

Two weeks ago, our notes centered on Christ's omnipotent hand. As John 3:35 says – "All things have been given over into Christ's hand." Consider the size and power of that very hand by which Christ holds onto us and orders our steps. There is no limit to what His hand can do for our good as His people. In John 10:27-33 Christ declares that He and the Father are One and that His sheep are secure in the Father's and Son's strong, divine grip on their lives. This week will continue in this theme of Christ's Divine power to hold us in His grip.

Monday: Read John 3:31-36; John 20:22-23 & Psalm 133

The Spirit's Touch

Because Christ is LORD of the Spirit, possessing that Spirit "without limit," (John 3:34) He is able to pour out all the Spirit's influences and effective power for our salvation. Because He is absolutely equal in essence, power and glory with the Father, He is LORD of the Spirit! For example, in John 20:22-23, Christ breathes on His Apostles as a prelude to the Day of Pentecost, giving them the authority to declare forgiveness of sins through the Gospel and to shut the Kingdom of God to those who refuse to heed their message. In Psalm 133 we behold the beautiful image of the Spirit (pictured in the oil flowing) refreshing, blessing, and empowering the Church to work as One to bless the world. Just as Jesus was anointed by the Spirit without limit (even as the High Priest Aaron was anointed) the anointing, the influences, and the graces of the Spirit flow down from Him as our Head onto the body, the Church.

Meditate and Pray: LORD Jesus, thank you that you are LORD of the Spirit. Please be pleased to pour Him out upon our churches, that ears might be quickened, eyes opened, and wills conformed to your Father's saving plan. Give us divine unity of purpose, deep forgiveness for others, and eternal life through your generous Spirit.

Tues/Weds/Thurs: Read John 3:31-36 & John 10:27-39

Trinitarian Relationships

In John 10, the Jews take up stones to execute Jesus – not because of His many undeniable miracles – but because of His claim to be God (John 10:33). Jesus pushes back on their refusal to bow the knee to His divinity by saying (John 10:38) that the miracles which He performs are meant to lead men to know and understand that, "The Father is in Me and I in the Father." What a stupendous claim! Christ says that He contains within Himself all that the Father is in His attributes, His Divine essence, His fullness, and His power to save sinners. Complete equality with the Father is what He claims here. This is why His grip on our lives is just as strong as His Father's grip – because He and the Father are one.

We must be careful and accurate here as we deal with this profound mystery of the Trinity. The church father Augustine can help us here, explaining how Father, Son and Holy Spirit are distinct, triune Persons:

According to Augustine, real distinctions exist among the divine persons that are grounded in relations of origin. Because the Father has *begotten* the Son, the Father is not the Son. Because the Son is *begotten* by the Father, the Son is not the Father. Similarly, because the Spirit *proceeds* from the Father and the Son, the Spirit is distinct from the Father and the Son.

Keith E. Johnson *Trinitarian Agency and the Eternal Subordination of the Son: An Augustinian Perspective, Themelios, Volume 36, issue 1*

At the same time, we can add: Because the Son has the Spirit without limit (John 3:34), this means that by that Holy Spirit He possesses all the immensity of nature, essence and power that is contained in the Father (John

10:38). Though the Son is “sent by the Father,” (a constant description of Christ in John’s Gospel) this doesn’t mean the Son is under the Father in glory, power or essence.

Johnson confirms this by quoting Augustine further:

If however the reason why the Son is said to have been sent by the Father is simply that the one is the Father and the other the Son, then there is nothing at all to stop us believing that the Son is equal to the Father and consubstantial and co-eternal, and yet that the Son is sent by the Father. Not because one is greater and the other less, but because one is the Father and the other the Son; one is the begetter, the other begotten; the first is the one from whom the sent one is; the other is the one who is from the sender.

Ibid Volume IV.27, 172

May God give us grace to hold onto both sides of this proof for both the individuality within the Trinity and the oneness of the Triune God. As Jesus so clearly sums up this teaching, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). Notice especially that in speaking about His existence along with the Father in verse 30, Jesus uses the first person plural of the verb to be, i.e., “The Father and I, we are one.” That shows the Father and Son are two real persons. There is not one God who *sometimes appears as the Father, sometime appears as the Son and sometimes appears as the Spirit*. There are three, eternally equal persons in God.

There have been recent books, such as *The Shack*, by William Young, which speak about God as sometimes in the mode of the Father, sometimes in the mode of the Son and sometimes in the mode of the Spirit. The modern name for this heresy is “modalism.” Its first proponent was an early church figure names Sabellius. One blog post from a Lutheran writer gets this right:

The Shack flat-out contains a heresy called modalism, which can be traced back all the way to the 3rd century. The Trinity is a miraculous and tricky concept. The Bible teaches that there is one God, but three separate and distinct persons. Modalism teaches that there is one God who is one person but has different modes. Modalism is evident in *The Shack* when God the Father and the Holy Spirit show their scars from the wounds Jesus received on the cross. Let’s be clear: God the Father and the Holy Spirit were not crucified; only Jesus was crucified. Only Jesus died. God the Father did forsake His Son because God cannot tolerate sin, and Jesus was carrying the sins of the world on the cross. Jesus was forsaken so that we would not be forsaken.

Broken Quiet blogpost <https://brokenquiet.wordpress.com>

Meditate and Pray: Give thanks that Christ as a real person, distinct from the Father and the Spirit, was able to pay the price for our sins in our nature because *as the eternal Son of God*, He took on real flesh in order to save us. He is truly our Second Adam. Sing about Him as accomplishing all that we in Adam failed to do, using this hymn by Isaac Watts: (# 441 Trinity Hymnal). Note especially the highlighted verses, which are not in our hymnal but which emphasize all that Christ as the God-Man and Second Adam has achieved for our salvation:

Jesus shall reign where’er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

To Him shall endless prayer be made,
And praises throng to crown His head;
His name like sweet perfume shall rise
With every morning sacrifice.

Bible Reading Notes The Nature of the Trinity
People and realms of every tongue
Dwell on His love with sweetest song;
And infant voices shall proclaim
Their early blessings on His name.

Where He displays His healing power,
Death and the curse are known no more:
**In Him the tribes of Adam boast
More blessings than their father lost.**

Pastor Carl Durham

Blessings abound where'er He reigns;
The prisoner leaps to lose his chains;
The weary find eternal rest,
And all the sons of want are blest.

10/20/24

Let every creature rise and bring
Peculiar honors to our king;
Angels descend with songs again,
And earth repeat the loud amen.

Friday: Read John 10:27-39

The Only Begotten Son of God

In saying, "I and the Father are One" (John 10:30), Christ refutes the early heretic Arius, who taught that Christ had a beginning.

(Arius claimed that Christ) was generated by the Father, which in the parlance of Arius was simply equivalent to saying that He was created. He was created out of nothing before the world was called into being, and for that very reason was not eternal nor of the divine essence.

Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines*

If this false teaching were true, Christ could not have held up the human nature of Christ in His suffering. Without being truly and fully the uncreated God, eternally begotten and not created, Christ would not have the full divine nature to make verses like 2 Corinthians 5:19 a reality: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself." How the Apostle plead that sinners must be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20) when Christ does not truly represent God in the atonement? How could any mere creaturely savior bridge the infinite gap between Heaven and earth?

Meditate and Pray: Give thanks that Christ is truly the God-Man. He was from eternity with the Father as God, was incarnate by the Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary, and was made man. Meditate on the fuller explanation of the nature of the Son in this ancient creed.

I believe in one God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, And of all things visible and invisible: And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.

From the Nicene Creed, AD 325

Sat/Sun: Read John 1:1-14**The Word Became Flesh**

We cannot omit consideration of John 1, since this week's notes have focused on that Gospel's emphasis on Christ's Divine power to hold us in His grip.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1: 14).

What do we mean when we say that the Word was made flesh?

- 1) This Word that became flesh *was* the eternal Word (vs. 1), with no beginning of His own; when other things began, He – *was*.
- 2) This Word was “*with God.*” The power that fulfils God's purposes as the Word stands in eternal relation to God, in active fellowship in the Trinity as a distinct, divine, personal being.
- 3) This Word “*was God.*” Here is the Word's *deity*. Though distinct from the Father, He is not a creature. He is, in Himself, just as divine as the Father.
- 4) This Word made all things (vs. 3). He was the Father's agent in every act of making that the Father has ever performed. All that was made was made through Him.
- 5) “In Him *was life.*” The Word animates all parts of the creation. There is no life in the realm of created things except in and through Him.
- 6) This all-animating life in the Word of God is also the “*light of men*” (vs. 4). In giving life, He gives light too. Here is the Word revealing.
- 7) This Word “*became flesh*” (vs.14). The baby in the manger was none other than the eternal Word of God.
- 8) This Word made flesh is revealed in His identity in all His words, works and wisdom as *God's Son* (vs. 14).

Thus John establishes the point at which he was aiming throughout. He has now made it clear what he means by calling Jesus the Son of God. The Son of God is the Word of God; we see what the Word is; well, that is what the Son is. Such is the Prologue's message in John 1.

All notes in today's entry from J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*

Meditate and Pray: Our God in Heaven, you “build your upper chambers in the heavens, you found the vault of your presence upon the earth” (Amos 9:6). This is why you sent your Son down to be incarnate in human flesh, to fulfill your desire that God would again dwell on earth among His people. Thank you for our Second Adam, who is the Last Adam. He has brought heaven down and restored the paradise of fellowship with God on earth as it is in heaven. Praise be to His name. Amen.