

“Team-Work”

Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15

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If you haven't gotten it by now, today is that holy day we celebrate in the church calendar known as “TRINITY SUNDAY.” It is a concept that ‘binds us together’ as Christian denominations. Catholic or Protestant, one of the key principles that unites believers in “one Lord, one faith, one baptism,” is that of the Holy Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

And despite its status as one of the bedrock principles of our Christian faith, it is likewise one of the most ‘mysterious,’ unfathomable, inexplicable ‘tenets,’ (NOT ‘tennis’) or ‘beliefs,’ of our Christian religion. As some of you may know, you will NOT find a single reference to the word ‘trinity’ in ALL of Scripture. The term is not even mentioned ONCE by Jesus. And yet, from Genesis to Revelation... from the **“Spirit of God hovering over the waters of creation,”** and God declaring **“Let us make man in OUR image”**... to the Apostle John’s speaking of the **“throne of God... Jesus... (and the) Spirit”**... THIS BOOK [BIBLE] is FILLED with trinitarian references to God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. “Elohim” and “Adonai,” used for God in the Old Testament, are plural terms, perhaps foreshadowing a reality not yet fully revealed. And Jesus, in the most singularly significant statement concerning His shared identity as one with the Father and the Spirit, prescribes the manner in which believers are to be identified at the time of their baptism: **“in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”** (Matt. 28:19)

Just HOW can this be, that these three distinct persons are yet ONE? Three words: I DON'T KNOW! That's why they call it a ‘holy mystery.’ But what it says to me is that the God we serve... Father, Son, and Holy Spirit... work together as a TEAM. In the most harmonious, beneficial, and powerful way possible.

It is this sense of working together as a TEAM that struck me as I read Jesus’ words in our passage from John. He spoke of how the **“Spirit of truth”** would only **“speak whatever he hears”** from Father and Son. As well as all that those two have in common: **“All that the Father has is mine.”** Though that term ‘trinity’ is not used, these few verses yet attest to how well the three of them work together for OUR good.

Their collective power enables us to be a part of that ‘team’ and accomplish great things... even in the most trying of situations. And that even tho’ I may not be able to comprehend just

HOW that relationship works between them, I CAN understand how it works for ME! How their intimate, symbiotic relationship (close, cooperative, or interdependent) should be a reminder to me of how I am a *member* of that team, how they are there for me, and how they help me face whatever challenges I have before me. Our Triune God is such an inspiring example of TEAM-WORK... and how they prepare us for the 'TEAM-WORK' set before us to accomplish...

We all know that in our secular world, be it in sports, in business, or as a family, to be successful, to achieve desired goals and rewards, the individual members must work together as a TEAM. It is no different in our lives of faith. As the body of Christ we must cooperate, communicate, and concentrate as a TEAM. And the best example we have is the triune 'TEAM' of Father, Son, and Spirit. Consider some of the different expressions that come in 'threes' that can relate to how this three-person TEAM of the Godhead [F, S, & HS] interacts with us:

Creator – Redeemer – Sustainer: This well-known 'translation' of the Trinity speaks well to the important roles of each. God the Creator, whose very words spoke and all things came into creation. God the Redeemer, who gave the cost of His life to 'redeem' us, to save us, from our sins. God the Sustainer, who encourages, strengthens, and 'motivates' us in our daily lives.

The Scriptures also speak of a God who "**Was – Is – Is to come.**" Our Father 'was' from the very beginning of time. Our Lord Jesus is the One who 'is to come,' "to judge both the quick (living) and the dead." The Holy Spirit 'is' the Comforter promised by Jesus to "**guide us into all truth**" in the here and now.

Keeping in that continuum of TIME, our Triune God is our **Past – Present – Future**. Our Father who has been our help in ages past... A Spirit who is our very present help in trouble... focusing our eyes on Jesus, who came to give us hope and a future. Their collective 'essence' is this: in a world that changes as often as its people's opinions, our One God is the same '**yesterday, today, and tomorrow.**'

And finally, the last two I'll mention in this 'Game of Thrones – Trinity edition,' both come from the Scriptures. In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, he closes with a benediction that has become a staple of many church pastors throughout the years: "**May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.**" (13:14) Paul

speaks of the 3 hallmark qualities of our triune God: Unconditional Love. Unmerited Grace. Unmatched Fellowship.

And lastly, some of the most famous words uttered by Jesus with regards to those who seek the path that leads to that 'stairway to heaven.' In response to Thomas' doubt of knowing how to get there, our Lord says, ***"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me."*** (John 14:6)

Jesus' words were not just about him, but could be related to ALL of His 'TEAM' as well. In the beginning of life on our earth, ***"The Lord God formed man and breathed into his nostrils the breath of LIFE."*** (Gen 1:27) Jesus, in today's passage referred to ***"the Spirit of TRUTH."*** SO, when Jesus speaks of Himself in John 14, he is in truth speaking of all three persons: ***"I AM... (WE ARE)... the way, the truth, and the life."***

So, here we have considered how Father, Son, and Spirit are living examples of how to BE a model of 'TEAM-WORK.' How do they help us to DO our 'TEAM-WORK'... the 'work' of our 'team,' called FPC-Welsh/LC? In the Roman's passage, Paul also refers to the Trinity *without* using the word: ***"the love of God... the grace of Jesus Christ... the outpouring of the Holy Spirit."*** By virtue of our having been 'justified'... "regarded as righteous, (and) worthy of salvation"... we are given two 'assignments,' two 'drills,' if you will, to participate in as part of our 'team's work.' And both require us to 'BOAST!' Which is not a word that most of you would readily associate with yourself. But rather than the 'prideful' definition, I prefer "glory" or "rejoice." Or, even better, another synonym is "triumph."

One of those commands is that we are to ***"boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God."*** (Rom. 5:2) As part of our 'team work' or 'objectives,' we are to REJOICE, to take great JOY, in our HOPE of SHARING the GLORY of GOD. And I am thinking we might just have another 'double entendre' here. The HOPE that by FAITH we have to one day personally 'SHARE' in God's Glory in Heaven. With all of those who have been 'justified' along with us. A second meaning, however, could be that we are to be joyful in our hope to share the glory of God with one another! This gift of grace we have been given, like love itself, is only good if we pass it along; our 'triumph' must lead to OTHERS' 'triumph!'

The other 'team-work' we are called to do is to **"boast of our sufferings."** Say WHAT? OK, even if we use one of our synonyms, 'rejoice,' or 'glory' ... just how are we to take such 'JOY' in our 'SUFFERINGS?!' Well, let's go back to that TRINITY again, and look at the next three 'products' of our suffering...

First, Paul says that **"suffering produces ENDURANCE."** (Rom 5:3) As we strive to endure suffering, whose example might we consider? Hmm... how about the second person of the Trinity, **Jesus**. In the words of Hebrews, **"Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter (finisher) of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him ENDURED the cross..."** (Heb. 12:2) Do you want your own trials and tribulations to seem lighter? Need the strength to carry on? Consider the burdens that Jesus carried...

Then we read that **"endurance produces CHARACTER."** (Rom 5:4) As great as an example as Jesus left for us in 'enduring' the suffering that he did, we still need that 'ever-present help in trouble.' The **Holy Spirit** that helps kindle in us a fire of Godly character. Character in the 'fruit' of God's work within you. As Paul wrote to the church in Galatia, **"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."** (5:22) All of these relate to the 'character' we display through our 'endurance'... with the help of our 'teammate,' the Holy Spirit.

And finally, **"Character produces hope."** (Rom. 5:4) The endurance of Christ... the character of the Spirit... leads us to HOPE in God the **Father**. In the words of the Psalmist David, **"We put our hope in the Lord. He is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. ²² Let your unfailing love surround us, Lord, for our hope is in you alone."** (Psalm 33:20-22) HOPE in the Lord your God. ALONE. TRUST in His holy name. Because his 'unfailing love surrounds' you. These words of the Psalmist David bring us full circle back to Romans: **"Hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."** (Rom. 5:5)

In closing, as I thought about today's 'keyword', 'TEAM-WORK'... and how it helps us to accomplish God's purposes in our lives... our 'TEAM-WORK'... I couldn't help but think about one of our youngest daughter's favorite expressions: **"Teamwork helps make the DREAM work."** And as those words 'dream' and 'team' swirled around in my head, I thought about a different sort of

team: the 1992 Olympic men's basketball team, comprised of a historic array of NBA All-Stars, allowed to play for the first time; including names like Jordan, Pippen, Malone, Magic Johnson, Larry Bird, Barkley and Laetner... the latter the only college player selected, narrowly edging out a name you will likely recognize... a guy by the name of Shaquille O'Neal. This 'Dream Team' beat their opponents by an average of 44 pts. per game, on the way to an undefeated gold medal.

I mention this group to point out that their success was not only because of their sheer talent... which was considerable... but because they were able to blend all of their incredible abilities into a cohesive group, utilizing the varied talents of each one of these superstars. *"Teamwork made the Dream Work."*

You and I get the opportunity to 'lace 'em up' with our own 'dream team' each and every day. A group of superstars that blend all of their incredible abilities into one cohesive group. One that we should BOAST about. Much more than any 'talkin' smack' for a sports team. But a 'team' that will lead us to 'triumph' in the most important game of all... LIFE. As we follow the lead of our Divine 'Dream Team'... Father, Son, and Holy Spirit... we KNOW that our 'Teamwork WILL make the dream work.' Our dream... our vision... our HOPE... in the life of the world to come.

CHARGE: May the GRACE of Christ Jesus grant you PEACE; may the Holy Spirit GUIDE you into all TRUTH; and may the LOVE of God fill your heart so that you may find HOPE in every circumstance of this life, and give GLORY to God.

BENEDICTION PRAYER: "Help us, O Lord, to live this day, and every day, in patient endurance, and to stand firm in the hope that comes only from God; that others may see the glory of God in us, made known in Jesus Christ our Lord."