Trinity Seminar Week 5

Lesson #8 A Trinitarian View of "God is Love"

“God is love because God is Trinity.”
Michael Reeves

Now we come to an exhilarating reality about the Trinity. We move beyond the reality of three persons in the one Godhead, to the dynamic reality that these persons are not just static or have a job to do, they are also relating with one another in passionate eternal love. The statement “God is love” in the Gospel of John and First Epistle of John is not a vague description of God’s character, but a deeply relational claim that points toward the *Trinity*. Love, by its very nature, involves relationship in that there is someone who loves, someone who is loved, and the ongoing bond between them. If God were a solitary, unipersonal being, love would only become real once creation existed. But the New Testament presents love as eternal, not something God begins to do, but something God eternally is. This only makes sense if within God’s own being there is an eternal relationship of love.

This is where John 17:24 becomes especially significant. In His prayer, Jesus says, “Father, before the creation of the world you loved me,” revealing that love existed within God prior to anything being made. The Father’s love for the Son is not dependent on creation; it is eternal and foundational. The Gospel portrays this mutual love as shared in the unity of the Spirit, forming a perfect communion of life and affection within the one God. In other words, the Father, Son, and Spirit do not become loving because they relate to the world; rather, the world is created out of the overflow of the love that already exists within the Triune life.

Understanding “God is love” in a Trinitarian sense guards against reducing love to mere sentiment or action. It means that love is grounded in God’s very being, where an eternal exchange of self-giving between the Father, Son, and Spirit is. And that this love is an eternal present reality. Creation and redemption then flow from this reality: God invites humanity into that same communion of love. The incarnation, the cross, and the gift of the Spirit are all expressions of this eternal love reaching outward. *Thus, the declaration that God is love is not just a moral statement; it is a window into the inner life of the Triune God, where love has always existed and always will.*

Dr. Michael Reeves often argues that the doctrine of the *Trinity* reveals God as eternally loving rather than eternally solitary. In *Delighting in the Trinity*, he contrasts the Christian understanding of God with strictly unitarian conceptions of God, including Islam’s doctrine of divine oneness. One of his most cited statements from his amazing book says: “*Single-person gods, having spent eternity alone, are inevitably self-centered beings… Everything changes when it comes to the Father, Son, and Spirit. Here is a God who is not essentially lonely, but who has been loving for all eternity as the Father has loved the Son in the Spirit.”* He argues that the *Trinity* means God is relational and loving in his very being, whereas a strictly solitary conception of God raises different questions about how love existed before creation.

Not only is God love and loving in the immanent trinity, but by redemption we have been gathered into this very love. In John 17:26, the final glorious declaration of Jesus in His prayer to His Father, He prays, "*I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."* Jesus is saying here that he will continue to make the Father known to them in order that two things might manifest. First, that the love that the Father has for the Son would be in them and secondly that He himself would be in them. Jesus' making known His Father is about bringing human beings into the almost unfathomable experience of the very love that the Father has for the Son. How much does the Father love the Son? None could measure it in heaven or earth. And that immeasurable love is now accessible to believers by redemption and the power of the Holy Spirit along with the literal presence of Jesus via the Holy Spirit— "*and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" Romans 5:5.*

Paul proclaims in Romans 8:31-39 that the thing that a believer cannot be separated from is the love of God in Christ! This is the ultimate reward of salvation. Our heaven is literally the immeasurable love of God. So great is this love that in Ephesians 3:18-19 he is praying for the Ephesians believers to have supernatural power together so that they "*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."* This love is so great that it literally takes supernatural power to comprehend it.

Beloved, the love of God is the greatest gift for all of humanity. And this is not mere sentiment. We do not get some kind of side love. What we receive is literally the eternal love shared among the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit. Our gospel comes short if we just think that the main goal is to get us out of hell or judgment and into an ethereal place called heaven. No! The ultimate reward of the gospel is that we now have entered into and will eternally enjoy the trinitarian love of God.

56. What is meant by God is love?
57. Describe how the Trinity is loving among themselves?
58. What was God doing before creation? (John 17:24)
59. Did God create because he was lonely?
60. What does the "love of God" mean for us?
61. Do we get a different love than Jesus receives from the Father?

Lesson #9 Union with the Trinity

“In Jesus Christ humanity has been taken up into fellowship with God.”
Karl Barth

The Gospel of John invites us to see union with Christ not as a distant doctrine but as a lived participation in God’s own life. When Jesus prays in John 17 that the disciples would be “in us,” He is describing a reality where the boundary between knowing God and sharing in His life begins to dissolve. The same love the Father has for the Son is not merely observed by believers; it becomes the atmosphere they live in. This reframes the Christian life from working to get close to God to discovering that in Christ, one has already been brought inside the fellowship of divine presence and love of God. It is less about reaching up to God and more about awakening to the fact that, through Christ, we have been drawn into His communion with His Father.

The Apostle Paul's favorite phrase in this letter is - in Christ. In fact, if you include related expressions such as “in Christ Jesus,” “in the Lord,” “in Him,” and similar union-with-Christ language, the total rises to around 160–200 references. Paul’s language of being “in Christ,” especially in letters like Ephesians and Galatians, deepens this reflection by grounding it in union with Jesus’ own story. To be “in Christ” means His death becomes our death to sin, His resurrection becomes our new life, and His relationship with the Father becomes the context of our identity. This is not abstract theology but rather the basis for a transformed way of living. The Spirit actualizes this process in our hearts, making it personal and experiential, so that believers don’t just believe truths about Christ but begin to live from within His relationship to the Father. The Christian life then becomes participation rather than imitation.

Seen together, John and Paul portray salvation as being caught up into the movement of Trinitarian love, where the Father delights in the Son, the Son shares that delight with those united to Him, and the Spirit makes that shared life real within us. This invites a shift in perspective; instead of seeing faith as primarily about obligation or ethical conformity, it becomes a life of communion that is shaped by love and that precedes and sustains us, resulting in righteous fruit. Union with Christ means that believers are not standing outside the life of God trying to gain access; they are already included, learning to live in the reality of a love that has always existed between the Father and the Son and now, by the Spirit, includes them.

Dr. Thomas F. Torrance frequently emphasized that salvation means being drawn into the communion and love shared by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*“Through Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit, we are taken up into a relationship of intimate communion with the Father in which we may know him as he knows us and love him as he loves us.”* This captures Torrance’s conviction that Christianity is not merely about forgiveness or moral improvement, but about participation in the very life of the Triune God. For

Torrance, union with Christ means believers are graciously included in the Son's relationship with the Father through the Spirit.

So just as the Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son, so we are now included in Christ. And this grace-accomplished union is where we are to abide. 1 Corinthians 1:30 says, "*And because of him (the Father) you are IN Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.* It is the Father through the redemption of Christ and by the Spirit that places us IN Christ. And now IN Him, we have His righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. These are not things we attain to by great faith or works but rather receive by being IN Christ. Our union with Christ is the core of our Christianity and our great inheritance forever.

Lesson #9 Questions:

62. What does salvation do in and for us?

63. What is Paul's favorite phrase in his letters?

64. What does abiding in Christ mean?

65. What is the primary role of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

66. What does the gospel restore that Adam and Eve lost?

67. How do we participate in the love and life of the Trinity?

In your own words describe what union with God is and how it is experienced.