spirit.

The Trinity is a foundational element of our Christian faith lives and one of the more reflective comments I have found is its description as the *atmosphere of Christian faith and devotion*; the entirety of the Christian life is a return to the Father through the work and person of the Son in the power of the indwelling Spirit. For all of its complexity, the Bible itself offers us insights into the Trinitarian nature of the God who loves us.

The Trinity is the foundation, content, and goal of Christian faith and devotion. In salvation terms, the Father sends the Son to save his people through the power of the Spirit. Likewise, Christians are reconciled to God the Father through the life, death, and resurrection of the Son through the power Spirit, who is our seal and guarantee of our inheritance. The church is the body of the Son which the Father has called into existence by his Spirit to be his holy temple. As such, Christians are to live as members of the Father's family, who are devoted to the Son, in the power of the Spirit.

The Trinity is the atmosphere in which Christian faith and devotion thrives. Christians are engaged to Christ and they look forward to the consummation of their engagement at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. They belong to God's family and they love God's people. They are the temple of the Holy Spirit, who fills the household with the holiness of Christ, in heart, speech, and behaviour. The Trinity is integral to the gospel because the saving power of the Triune God ***is*** the gospel. If the gospel creates Christian faith, then Christian devotion should be as Trinitarian as the gospel on which it rests.

To the Praise of His Glorious Grace (Eph. 1:6).

God comes to us from the Father, through the Son, and by the Spirit. This is the gospel, plain and simple. The gospel is less a list of benefits, than it is the saving work of divine persons. ***The Father is of no one***. He often represents the majesty of the entire Trinity, as he does here, since the whole work of redeeming sinners is *to the praise of his glory* (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). ***The Son is of the Father.*** He is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person (Heb. 1:3). ***The Spirit is of the Father and the Son*** (John 15:26). ***He is of the Father through the Son*** (John 14:26).

Every act of God originates with the Father, is executed by the Son, and is perfected by the Spirit. God created the world by speaking through his eternal Word, the Son, and the Spirit of God hovered over the face of the deep (Gen. 1:1–2; John 1:1–5). The Father sent the Son to become man and the Spirit hovered over Mary's womb, uniting true deity with true humanity (Luke 1:35). All three persons work in everything God does because the one God is Triune.

God does what he does because he is who he is. He saves through his Son and by his Spirit because the Son is eternally of the Father and the Spirit proceeds eternally from

the Father and the Son. God saves from the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit. We bless the Father who has blessed us by choosing us before the foundation of the world in Christ (Eph. 1:3–4). These blessings are spiritual and heavenly. Their purpose is that *we should be holy and blameless before him*. The destination to which he has appointed us is adoption into his family, with all the rights and privileges that come with it in Christ (1:5–6). He does this by redeeming us in Christ's blood, displaying the riches of his grace in the forgiveness of our sins (1:7). Christ united the Father's family, whether in heaven or on earth, revealing the mystery of God's wise counsel so that we might receive our inheritance as we hope in Christ (1:8–12). We can trust that God's plans will not fail because he works all things according to the counsel of his will (1:11). The Spirit ensures that none of these things will be in vain. He brings about faith in the gospel of salvation through "the word of truth." He is the seal that God owns us and he is the guarantee that we will come into our inheritance (1:13–14).

The Triune God creates the Christian family. The Father chose us, the Son redeemed us, and the Spirit is God's seal of approval on us. Do we inhale the fresh air of the gospel as the Triune God gives life to our souls?

For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father (Eph. 2:18)

We return to God by the Spirit, through the Son, to the Father. We are who we are, as Christians, because God does what he does in bringing us back to himself. We are apostates by nature. We were dead in our sins and children of wrath (Eph. 2:1, 3). Adam was exiled from God's presence and we became strangers to God through him (Rom. 5:12–20; Eph. 2:12). We did not know God because we did not know Christ. We come near again through Christ's blood because Christ is our peace (2:13–14; Mic. 5:5). He removes the hostility between God and mankind that spills over into human relationships by killing the enmity and by removing every case of separation (2:15–16).

Christ speaks peace to our hearts when we hear his Word preached (2:17; Rom. 10:14–17). The Spirit seals this word in our hearts so that "in one Spirit" we have access to the Father through faith in Christ (Eph. 2:18). Our glorious Trinitarian gospel finds reflection in a glorious Trinitarian salvation. It takes the work of the whole Trinity to make us "no longer strangers and aliens," but "fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Christ himself being the cornerstone" (Eph. 2:19–20). The Spirit changes us so that Christ becomes lovely to us so that we believe in God through him. In this one Spirit, the Father's election comes to fruition by applying Christ's redemption to us so that we may inherit his Fatherly blessings.

The Triune God ensures that the children come into the household. Do we exhale the fresh air of the gospel as the Spirit gives us breath to come to the Father through Christ?

In him you are being built into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (Eph. 2:22)

God dwells among us in Christ by the Spirit. God's actions, which reflect his being, result in a church. The structure of the church is joined together in Christ so that it may be "*a holy temple to the Lord*." The builder is the Spirit, who uses the teaching of the apostles and prophets as tools to fashion the building. As Christians, we are the living stones with which he builds(1 Pet. 2:5). As individuals, we are temples of the Spirit who

dwells in us (1 Cor. 6:19). Yet the temple is only fully realised in the church (1 Cor. 3:16). God dwells in and shines in us as Christians. Yet God's presence shines most brightly in the church to which every Christian is joined and must be part of. The church is the object of Christ's death (Acts 20:28), it is the temple in which God lives, and it is the location of the Spirit's presence as well as the sphere in which he works.

The Triune God makes the church his home. Do we breathe in his work with our brothers and sisters? Do we share the Christian faith and life with them?

There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in you all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift (Eph. 4:4–7).

We live with God in the Spirit as a church through faith in Christ. Who we are as Christians determines how we live with God's people. We must walk humbly, gently, and patiently with one another in love, "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:2–3). This is the only way we can walk worthy of God's calling (4:1). We cannot do it alone. Our behaviour towards one another is grounded in our relation to the persons of the Trinity. The one body in the one Spirit reflects our common hope and common call (4:4). We are all baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). We are also baptized into "one Lord" Jesus, in whom we share a common faith (Eph. 4:5; Acts 2:38). This is because there is one Triune God and one incarnate Mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5). The Father is above us, but he is also through us and in us, uniting the family in its goals and purposes (Eph 4:6). While Christ has graciously given gifts to each of us (4:7), he did not give them to us for our sakes. When we are more concerned that our gifts are underutilized in the church than we are with serving Christ and his church through them, we have turned Christ's gracious provision into something perverse. As individuals, we reflect the image of God, but it is only through serving in a unified though diverse church that we can reflect the unity and diversity in the Trinity.

The Triune God leads the children how to live together. Do we breathe out his work in us as we serve our brothers and sisters rather than ourselves?

Conclusion: Living to Praise the Triune God

The Father's family is the atmosphere in which his children are devoted to him through his Son and by his Spirit. We know this reality better by its effects than by any definition. Though the Spirit's work is only implied in it, Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14–21 marks the beginning, middle, and end of Trinitarian devotion:

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith—that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

The lines between prayer and doxology are blurry in Trinitarian devotion. We move from prayer to praise and back again. Our focus on the glory of God overflows to the good of others. We pray that all would *know the love of Christ that passes knowledge*, that they and we *may be filled with all the fullness of God*. This is according to *the power at work within us*, which is by the Spirit, who unites us to the Savior. To the praise of God's glorious grace, we come to him through his Son and by his Spirit, so that we may be temples to God in the Spirit and use Christ's gifts to serve the Father of our family as one body in the Spirit. This fuels our prayers as the Spirit of Christian devotion ignites our praise to God.

Some spiritual challenges for Trinity Sunday: We live and move and have our being in God (Acts 17:28). Yet we do ***not*** have a generalised faith in a generic God. As Christians, our highest privilege is knowing a living God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Trinity is fundamental to the message of Ephesians. It should not surprise us that the Trinity permeated Paul's prayers and his praise. ***Does it*** permeate ours? ***Do we live*** in communion with the Triune God, as individuals and together? ***Does our faith*** rest on the Father, through his Son, and by his Spirit? ***Does this make*** a difference in our devotion to God? ***Does it affect*** our understanding of the gospel and our evangelism? ***Does it filter*** into our worship, our service, our gifts, our families, and our work? Paul pulls us on a straight path toward being Trinitarian in fact and not in name only. *For from him, and to him, and through him, are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen!* (Rom. 11:26). The path is from God, to God, and through God in all things, by the Spirit, through the Son, to the Father.

> ***Most Holy Trinity***, Godhead indivisible, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, our first beginning and our last end, You have made us after Your own image and likeness. Grant that all the thoughts of my mind, all the words of my mouth, all the affections of my heart, and all my actions be always conformed to Your holy Will. After having seen You here below in Your manifestations and by faith, may I come at last to see You face to face in the perfect possession of You forever in heaven. **Amen**.