Delighting in the Trinity

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Preacher: Cory Brock

[0:00] All right, let's pray together. Lord, we ask for your presence. We ask for your help as we consider you tonight. We want to talk about you and think about you as you've revealed yourself to us.

And so we ask that you would help us think your thoughts after you. Lord, that we would be able to know more of you and to delight more in you and to have affections oriented toward you, to have our loves rightly ordered so that we would love you above all else.
And so we come in the middle of the week with all sorts of weeks that have already happened with different states of emotion, different states of celebration or grief, all of us in here in different places. But we do ask for a refreshment tonight, for renewal of faith before we go back out into the city to complete our week before we come to worship you. And so help us tonight, be with us, we ask in Christ's name, amen.
All right, we are kicking off tonight in our new, really, we're calling it something different. It's the exact same thing we've been doing forever and that's teaching and prayer. But this is just calling it what it is.
[1:01] And I come tonight with an amazing new technological toy that Allie has built, which allows people to write on the screens and do all sorts of cool things.

So we're thankful for that and for his hard work on that. And I think this will pay dividends for the church and all sorts of venues for years and years. So including, I think they're going to use it this weekend at the ETS conference.
So that's great. So just a real quick, 30 seconds. Courses, same thing as we've always been doing, but we are breaking the year into trimesters, a good biblical number, three.
And we're going to focus on doctrine, first trimester, then Bible, second trimester, and then a topic in the Christian life, third trimester. And the hope is that we'll get other teachers in for different courses based on maybe a particular thing that they're gifted in.
So somebody maybe that's very gifted in teaching Ezekiel or Romans or something like that in time and have these courses built up, hopefully over the years for us. So tonight we start, and you can switch over to the My PowerPoint now, guys at the back, if you want.
[2:05] Tonight we'll start on the course, Delighting in the Trinity. And the focus obviously is the Trinity. Press pause on that.

I'll come to that in just a moment. Oh, I've got, you taught me to do this. There we go. Don't look at that quote yet. You taught me to go to the holding screen, so I'm going to do that. The hope of this course is not just to think about the Trinity, but to delight in the Trinity.
So that requires understanding something of the Trinity and knowing what we mean by the word Trinity or the triune God, and then ultimately getting to a place where we can see ourselves delighting more and more in the Trinity and the pathway to do that.
And so that's the hope of this class. And this is such an important thing. One of the things that we'll do is actually defend the doctrine of the Trinity a little bit, especially next time. And that's important because somebody might come up to you and ask, how is it that you can have one God in three? And they'll say to you, the math does not add up, one in three. And so in a Muslim community, for example, they would call the doctrine of the Trinity veiled polytheism.
[3:20] And so we need to be able to understand why we can believe in the triune God and not say that we believe in three gods, tritheism. So what does it mean to say God is one in three?

And so that's one of the obviously big questions that we want to ask. Now, another reason, secondly, I've got seven things for you tonight. We're already at number two. Secondly, why this course I think matters so much is because we take the Trinity for granted in the life of the church.

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You know, we focus on the atonement, if we're going to talk about theology. We focus on salvation. We focus on the cross and what it means. But rarely do we actually think about the triunity of God. And it's a big deal. If you get the doctrine of the Trinity wrong, then you risk every other doctrine falling down. So here's an example. If you talk about the cross and you say that God the Father died at the cross with God the Son, God the Spirit, if you say something like that, you've committed a heresy called patropassianism.
And the cost of that is not fancy words for heresies. The cost of that is that you have said something like God is actually a creature or God is eternally changeable.
[4:34] And the cost of that is actually the loss of the gospel. So we'll get into next time in time three together a little bit of how these things work out. Another example, it is a wrong instinct to say something like, the Father has built up wrath for centuries for humanity.

And the Son comes into the world to appease the wrath and assuage the wrath of the Father. And so the Son is the God of love and the Father is the God of justice and wrath.
And thank goodness for the Son who assuages the wrath of His Father. And that's more of actually a pagan instinct, not a Christian instinct into understanding the relations of the Trinity and how they relate in what we call the work or economy of salvation and grace.
And so if you make missteps on the relationship among the triune persons, you start to ultimately lose the gospel. That's one of the biggest takeaways. Now, Trinity, delighting in the Trinity.
The word Trinity, just to be clear, is a placeholder. So when we talk about Trinity, we're talking about the triune God. So people will say things like the Trinity, but Trinity is actually a word that encapsulates so many other doctrines, so many other things we want to say about God.
[5:53] And that's the way it's been used for centuries. And so, okay, now I'm ready for my, if I can get out, how do I get out of the holding screen? There we go. All right. Just listen, this is John Calvin in his famous book, The Institutes, addressing a question about whether or not people are upset about using words that aren't in the Bible, like Trinity or person.

And this is what he says, I could wish that they were buried. He's talking there about the terms, effectively saying the singular word Trinity is not the important thing, only if this faith were universally agreed upon that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are one God, yet the Son is not the Father, nor the Spirit, the Son, et cetera.
So the Trinity is describing a whole world of content in a way that we want to describe God ultimately. So I've got two questions for you as we begin this course.
Of course, it is a course, so every week is going to, every two weeks is going to build on each other. We only have five times together, and we're going to, I think the plan is to hold off posting these until the end.
So I do want you to come back if you can, and I know sometimes people have to miss, but because we will build. Every time will be somewhat distinct, but we'll build.
[7:08] But I have two questions for you. Number one, do you know what you mean, what the church means, what we believe when we say Trinity, or the triunity of God? Do you have clarity on that?

That's the first question that I have for you in this course. The second one is, is the Trinity, the triune God, the object of your worship, the object of your delight, the object of your joy?
And the reason I ask that question is because everything the church does, you know, we make buildings, we create charities and institutions and have charity numbers, we have accountancy that we have to use here in the church, we have AV teams, we have ministers that you call, we have gatherings, but actually the entire point of the entire existence of this institution is simply to help people delight in the triune God.
That's really the big thing. That is what church is for. That is what Christianity is all about, is communing with the triune God more and more. And so that's the question I have for you. I hope this won't feel to you like, you know, too much of an academic weight or anything like that.
I don't think that's what we're up to at all. Instead, we are trying to re-encounter what the church has said about God for all the centuries. And so that's the big goal. Okay, thirdly, thirdly, who is the Trinity or who is the triune God?
[8:22] So just a brief foray into that and then we'll pick back up on that question in depth next week. But I want to, obviously if we're going to say delighting in the Trinity, let's at least get a definition for what we mean by the triune God.

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And so, all right, I don't think I can change the slides, right? No? Okay, next slide, please. Yeah. So first we say two things. God is one, God is three. Now this is where the problems start to come up. First, God is one. So Deuteronomy 6, 4, very famously, that's the great pronouncement. It's called the Shema in Deuteronomy. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.
And when that statement is given in Deuteronomy, it's saying the Lord is one, not many. Not like the pagan deities, not a pantheon, not a polytheistic deity that you worship.
The Lord is radically one, monotheism. And yet, God is three. And so you start, just imagine yourself as a first-time reader of the whole Bible and you're collecting thoughts through the whole Bible and you come to all these passages and start to see that while God is one, there's also this sense of multiplicity.
[9:34] And you get to baptism in Matthew 28 and maybe think of your own baptism. And the minister would have said, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name Father, Son, and Spirit.

And notice, you can't see it as well in English, but it is there in English, and that's, it's the singular name of Father, Son, and Spirit. And that's so notable that it's one name, singular, not plural, not names of Father, Son, and Spirit, but the name Father, Son, and Spirit.
So now there's this oneness and this threeness going on. Okay, next slide, please. So if you were to say to somebody, well, what does Trinity mean?
And you say, well, God is three in one. That's where the confusion is especially arises because you can stick in any noun after three in one, and they can say the logic doesn't work.
The mathematics don't work out in that. What does it mean to say something is three in one? And that's where we have to say God is very carefully in the history of the church, God is three persons in one being.
[10:44] And we'll come back next time to talk about those two terms more specifically and the language underneath them. But God is three persons in one being. So God is not three gods in one God.

God is not three persons in one person. God is not three beings in one being. But very specifically, God is three persons in one being. And sorry, that last little, that whole thing's not from Fred Sanders, but just that last little snippet in the smaller print there is a quote from a theologian called Fred Sanders.
Okay, next slide, please. And this is another way to say it or some of the other words you can use. God is one being, or you could say one in essence. So essence just means what something is or substance.
That's another word for being or essence or nature. So you might see all these different words used if you open up a book in the history of theology or from your favorite theologian, no matter what level it's at, they'll say things like this.
And all those words are interchangeable. And the word person is especially important. And we have to define it really carefully. Okay, one more slide for me. Okay, so just to break this down very quickly, what does that mean?
[11:55] God is one being in three persons. So we can think about it like this. Being is what makes you what you are. So let me ask you, what kind of being am I?

This is dangerous, but shout it out. What kind of being am I? Human being, right? Human being, as the BFG would say.
Human being. And all of you are human beings as well. So we all share this quality, this essence, this nature called being, and it's human.
We be human. And then that's different if I would say, but who am I? And you might say, well, you're Corey, and I'm, you know, James, or whoever else.
And you see, being is what you share with everybody else. Human being, the type of being you are, but person is what makes you you. So when we attach a name to a person, and we share the broad category of being, human being, being together.
[13:02] All right, so you can flip the slide one time for me. I think, ah, sorry, I've gone one too many. You can just, holding screen. Just don't read that yet, okay? Eventually, I'm going to be able to change the slides myself, and not mess up like that.

That's entirely my fault. So let me say it to you like this. When we say that God is one being, and three persons, we are saying, God is three, in distinction of person, or personalities.

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The Father, the Son, the Spirit, without any division in His being or essence. So God is not three different beings, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, but God is one God, one being.
It's not like a pie chart, where you've got three equal slices, Father, Son, and Spirit, each making up together a part of the whole pie that is God. But instead, no, in God, the Father, Son, and Spirit is the pie, is God.
All sharing the essence, and yet distinct in three persons. Now, the next thing to say, sorry, keep messing up, you guys up back there. Now we're ready to go forward.
[14:13] Now, that's to say, when you say something like that, and we'll just leave it at that for today, and come back to it next time, just that headline article, that's to say this, that means God is very different from us.

He is not a creature. And when you say, how could it be that God could be three persons and one being? The answer is, He is God, and He's not a creature. And therefore, any attempt to understand that in any comprehensive way will not work.
Because there's a radical distinction between us and Him, and what we are. And so we can't understand that. And that's normal. That's to be expected. So if you think, I don't really know what that means, that's okay.
That's okay. So we know God, but not the way God knows God. That's how we like to say it. So there's some fancy terms here, but they're quite simple concepts. And this is from Franciscus Junius, an old theologian.
And he says it like this, and just don't worry about archetypal, archetypal, I'm just going to, I'm going to explain them, but they're, it's an important thing to know if you just get the concept. Archetypal theology is God's own perfect knowledge of Himself.
[15:17] So an archetype is just an original. The language actually comes from printing press terminology when the printing press was invented. So, you know, in the old world of printing newspapers, you got an original, right?

The one that is the original, and then you got all the copies. And the archetypal is the original. So God, only God has original knowledge of God. In other words, only the Father, Son, and Spirit know the Father, Son, and Spirit, and can explain the Father, Son, and Spirit.
Spirit. We cannot. We're creatures. That's fundamental to what we believe. But we have a copy, you might say, an imprint of His knowledge gifted to us.
And that gift is what? It's revelation. It's Scripture. It's the way God has revealed Himself. So when God enters into the world and He communicates to us by grace for His own glory, as Junius says, even Scripture is not God's knowledge of God outright.
It's not the utmost knowledge. No, God is, as Calvin put it, speaking in baby talk to us when He writes Scripture about Himself. He's accommodating to us. And so only God knows God perfectly.
[16:26] We know God relatively as creatures, but yet truly, because it's God who's spoken. And that means that we can say when we define the Trinity, when we talk about God's triunity, we have to get to a place, one more slide for me, that I think this is right, where somebody like Gillis Emery is just quoting from the whole Christian tradition, our words cannot do any better than this.

There's a point where human words just fail because of the majesty, the magnanimousness of God. Only God can truly define God. And we make as good of an attempt as we can at it.
Okay. All right. We'll press pause for that and come back to it next time. Fifthly, sorry, I've got, I think one more. You can just, yeah, scroll on for me, please. I'll come back to that next time just because we're running out of time.
Okay. Now, tonight, I just want to finish with a few thoughts on helping us delight, grow in delighting God. So we see this idea in Jesus in the Gospels in John 15, 11.
He says in that upper room discourse, I've come so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full.
[17:40] So God, what was, one of the ways to say it is what was God up to before creation? Trick question. There is no before creation because time began when the creation began. But God in his eternality, what was, what has he been up to?

And really the answer is he's been delighting in himself. The father delighting in the son, the son delighting in the spirit, the spirit delighting in the father and the son. And here you come to the gospel and Jesus says on the night he was good to be crucified, before he was to be crucified, I've come so that you would have the joy that I share with the father and with the spirit.

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And so he gives you this big mission in your life, which is to delight in the Trinity. And you can cast that slide over for me at the back. I love the way George Mueller talks about seeking this in his life, delighting in the Trinity, delighting in God.
George Mueller was the great founder of so many orphanages in England. I mean, they say he cared for over 10,000 orphans personally in the course of his ministry.
But he writes this in 1841. I saw more clearly than ever on this day that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was to have my soul happy in the Lord.
[18:58] The first thing to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord, how I might glorify the Lord, but how I might get my soul into a happy state and how my inner life might be nourished, inner man might be nourished.

So he talks about, Mueller in other places, talks about discovering that secret of life later in his life, that it took him too long to realize that the entire point was to grow into a place where you could be happy in God or delight in God.
All right, so you scroll, you can scroll that slide as well for me. I mean, just press pause for one second. I mean, if you think about a few things, one, we're working through Genesis 4 to 11 on Sunday mornings, right?
And if you back up to Genesis 1 and 2, God made Adam and Eve and he put them in Eden. The word Eden in Hebrew means delight. It is the garden of delight.
The whole point was delight in God. And then I think about it in the lens of the Westminster Confession, the Westminster Assembly, you know, you take a bunch of English and Welsh and Scotsmen and a few Dutchmen and you put them in a cold room in London for seven years and you don't expect them to come up with Westminster Shorter Catechism number one.
[20:09] What is the most important thing they ever really told us? And they said, what is the chief end of humanity? Yeah, to glorify God and what did they say? Enjoy Him.

So they came up with that seven years of work to say the big thing to know is that you were made in your chief purpose to enjoy God forever. Right?
So just quickly, we won't go through these in any at all. I just want to highlight to you, I've got four straight slides of some of the text in the Bible. These are hard to see, sorry.
But I'll highlight. So there's the word joy there. Hold on, I'm going to switch colors. Joy there. See, joy. Delight yourself in the Lord.
You will delight yourself in the Almighty. Job 22. Delight in the Almighty. Job 27. And every single one of these is going to be like this. That might, there's John 15 again.
[21:02] All right, keep scrolling for me. I just want to give folks snippets of how common this is. Habakkuk 3. Yet I will rejoice in the Lord. Psalm 5. Let those who love the Lord exult.

Exult. Rejoice. Exult. Joy. Keep going. A couple more of these. These are different accents and I don't have time to get into them.
But oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Taste it and see. That's joy and delight language. Your steadfast love is better than life. Satisfaction language here. There's nothing on our desire.
desire language besides you. And we can go on and on and on. Here at Jeremiah 15 is an important one because this is where Jeremiah eats the scroll, eats the word of God.
And then he says, your word became to me joy and the delight of my heart. And so that's what George Mueller was talking about is letting the word every morning become joy and delight to him.
[22:01] That was the secret that he discovered. I think there's one more. Yes, gladness and worship in God's presence. And you can see a whole smattering of those.

There are about 800 instances in the English Bible, even just the ESV, of delight, rejoice, joy, pleasure, satisfaction, and maybe one or two other synonyms.
800 instances. And so we've looked at, you know, 16 maybe. So it really becomes the entire theme of the object of God's work of redemption is to grow into a person who can delight in the Trinity.
Okay, you can carry on to the next slide for me. Oh, there's another one. Sorry, I forgot. Keep going. Keep going. Okay, so lastly, I just want to take a second to talk about what it looks like to actually cultivate this in your life a little bit more.
And one of the keys to that is to just take two minutes to think about the way we talk about the word emotion. So we could think of delighting in God as merely an emotion.
[23:14] Something that we sort of, if we're not getting the butterflies, if we're not getting good vibes and good feelings in morning prayer, in worship, are we really delighting in the Trinity, the

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very thing that we were made to do, delighting in growing.

And the word emotion was not used in the English language at all, really, until the 18th century. And it didn't become normal at all until the late 19th century. And that word flattened out a bunch of distinctions that were present prior that were very normal in church life.
And these are a few of them there. One is, people used to talk about our appetites, you know, hunger drive, thirst drive, that's an appetite. And then they would talk about passions, and that's really the way we use the word emotion today.
And a passion is a surge of feeling that's sort of involuntary, like rage, or lust, or things that normally we would say we need to keep a control on that.
That's a passion. But then the real word that people use were not emotions, it was affections for this. So when we say delighting in God, we're attaching ourselves to an old term that used to be used in the church all the time, and that's growing in affection for God.
[24:27] And affection is not an emotion primarily. Affection is a settled, deliberate inclination of your soul. So how does an affection take place? An affection first starts in your mind, and you're persuaded that something's true.

And then that drives down to your heart to say in your heart, I'm convicted that this is true. So this is a hill that I'll die on. That's what affection is. And then that mind to heart then starts to transform your passions or emotions.
And then it expresses itself in your will where it actually breaks forth into actions of some kind. And so affection is the word for how the whole person operates. And so Jonathan Edwards wrote a very famous book called The Religious Affections and said we're pursuing affection for God.
That's the big purpose of our existence. You can scroll the next slide. I think I've got a little chart here. Yeah, so just real quick. The difference in affections and emotions. Affections are rooted in what you believe is true, whereas emotion can float free of belief.
You know, you might get road rage. That has nothing to do with what you believe to be true. That's just a passion that's risen within you. An affection is settled. It's very hard to break an affection.
[25:43] So it's something that you've committed yourself to mentally and in your heart. It's easy to move on from a passion or an emotion. An affection moves the will.

So in other words, it produces an action in you to worship, to serve someone, whereas an emotion often doesn't or can often produce a very negative movement of the will. You do something you regret, you didn't want to do.
It's not carefully thought through. And then lastly, affections are about the whole person and emotions are often just on the surface. Okay, you can scroll forward for me there. Thank you.
So a little summary statement. Therefore, what does it mean? Delighting in God isn't manufacturing a feeling on command. So when George Mueller talks about being happy in God, he's not saying all my emotions were there every day.
That's not what he means. It's having your deepest affection rightly ordered toward the one actually worthy of them. And that can involve strong feelings sometimes, but it is not reducible to strong feelings.
[26:42] And it can be cultivated even on days that feelings are ultimately very faint. So I just want to finish by giving you a few ways to pursue this. And we've got three minutes left.

So you can scroll that slide for me, Ila, thanks. How do you do this? Here's my invitation to you throughout the rest of the course. One of the ways to grow your affections for God is to be more informed about God.
Informed isn't the best word to use, but pursuing the knowledge of God more and more. So affections arise from truth grasped with the whole person. Growth means knowing the Trinity more clearly, knowing the work of the Father and the work of the Son and the work of the Spirit more.
Secondly, scroll one more time, more settled. So you know that your affections are growing the more and more your actual emotive life, the life of your passions does settle.
That's been a common thing. You see that all over Jonathan Edwards. So passions spike. You know, you get road rage and then it goes away. You recover from it. But affections, when they're rightly oriented, your loves are rightly formed, are constant.
[27:52] They create a constancy in your life where you're less affected by the negative passions. That's been a consistent evidence of what it looks like to have more and more affection for God is you're less affected.

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your mind is reoriented, your heart is reoriented, your will is daily reoriented. And so that means you have a more settled person, if you will.
Lastly, more active. So we said that the affections, what does it mean to be a person growing in delight in the Trinity? Well, it will over the years produce a more active believer.
And so real affections move the will. Growth shows up in what a person does. So, it doesn't mean that you're always coming to worship with the highest emotions in the world or the best feelings in the world.
What it means is that it does change the depth of your worship over time. It changes how you treat people. It changes your willingness to acknowledge your vices, your desire to actually look at your idols.
[28:51] These are actually evidences of the affections of delighting in the Trinity growing or God growing and growing over time. So really just looking for change. That's an acknowledgement of affection.

All right. I want to finish on a quote, a little series of quotes. It actually, you can skip past that. I won't. This is, this is, sorry, this is hard to see.
But I'll just, I'll read it and I'll say one sentence about it in plainer language. But this is from Fred Sanders and I think he really summarizes so well what we're talking about tonight.
It's a little cloudy the way he writes it, but hopefully I can say a word or two to make it clear and we'll finish. He talked about two different kinds of Christians and he's really saying that there's a point in the Christian life where you sort of step into longing to grow in your affections for the Trinity, for God, and you really do start to hunger to know more and to grasp the truth of who God is more and more.
And so he says the first kind of believer that hasn't yet taken that step, hears the word like Trinity, nods and says, yes, you know, I agree to that technically and immediately asks, wait, but why does this matter?
[29:59] The doctrine is to them an itch, you know, it's creating an itch, it's not yet the scratch to the itch they already had. They're vulnerable to any cheesy explanations, perhaps, applications, analogies that come along, you know, that God is H2O or water vapor, you know, these kind of things, a three-leaf clover, et cetera.

You know, whatever they might listen to on this week's episode, as long as it involves the number three, you can somehow get to caring about it. So it's to say that you might be in a place where you're just stepping into saying, actually do want to understand what we mean by the triunity of God more seriously, and that's what he's talking about here.
Secondly, Isla, but the second kind of believer hears the word Trinity and is aware they've just received a signal about the great open secret of the glory of God and the depth of salvation.
This kind of Christian, any hint in the Trinity is evocative. It strikes a chord and resonates deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls, the psalmist says. This kind of Christian longs for the deep things of God.
And so there's an invitation, I think, to ask you, you know, are you ready? Do you want to take a step? And many of you will and do it to say, I do want to hunger more for the deep things of God to know what it is to talk about God, Father, Son, and Spirit in His eternality and things like that.
[31:23] So I've got one more and this one's truly the last one. What these Christians instinctively do without necessarily working out all the theological details is associate the Trinity with the gospel.

So why does the Trinity matter so much? Well, because when you realize it does, you start to say, oh, ah, the gospel, the Father sent the Son, the Son sent the Spirit to me, I now have the fellowship of the Spirit in the Son and the Father, you start to live out John 15 to 17 and realize that that is the whole point.
That's the whole point of Christianity. And so he says here, that associative move is the whole trick. Trinity and gospel belong together and anyone whose habit of mind is trained to keep them close together is constantly in touch with the deep grounding of the Christian spiritual life.
All right. Let's pray. Father, we ask that you would give us great affection for you. And we pray that in Christ's name. Amen. All right.
We'll dig into Trinitarian terminology.

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