

# OCCASIONAL NOTES

Strangers Rest Evangelical Church

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**"The Secret *things belong* unto the Lord, our God: but those *things which are revealed belong* unto us and to our children for ever, that *we may do all the words of this law*"**

## Deuteronomy 29:29

By Mark Mullins

In the past two editions of these Occasional Notes we have examined the glorious doctrine of the Trinity and looked at some of the attacks that have been made over the centuries which have been revived in our day.

It is easy for us to forget that the nature and character of God comes through the revelation of the Scriptures. Creation itself is very limited in what it reveals about the Godhead. Romans 1:20 informs us that creation reveals two aspects of God's character and attributes: his eternal power and Godhead. In other words, there is an eternal power that made the world and this eternal power is not some blind force or pantheistic spirit of nature but the power of the living God. It tells us about His glory, wisdom and that He is a God to be worshipped.

The Bible takes us further. It speaks of God as one (Deuteronomy 6:4) and yet three persons (1 John 5:7 and Matthew 28:19). It speaks of God as Spirit (John 4:24) who does not therefore have body parts (Luke 24:39). He is a pure Spirit (Habbakuk 1:13) who is infinite, eternal, omniscient (Proverbs 15:3), omnipotent (Proverbs 15:3) and omnipresent (Hebrews 13:5).

Up until recently it has been the orthodox evangelical position not to enquire into the inner life of the Trinity, into the relationships between each person of the Trinity. The extent of our knowledge concerns only their relations, namely that the Father is eternal and unbegotten, the Son is eternally begotten of the Father and the Holy

Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son.



The reason for not enquiring into the inner life of God is that Scripture does not reveal to us these mysteries. As soon as we begin to speculate or to reflect qualities back from the creature to the creator we end up with a god in man's image. In Deuteronomy 29:29 we read that the secret things belong to the Lord our God. Of those secret things, the great 18<sup>th</sup> Century theologian, John Gill includes the inner life of the Trinity:

"... there are many things relating to God himself, which remain secret with him; notwithstanding the revelation he has made of himself; **for not only some of his perfections, as eternity, immensity, &c. are beyond our comprehension; but the mode of subsistence of the three divine Persons in the Godhead, the paternity of the one, the generation of the other, and the procession of the Spirit from them both...**"

We are not told how the three persons of the Trinity eternally communicate with each other within the inner life of the Trinity and so it is not open to us to speculate because to do so risks falling into the errors of subordinationism or tritheism. In the last edition of the Occasional

Notes the focus was on the error of the eternal functional subordination of the Son within the inner life of the Trinity. In this edition, the focus is on the error of the social trinity where the Trinity is described as a community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The critique offered is not by any means exhaustive.



Dr Michael Reeves is an increasingly popular author and speaker who has written and spoken widely on the Trinity. He is currently President and

Head of Theology of Union School of Theology where he teaches in the areas of systematic and historical theology and also on preaching and spiritual formation. He is a local church minister, Director of the European Theologians Network. Previously he was Head of Theology for UCCF and an associate minister at All Souls Church, Langham Place in London.

## Trinity from Creation?

Mike Reeves, teaches that the Bible likens the Trinity to marriage. This is taken from Genesis 1:26-27:-

And God said, let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness ... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.



He goes on to say this in *The Good God* at location 440 (Kindle) and also in his book *Delighting in the Trinity* at page 35:

“There is something about the relationship and difference between the man and the woman, Adam and Eve, that images the being of

God – something we saw the apostle Paul pick up on in 1 Corinthians 11:3. Eve is a person quite distinct from Adam, and yet

she has all her life and being from Adam. She comes from his side, is bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh, and is one with him in the flesh (Genesis 2:21–4). Far better than leaves, eggs and liquids, that reflects a personal God, a Son who is distinct from his Father, and yet who is of the very being of the Father, and who is eternally one with him in the Spirit.”

Dr Reeves is wrong to imply that the relationship between Adam and Eve represents the relationship between the Son and the Father. Note the reason the woman was made was to be a help-mate to the man. God has no need of a helpmate!

First of all, it is an individual human being that is made in the image of God – not just married couples. A man or a woman is complete without being married! We know this from Genesis 9:6:-

Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

This is confirmed in James 3:9:-

Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

Turning to Ephesians 5 we find the correct biblical analogy of marriage which is to the relationship between Christ and his church (verses 22-23):

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. **23** For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

The dangers of making the marriage relationship a picture of the Trinity include the following:

1. While man and woman are made one by the marriage act they still remain two separate human beings. It is true that both share the same human nature and that they are joined together in the eyes of God. However, they are separate instantiations of that nature, and each still possesses independent wills, whereas there is only one will in God. We see that very obviously in the history of the fall of man. Eve was the first deceived. Her decision to eat the forbidden fruit was entirely independent of Adam's decision.

2. The biblical teaching is that a wife should obey her husband for the very reason that they are **not** equal in power and authority. Indeed the Bible teaches that a woman is the weaker vessel (1 Peter 3:7) and therefore in need of greater honour. Yet, each person of the Trinity is equal in power and authority because each is Jehovah;
3. 1 Corinthians 11:3 teaches that God is the Head of Christ as touching his manhood but not touching the Godhead where he is equal with God. A woman, being in submission to her husband is to obey him. This is not the case for members of the Trinity who are equal and one with each other.
4. If we take marriage as a picture of the Trinity then we end up with a god in man's image when, as our title verse tells us, "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One." God has no equal. He cannot be known by studying mankind.
5. In Deuteronomy 4 the Lord expressly forbade the people of Israel from making any image of a created being to resemble God including human beings despite them being made in His image:

Verses 15-16:- "Therefore watch yourselves very carefully. Since you saw no form on the day that the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, 16 beware lest you act corruptly by making a carved image for yourselves, in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female ..."

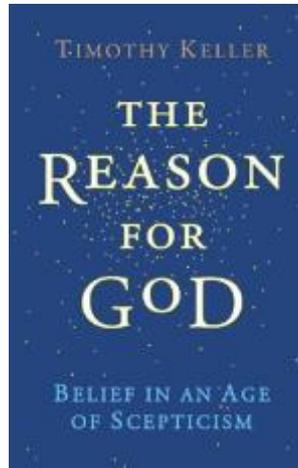
### Tim Keller and the Dance

Michael Reeves is not alone in using human analogies to represent the inner life of the Trinity.



Dr Tim Keller, a well known author, speaker and founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan, likens the Trinity to a dance in *Reason for God*:

"The inner life of the triune God, however, is utterly different. The life of the Trinity is characterized not by self-centredness but by mutually self-giving love. When we delight and serve someone else, we enter into a dynamic orbit around him or her, we centre on the interests and desires of the other. That creates a dance, particularly if there are three persons, each of whom moves around the other two.



So it is, the Bible tells us. Each of the divine persons centres upon the others. None demands that the others revolve around him. Each voluntarily circles the other two, pouring love, delight and adoration into them. Each person of the Trinity loves, adores,

defers to and rejoices in the others. That creates a dynamic, pulsating dance of joy and love. The early leaders of the Greek church had a word for this – *perichoresis*. Notice the root of our word 'choreograph' within it. It means literally to 'dance or flow around'."

We should note that to 'dance or flow around' is a mistranslation of perichoresis which is correctly translated as co-inherence or interpenetration.

### One Will in God

Both these images of the Trinity have an additional problem because they imply independent wills in each person of the Trinity yet the Bible only speaks of one will in God because the will is part of the being or nature of God. A few examples demonstrate this:

1. It is God's will that all will be saved. 1 Timothy 2:3-4:- "For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of **God our Saviour**; 4 **Who will have all men to be saved**, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."
2. In Romans 12:2, Paul described how believers are to find God's will: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind,

that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

3. Paul wrote about being an apostle according to the will of God in Ephesians 1:1:- “Paul, **an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God**, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.”

Tim Keller speaks of three people rotating round each other and apparently deferring to each other. As soon as we speak of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit having independent roles within the Inner Life of the Godhead we are implying that each has an independent will which is tritheism. Yet God is one (Deuteronomy 6:4) as Tim Keller points out himself at page 6 of *King’s Cross* where he states: “God is not more fundamentally one than he is three and He is not more fundamentally three than He is one”. It is a pity that he cannot see the contradiction that his dance analogy represents to orthodoxy.

The only attempt to justify this unorthodox approach to the Trinity can be found in *King’s Cross* (page 6):-



“According to the Bible, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit glorify one another. Jesus says in his prayer recorded in John’s Gospel: “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me

in your presence with the glory that I had with you before the world began” (John 17:4-5). Each person of the Trinity glorifies the other. It’s a dance...”

Tim Keller also refers to the Lord’s baptism (Mark 1:9-11) (page 5) as well as to the high priestly prayer in John 17 (mentioned above). However, none of these passages support the idea of a dance.

Furthermore, the pattern of order in the Bible is from the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit:

Matthew 28:19:- Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;

John 1:14, 18:- And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth....  
**18** No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

John 15:26:- But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me;

1 Corinthians 12:4-6:- Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

2 Corinthians 13:14:- The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all

By obscuring all into the picture of a dance, Tim Keller confounds the Godhead by removing the distinctions of each person of the Godhead. He is replacing substance with love so that love becomes the basis of unity rather than that all three Persons are of one substance.

### Love at the Centre of the Trinity?

Mike Reeves falls into the same error. He sees God as a community of love (Talk 4: Trinity in Salvation at 00:34:15<sup>1</sup>) where he says:

Everything else must fall into place with that. So God’s being wrathful isn’t something that’s a flipside or just another attribute you can pull on whenever you want.” (Theologynetwork.org: Mike Reeves Trinity 4 at 00:37:15).

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theologynetwork.org/christian-beliefs/doctrine-of-god/trinity-4--trinity-in-salvation.htm>

He goes on:

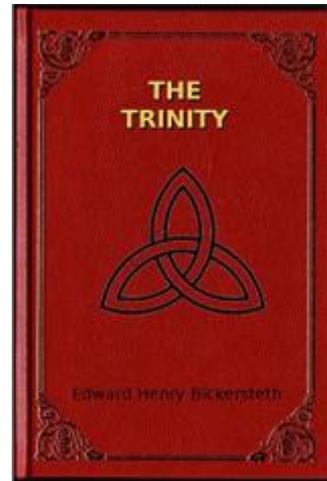
“It's not that we have all these different characteristics all on an even playing field so there's love, there's mercy, there's infinity, there's wrath. It's not like that. Love of the other is central to his being. Everything else must fall into place with that. So God's being wrathful isn't a flip-side or just another attribute He can pull on whenever He wants. His wrath is an aspect of His love. He will judge what goes against His loving plans. He will remove it. He is not eternally wrathful. He is eternally loving and mercy is a natural expression of that in fallen time and history. So see what this God is like. The God of whom love for the other is central to His being.”

Putting love in the centre of God's being invites the danger of eclipsing His other attributes. It is significant that in the Old Testament it is God's holiness that is the central attribute that is displayed in his appearance of Moses in the burning bush in Exodus 3 and to Isaiah in his vision in Isaiah 6. His love must, therefore, be seen in the context of his holiness for it is a holy love. His love must also be seen in the context of his justice and his hatred of evil. Otherwise there is a danger that man will not appreciate the gravity of his sin and will therefore not repent but assume that God in his great love will accept him as he is with the consequent danger that the person's lifestyle is not changed. Yet the Bible speaks of “serving God with reverence and godly fear” (Hebrews 12:28).



Edward Bickersteth (the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Anglican Bishop of Exeter) had this warning to those who elevate God's love above his other attributes when he addressed those who denied eternal condemnation in his highly recommended book, *The Trinity*.

Further, do you say, God is love, and will not visit with eternal condemnation the creatures of his hand? My friends, you are making to yourselves a God of your own imagination, a God of mercy and compassion only, but without holy jealousy and righteousness. Such a one is not the



God of creation, or of providence, or of the Bible. He is not the God of creation; for even there, amid the abounding evidence of his goodness, there are things which tell of his severity; there is not only the sunshine, and

the summer. And the dew, and the calm, but also the terrible darkness, and the wintry blast, and the storm. And the volcano. Such a one is not the God of permissive providence. For there is not only the happy home, and prattling childhood, and the mart of peaceful merchandise, and the honorable senate, but also the chamber of suffering, and the creeping infirmities of age, and the wail of oppression, and the battle-field strewn with corpses. Nor is such a one the God of the Bible: God is love indeed-but love embraces all his attributes, not mercy only, but righteousness likewise: “for love is strong as death, jealousy is hard as the grave, the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.” Oh, surely not in vain was [Song of Solomon 8:6] the cry of the gospel herald, “Flee from the wrath to [Matthew 3:7] come.” Not in vain the warning of Jesus Christ, “If you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins.” [John 8:24] Not in vain the awakening question of Peter, “What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” [1 Peter 4:17].

Neither Mike Reeves nor Tim Keller deny the eternal condemnation of the sinner although Tim

Keller's view is not orthodox<sup>2</sup>. However by placing such an emphasis on love the wrath of God is downplayed to such an extent that it seems to have little place in their understanding of God.

## The Two Natures of Christ

Neither Mike Reeves nor Tim Keller distinguish between the two natures of Christ. Therefore any reference to the Father by the Son when he was on earth is taken to be the Son in His divine nature communicating with the Father in His divine nature rather than the Lord Jesus, as both divine and human (perfectly united together into the one person) communicating as the God-man in his manhood with his heavenly Father. At page 218-219 of *The Reason for God*, Tim Keller writes:

Why did Jesus die for us? What was Jesus getting out of it? Remember, he already had a community of joy, glory and love. He didn't need us. So what benefit did he derive from this? Not a thing. And that means that when he came into the world and died on the cross to deal with our sins, he was circling and serving us. 'I have given them the glory that you gave me' (John 17). He began to do with us what he had been doing with the Father and the Spirit from all eternity. He centres upon us, loving us without benefit to himself.

We must not speculate about what the Lord Jesus, as God, does in eternity. Scripture is silent about it. What Tim Keller has done is to reflect back into the inner life of the Trinity the life of service that the Lord Jesus performed on earth as the God-man. Furthermore the idea that the Lord Jesus centres on us wrongly suggests that it is man who is at the centre of the universe instead of God. It leads to a man-centered God instead of a God-centred man!

## Reflecting Back into the Immanence

Mike Reeves does something similar to Tim Keller in Talk 3 of *Delighting in the Trinity*<sup>3</sup> when he says:

[00:01:51] Just see what is going on here in John 17. We've got the Son of God

speaking to God His Father or perhaps better, here is God the Son speaking to God the Father so here God speaks to God. We are eavesdropping on a conversation within the Trinity. Amazingly, the conversation is about us. Now, how do you get your head around that, a conversation within the Trinity, one Person speaking to another?

Mike Reeves is mistaken in saying that we are eavesdropping on a conversation. This is not a conversation between two persons of the Godhead but a prayer by the God-man to His Heavenly Father. By suggesting that this is a conversation within the Trinity the impression is given that we are looking behind the veil of secrecy and looking into the inner life of God where a two-way conversation takes place. However, prayer by its nature is quite different consisting as it does of petitions by the lesser to the greater – in this case the God man in his manhood to His Heavenly Father.

A little later in the same talk (00:13:59) Mike Reeves says that salvation is being brought into the Trinity, into that fellowship. However, it is misleading to speak of being brought into fellowship with the Trinity because it implies that we join a community of three Persons sharing in their eternal communion. After all that is how he defines God: "Three persons loving one another".<sup>4</sup> Mike Reeves is confusing the roles of the three Persons of the Trinity in their joint work of salvation with their eternal internal relationships.

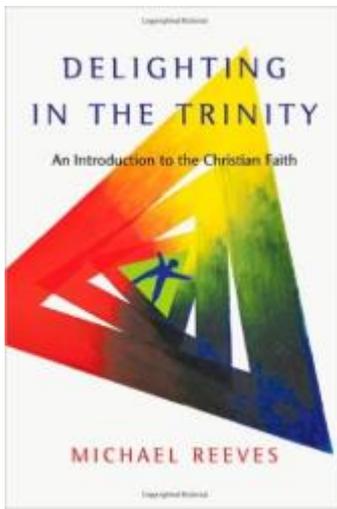
## Social Trinity

Mike Reeves, in common with other Social Trinitarians, sees the harmony of the Trinity as a blueprint for world peace. In his book, *Delighting in the Trinity*, he writes at page 104:

<sup>2</sup> Tim Keller teaches that people condemn themselves to hell and that God does not send them there. He erroneously describes the traditional doctrine as a travesty and goes on to claim that no one asks to leave hell and that men make their own hell (see *Engaging with Keller* edited by Iain D Campbell and William M Schweitzer, chapter 2)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theologynetwork.org/christian-beliefs/doctrine-of-god/getting-stuck-in/enjoying-the-trinity-3--this-changes-everything.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.theologynetwork.org/christian-beliefs/doctrine-of-god/getting-stuck-in/enjoying-the-trinity-3--this-changes-everything.htm>



“So it is not just that the Father, Son and Spirit call us into fellowship with themselves; they share their heavenly harmony that there might be harmony on earth, that people of different genders, languages, hobbies and gifts might be

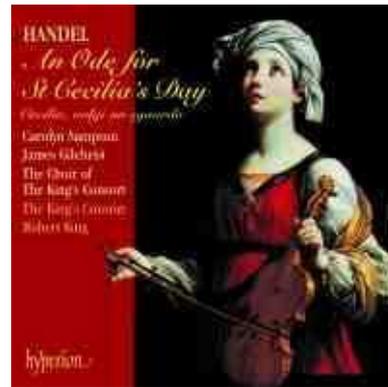
one in peace and love ... And that is what the family of God—by its very existence—makes known to the world: that the God of harmony is the hope for world peace: that He can and will unite enemies, rivals and strangers into one loving family under his fatherly care.”

However, this is also misleading. It is true that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This peace with God brings us into peace with other true believers. But peace with God means enmity with the world. So the Lord Jesus warned that he did not come to bring peace but a sword (Matthew 10:34). The implication of Mike Reeves’s teaching is that the internal relationship within the Trinity gives us a blueprint. But that is not true because we are not given to know about such sacred mysteries.

Mike Reeves is more explicit at page 59 where he speaks of the heavenly harmony of Father, Son and Holy Spirit being the blueprint for all created harmony:

It is from the heavenly harmony of Father, Son and Spirit that this universal frame of the cosmos – and all created harmony – comes. To hear a tuneful harmony can be one of the most intoxicatingly beautiful experiences. And no wonder: as in heaven, so on earth. The Father, Son and Spirit have always been in delicious harmony, and thus they create a world where harmonies – distinct beings, persons or notes working in

unity – are good, mirroring the very being of the triune God.



The problem with this approach is that it leads to reflecting back into the immanence of the Trinity what we see in creation so the harmony we see in music is said to be an illustration of the

harmony of the Trinity (Mike Reeves has a special fondness for Handel’s composition of John Dryden’s “Song for St Celia’s Day”).

At page 106 of *Delighting in the Trinity*, Mike Reeves suggests that the motivation for sending the Son was that “the Father so enjoyed loving the Son that he wanted his love to be in others” ... “The mission comes from the overflow of love from the uncontainable enjoyment of the fellowship”. However, the love that the Father has for the Son in eternity is a *necessary* love by definition. Yet the love for us is a *voluntary* love just as the creation is a voluntary act of the Trinity that does not arise out of the necessary love that exists within the Trinity. Thus, the orthodox view is that the love spoken about in John 17 is the Father’s voluntary love for His Son as the mediator rather than the Father’s eternal and necessary love for His Son within the immanence of the Trinity. Thus, the love that the Father has for the Son before the foundation of the world is described by John Gill as the Father’s early love for **His Son as the mediator**.

Mike Reeves is in danger of confusing justification with sanctification when he expands on the idea that we can adopt for ourselves the Father’s commendation of His Son at the Lord Jesus’s baptism – “This is my Son in whom I am well pleased”. This is what he said in *Enjoying the Trinity* talk 3:<sup>5</sup>

The Spirit, Jesus tells us back in John 16, takes what is mine and declares it to you. That's what the Spirit does so what was

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.theologynetwork.org/christian-beliefs/doctrine-of-god/getting-stuck-in/enjoying-the-trinity-3--this-changes-everything.htm>

declared to the Son, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased [00:11:45] that is now declared to us through the Spirit for the Spirit that rested on the Son when those great words were heard at his baptism, that same spirit now rests on us and so I stress to you I'm rubbish. I with that spirit resting on me now hear those words from heaven, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased so, friends how is your relationship with God today? If you think, oh, to be really honest, not great, I just haven't been doing very well recently. What? Not doing very well recently? No one's ever going to be accepted by God by doing very well. That's irrelevant, absolutely irrelevant. Have you trusted Jesus? [00:13:11] Have you been united to Jesus? If so, how is your relationship with God today? This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. If your heart is saying something different to you, your heart is lying to you. Trust the Gospel.

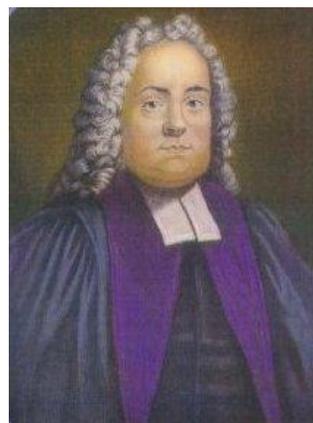
It is true that in Christ, God "is pleased with all that are in him, and are united to him by faith" (see Matthew Henry on Matthew 3:17) and that this is the position for every believer who has repented and trusted in Christ for their justification.

The difficulty is that our fellowship with God is affected by our conduct as Christians even though positionally we are loved in Christ and this is something that Mike Reeves glosses over. The Lord Jesus had the Spirit without measure (John 3:34) yet we are instructed to be filled with the Spirit and are warned not to grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). A disobedient Christian cannot expect the same fellowship with the Father as a Christian who is living an obedient sanctified life, let alone the same as the Son who lived a *perfect* life. The Bible is clear that without holiness we shall not see the Lord (Hebrews 12:4). Furthermore, not all prayer is answered but only "the effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous which availeth much" (James 5:16). Finally, if our hearts condemn us 1 John 3:20-21 warns us that God is greater than our hearts and knows all things. John goes on to say that we only have confidence with God when our hearts do not condemn us

(supported by Romans 2:15 which speaks of the conscience accusing and excusing the gentile) which is the opposite to what Mike Reeves taught in this talk to students.

## Conclusion

When the Ark of the Covenant was returned to Israel after its capture by the Philistines at the end of Eli's life, the men of Bethshemesh made the fatal mistake of looking into the ark of the Lord which brought terrible judgement on the people (1 Samuel 6:19). We would do well to heed the warning given by the great Puritan commentator, Matthew Henry, on this verse when he wrote:



Note, It is a great affront to God for vain men to pry into and meddle with the secret things which belong not to them, (Deuteronomy 29:29; Colossians 2:18). We were all ruined by an

ambition of forbidden knowledge. That which made this looking into the ark a great sin was that it proceeded from a very low and mean opinion of the ark. The familiarity they had with it upon this occasion bred contempt and irreverence.

It is a dangerous mistake to take what God has revealed in his work for men within time and reflect it back into the inner life of the Trinity outside time in order to try and look inside the inner life of God which God has chosen to keep secret from human eyes. We must therefore take great care not to go beyond what Scripture teaches on the magnificent mystery which is the doctrine of the Trinity but rejoice in the glorious truths that have been revealed to us. These we need to recover and proclaim that many may come to a saving knowledge of the One Triune God.

## Service Unto Him

“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.” (1 Timothy 6:12)

By Faith Amurao

The etymology (or derivation) of the word ‘service’ is found in its Latin roots, *servitium* which is from the word *servus* meaning ‘slave’. I remember hearing a sermon by Paul Washer a few years ago in which he said “we are all a slave to something, the only question is to what?” As a Christian, I have become a follower of the Lord Jesus. I have had to make deliberate choices to follow Him and leave behind my old life. But *calling* myself a follower is not quite enough. I have deliberately to see myself as a slave to Christ, as someone who belongs to someone else greater and better than myself, who is owned of God. As 1 Corinthians 6:19 tells me, “What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and *ye are not your own?* For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (my italics).

In the Old Testament, a Hebrew slave would serve for six years and at the seventh year he had his freedom restored to him. In some cases, an alternative and radical choice is made by the slave who declares simply “I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free” (Exodus 21:5). The slave’s choice to serve his master for life – rooted in a love for him – instead of decidedly for freedom is followed by a ceremony in which his ear is to be pierced against the doorpost of his master’s house (Exodus 21:6). This is a picture of what happens to every believer. We hear Christ’s voice and follow Him like sheep their Shepherd because like Peter we ask, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”

There are a multitude of words and voices to be heard today, many beautiful ones which have the power to mesmerise in their cadences which rise and fall in the captive ear but to what end? There is only one Word who can save from hell and bring us to heaven, who was “In the beginning”, “was with God” and “who was God” and a relationship with whom is to be guarded and not exchanged for anything in the whole wide world. Every Christian chooses their ear to be pierced against the same doorposts on which the blood of the Lamb was to be spread with hyssop, trusting in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and turning away from being a slave to oneself, this world and its master, the Devil, to become a slave of the living God. In this is found true freedom for “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).

Joshua before the people of Israel said, “Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve.” Then he makes his choice, “but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” I have spoken of service before to others, *appearing* to serve God with all my being. In actual fact, I was giving only scraps of myself, my energies and my time, and withholding the rest of myself for my own ambitions and desires from the God who asks and waits patiently for my whole heart’s surrender. I have been in the shoes of the Pharisees and *not* the widow: “For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast

in all that she had, even all her living" (Mark 12:44).

Over the summer, after attending Camp Victory – organised and run by the Crown Christian Heritage Trust – three years in a row, I was encouraged to help lead a group of girls. I accepted the responsibility and after the first two days felt overwhelmed! But God's grace, which is supplied in our weakness, proved sufficient again. As a tent leader, apart for the privilege of speaking to each girl about the Lord Jesus, his love and salvation, I had the blessing of sitting through each sermon morning and evening. Pastor James Zenker's thoughts on the final night, his text being 1 Timothy 6:12, was what I needed to hear – an encouragement to serve by recalling

the command to fight the good fight of faith, lay hold of eternal life and make a good profession of our faith: three necessary actions for Christian, contemporary life.

Each minute I face the choice of whom will I serve? I have a lot to learn, needing always to reach out towards the high calling but my faith is in the Lord "as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us" (Psalm 123:2) and the desire God places in my heart is to be a corn of wheat that falls into the ground and dies, not to abide alone, but to bring forth much fruit (John 12:24).

### **Points for Praise:**

- We thank God for new attendees to the Sunday morning service, including a Portuguese family.
- For a wider vision for the Children's Ministry to meet new families and revisit old friends for the children's ministry, including the Friday Bible Club and Sunday School.
- For the Christian wedding at a sister church, Poplar Baptist Church, of a former Sunday school, local attendee, Tolani, who met his wife at that church, to which some of the members were kindly invited!
- For the good and regular attendance of the children who are part of the fellowship! We anticipate holding a Promotion Sunday School Service soon to which families and friends of the children are welcome.
- For an excellent Camp Victory 2017 – organised and run by Crown Christian Heritage Trust – attended by 4 girls and 1 boy from the church!
- For the evangelistic activities of the church, such as giving out tracts and cakes during the recent Monday Bank Holiday in August, which was followed up by a barbeque which the adults and children enjoyed!

### **Points for Prayer:**

- Please pray for old attendees to renew fellowship with the church.
- For labourers to be involved in the worship, such as a pianist, and in the English Classes ministry, such as teachers and registration staff.
- For help in the administration of the work, particularly in registering with the local Council, Tower Hamlets, and renovating the church kitchen to make best use of the generous funds provided by a recent legacy.
- For the improvement of health and recovery from a hip replacement operation of the previous minister and superintendent, Gerald Daley.
- For the visit of Geoff Thomas (formerly pastor of Alfred Place Baptist Church, Aberystwyth) to preach on 17 December 2017.

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