

BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY
(gently considered)

I. Some introductory thoughts

A. Some terms:

1. Doctrine: the basic meaning is teaching. A dogma is a particular teaching.
 - a. Theologically the doctrine (or doctrines) is (or are) stated in the Scripture. But virtually no doctrine is fully defined in just one passage so there must be a study of all the passages that relate to a subject before it is put out as a final teaching.
 - b. Particular doctrines are defined by Christians...acting individually, in church fellowships, or in ecclesiastical unions of different sorts. The church does not "make" the doctrine...it outlines it from the source material and gives it a form for the particular age in which it is studied. The doctrines do not change but the defining medium is subject to change. (Complicated?)
 - c. The importance of doctrine cannot be overstated but it must be kept in balance with the fact of life..spiritual life.
2. Christianity (Christian life)
 - a. Christian life is essentially an experience. From that initial thrust it becomes a life and then a study. To reverse this order invites catastrophe.
 - b. As an experience it may or may not be enjoined with great doctrinal understanding. But without doctrine perspective it will never become a meaningful life or a study.
 - c. So we do not need to know a lot to become Christians...but we need the benefit of the whole word of God to live Christian.
3. Trinity
 - a. The word is not found in the Bible but was "coined" by Tertullian (ca 160-220 AD).
 - b. Its service is to define the "godhead" (Romans 1:20, et al) a reality that is a mystery...and as soon as you begin to define "mysteries" all sorts of troubles come.

B. The challenge of being a Christian:

1. The witness of the early church...a witness to the Lord Jesus and not the particularisms of diverse doctrines. But a witness to the Lord Jesus as a person of divinity...unique from all others and identified with deity.
2. So our desire as Christians is to understand as fully as we are able the truths of God and His Word. At times we come to a point where our intelligence is not adequate...then we say "I don't know" and we mean we would like to find out. But we do not allow what is not known to negate what is known.