

1. **Introduction:** As we discussed last lesson, salvation deals with two categories of sin issues, lack of righteousness and an unholy nature. Ephesians 1:4 says, *“He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.”* But unless God intervenes we are neither holy nor blameless. Here is a quick review:
 - ◆ God does intervene. His intervention is rightly called **Salvation**. Failing to be blameless is a legal issue due to breaking God’s moral law (resulting in a death penalty). God solves that problem, based on the divine Son’s incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth, by legally imputing to those who believe, His earned righteousness and payment of the death penalty.
 - ◆ Failing to be holy is an ontological problem (our “being” is fallen and degraded) solved by the work of the Holy Spirit transforming each regenerated person into an image of Christ.
 - ◆ Sent by the Father, the incarnate Son’s salvation “work” produced benefits that the Holy Spirit applies to individual believers. **Salvation is Trinitarian from beginning to end.**
 - ◆ The Holy Spirit applies the benefits of Christ’s work by grace through faith. Charles Hodge (*Systematic Theology*, p. 104) says, **“The first effect of faith, according to Scriptures, is union with Christ.”**

2. **A Definition of “Union with Christ”:** A dictionary meaning of the noun “union” is **“To be joined together.”** “United” is an adjective for union. United means **“to be made one.”**
 - ◆ Our country was formed by states being united to form one Union functioning as the one country, USA. The states continue to exist as distinct entities but no longer separate.
 - ◆ A common-sense definition of Union with Christ, then, is **“believers are joined together with Christ in such manner that they are, in some sense, made one with Him. They remain distinct persons, but no longer separate persons.”**
 - ◆ This commonsense definition of Union with Christ agrees with Scripture. More later.

3. **God the Holy Trinity:** Consider some useful knowledge about the Holy Trinity (from the Westminster Confession). There is one living and true God, a most pure Spirit, self-existing, self-sustaining, invisible, of one divine essence, immaterial, without body, parts, or passions, infinite and immutable (*unchanging*) in being and perfection. God is incomprehensible (*cannot be fully known*) but not unknowable (*we know what is revealed in Scripture*).
 - ◆ **There are three subsistences (persons) within the one divine essence:** The three Persons are Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Persons are distinct and distinguished from one another, not by a difference in being, but by their relationships to one another.
 - All three are equal in power, glory, and eternity. Unlike three human persons, the three divine persons do not exist alongside one another. They exist in eternal mutual indwelling, such that the fullness of the divine essence is possessed by each person.
 - ◆ **The Three Persons in the Godhead All Have the same Attributes:** Each Person is fully God having all the attributes of God.

- ◆ All anyone knows about God is what God has revealed (Deuteronomy 29:29).
 - ◆ Is three Persons, one God, a contradiction? No! The law of non-contradiction says, “A” cannot be both “A” (*what it is*) and non-A (*what it is not*) at the same time in the same relationship. God is not 3 (*in persons*) in the same way He is 1 (*in essence*).
 - ◆ Each Person of the Trinity is an immaterial, spiritual, thinking, willing, relational, active agent. For example see (John 6:37,38;10:29;1;7:2,11-12).
 - ◆ The three Persons of the Trinity jointly participate in all work external to the Godhead, each in accordance with His distinct “properties” (Q.9 WLC).
 - ◆ **Same Attributes, Different Properties, Mutually Indwelling**: All three have identical attributes. Each have “properties” belonging to that particular Person. The Father eternally begets the Son. Never the reverse. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and Son. The three Persons are mutually indwelling. Where one is, all three are. Never one alone.
 - ◆ **External Works**: External works include creation, sustaining creation, recreating fallen humans through redemption and sanctification. The Father is the fountain and well-spring of all things. He originates all external activity and, in some activities, takes the lead (Jn.6:44). In others the Son or Holy Spirit takes the lead.
 - The Son, as mediator, embodies each plan doing what is necessary to make the Father’s plan possible. The Holy Spirit applies His power and efficacy (i.e., ability to produce a desired result) to produce the result intended.
 - ◆ The Holy Trinity is one God, one divine essence, three Persons.
4. **Definition of A Nature**: The word “nature” has a precise meaning in Christian doctrine.
 - ◆ All things which exist have qualities, some are essential, some nonessential.
 - ◆ Consider a 2-inch diameter iron pipe 3-feet long, painted white. Its essential qualities are those of the material iron plus length and hollowness.
 - ◆ Dimensions, weight, and color are nonessentials. Change them and it remains an iron pipe.
 - ◆ A things nature is defined as its essential qualities, things that can’t be changed without changing it into something else, things that make it what it is.
 - ◆ For example, eliminating a pipe’s hollowness by flattening it converts it to an iron bar.
 5. **Nature of God**: God is a living spirit whose nature (essence) includes all essential attributes and properties characterizing the Godhead (L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, nature/persons).
 6. **Human nature**: Human nature is the complete set of essential human attributes including body, mind, will, and emotions. A human person has a human nature, but a human nature is not a person. The difference between nature and person is vital in understanding incarnation.
 7. **Persons**: Persons may be material or immaterial (spiritual). Persons have a center of self-awareness, an identity or an “I” to the “You” of other persons.
 8. **Human Persons**: A human person is thus more than a human nature. A human person is a human nature plus an independent source of identity, that which enables saying “I.

- ◆ The identity “I” is the owner, possessor, and master of the nature.
- ◆ “I” is the subject that lives, thinks, wills, and acts through the nature.
- ◆ “I” acts something like a “mission control center.” A person’s “I” directs the use of the attributes of their human nature.

9. **Persons of the Trinity:** Each Person of the Trinity has a center of self-awareness, an identity or an “I” to the “You” of other persons. God’s nature (essence) is pure spirit. Again, the Trinity is undivided divine essence within which there are three individual subsistences (Persons), each a center of consciousness with a source of “I.”

- ◆ The one essence is shared by each Person. Each Person possesses all attributes of God. Each Person regards Himself as “I” and the other two as “You.”
- ◆ The Persons of the Trinity are distinguished from one another by a difference in “properties and relationship,” not by a difference in essence or attributes.

10. **Incarnate Christ, One Person, 2 Natures – Divine and Human:** In the incarnation the divine eternal Son united Himself with a human nature. The union of the divine Son with a human nature is necessary to achieve the mission of redemption. If no incarnation, then no salvation and no Union with Christ.

- ◆ The divine Son took to Himself a human nature (conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary), to become the one person, Jesus Christ, the God-man.
- ◆ The Son retained His divine nature and added to it a human nature (including a human body. There is no mixing, confusion, or combining of His two natures.
- ◆ Each nature retains its own attributes. One Person, two complete natures.
- ◆ Christ has and will forever continue to have a human nature including a human body.

11. **Eternity Intrudes In Time:** The Son’s divine essence (and Person) were His from all eternity, eternally begotten by the Father. His human nature and body were acquired “in time,” derived from His mother Mary. It is a deep mystery how the eternal, omnipotent, infinite second Person of the Trinity could add to Himself a finite, limited human nature and become one person in a human body. But we know it is true.

- ◆ The Trinity is pure divine spirit, 1 nature, 3 Persons. The incarnate Son is 1 Person, 2 natures. The incarnate Son is divine spirit plus a human nature (including physical body).
- ◆ The “nature/person” distinction is vital for understanding the incarnation. The Son did not take to Himself a “human person” but a “human nature.”
- ◆ If Jesus Christ had only a divine nature, He could not have died in place of sinful humanity and paid the death penalty due. The eternal cannot die. But because He is both God and man, He could and did die in His humanity.
- ◆ If He were only a man, His death could not produce eternal benefit for many. Because He is God, His humanity was sinless, capable of being a perfect sacrifice for sins.
- ◆ Because of His divine nature, He could place on Himself the burden of every sin of everyone who would believe. Both human and divine natures are necessary.

12. **Incarnate Christ's "I":** What is the source of the identity "I" for Christ's human nature? It is the same "I" that establishes His personhood as the second Person of the Trinity.
- ◆ Both natures of the incarnate Son are directed by the same divine "I."
 - ◆ It is amazing but true that Christ's human nature never existed as a human person. He has no **human** "mission control center," no human "I."
 - ◆ His human nature from conception was controlled by His divine personal "I." His divine "I" controls both His divine and human natures.
13. **Activities of The God-Man:** Taking to Himself a human nature (complete except without sin) did not diminish His divine being. Anything done in either nature was done by the one person, Jesus Christ. Jesus was willingly controlled by the Father. **Jn. 5:19**, "*So Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.'*" **Jn. 12:49-50**, "*For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. ⁵⁰ And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.*"
- ◆ With respect to His human nature, Jesus ascended to heaven and is no longer present in the world (Jn. 1:28; 17:11; Acts 1:9-11).
 - ◆ With respect to His omnipresent divine nature He continues to be everywhere present (Mt. 18:20; 28:20). The Holy Spirit mediates to us the presence of the risen Christ in heaven.
 - ◆ In His human nature Jesus was at times weak and tired (Mt. 4:2, 8:24; Mk. 15:21; Jn. 4:6), but in His divine nature He was omnipotent, never weak or tired.
 - ◆ Because His human nature was exhausted, He slept in a boat. When awakened from his human nature's sleep, He then by His omnipotent divine nature calmed wind and sea with a word (Mt. 8:26-27).
 - ◆ At all times in His incarnate state on earth, Jesus' divine nature continued to uphold creation and to carry out the Father's plan. But His human nature (including His human body) developed and grew in the normal way, growing in stature and wisdom.
14. **Christ:** Jesus, the man from Nazareth, was and is the divine Christ, the God-man. He was not potentially God but was and is truly and fully God. Even though in His divine nature He knew all things, in His human nature Jesus could learn things. When He took to Himself a human nature, it was His forever with no change to His divine attributes. (**Systematic Theology**, Wayne Grudem, Inter-Varsity Press, 1994 chapter 26.)
- ◆ On earth He lived in a normal human body. Having both a human and divine nature, Christ has both a human and a divine will. How does that work? We don't know.
 - ◆ We do know Jesus' divine will has always been in one accord with Father and Spirit.
 - ◆ Christ's divine "I" always controls His human nature, even now in His glorified state.
15. **What is Next:** Ephesians 2:1-10.