

Foundations of the Spiritual Life (3)

The Correct Vision

A. Correct vision of God

I. God is a Trinity

This is another talk in the series of the foundations of the spiritual life and living in Christ.

The first foundation discussed was *counting the cost*. We highlighted that the spiritual path entails a cost. This cost is necessary to prepare ourselves, our inner vessel, to receive the divine gifts which come to us as grace upon grace. This grace becomes part of our inner spiritual building.

The second foundation discussed was the *state of the heart*. The heart can be divided; we need to pay attention to our heart and to have an undivided heart. We also need to learn to direct our heart to take a certain direction and to be inclined to do the will of God and be fixed on Christ. There are many references in the bible that indicate that the person is responsible to incline his heart and give it a direction. The heart may not have a specific direction and it is the person's responsibility to learn to give his heart a specific direction, that is, to determine its direction.

The third foundation is having a correct vision of God, of oneself, and of the enemy (the devil).

The first point in this third foundation is the correct vision of God.

Having a correct vision of God is a matter of great importance because we should be transformed into this image. If the image of God is distorted or limited in our minds, our transformation will also be limited and weak. But if we have a correct and rich image and vision of God, our transformation will be genuine and rich. This will lead to a rich and growing spiritual life, which is not limited or constricted and which does not come to a halt. Therefore, the main purpose of having a correct vision of God is to form a correct image of Him in our mind.

God revealed Himself as a Trinity. We first need to understand why God presented Himself as a Trinity; then we will explain further in separate talks about each Person of the Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

God chose to reveal Himself as a Trinity because this is His truth. Such truth is of great importance and significance for man.

Why is this important to man?

Man is created in God's image; therefore, man's essential and deep needs are satisfied and filled only through the full discovery of God as a Trinity.

In other words, since we are created in God's image, this means that He is the origin. If I am an image, I will not be able to fully discover myself nor find satisfaction of my needs until I fully discover God.

God's attributes are so rich that they cannot be revealed as one facet; so, He chose 3 facets; One God in three Persons. Therefore, He chose to reveal himself as a Trinity. I need to discover these 3 Persons because this is the original image that I was created on. The more I discover these original

Persons, the more I find true satisfaction and fulfilment of my needs; otherwise, there will always be something groaning and unfulfilled in my personality.

The character of God is the original while my character is the image of it. This original Person of God has 3 revelations and I am the image of all this. Therefore, each of these Persons fulfils a certain need that I have. The more I comprehend these matters and receive satisfaction of my needs, the more my character or personality is corrected and becomes wholesome, restored and finds fulfilment of all its needs.

How can this be practically understood and applied?

God chose to reveal Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

[Illustration: This is like a pyramid or a triangle that has three facets. If I lift up my eyes to God, I can see one of the facets of the pyramid looking upon me; and this facet that is directed towards me is exactly my need at that specific time. At another time, I lift up my eyes to God to find a different facet waiting for me. *This illustration is just to help in understanding – though it is not a fully proper or accurate illustration*].

This means that sometimes God looks down upon me as the Father; at other times as the Son; and at times as the Holy Spirit. In other words, He desires to have fellowship with me through the Person of the Father; at other times, He gives me the opportunity to have fellowship with Him through the Person of the Son and at times through the Person of the Holy Spirit.

How can I discover this and how can it happen practically?

Each of these Persons fills and satisfies an essential human need.

Man has three essential needs. The science of Psychology elaborates and adds to these needs and subdivides them. This is fine; yet, we can actually sum up all the psychological needs of the human personality in three main areas or three main pillars:

- The need to belong
- The need to have deep peace between man and himself and between man and creation, both the rational and no-rational creation.
- The need to be enabled, that is, to discover a certain role or message in life and be enabled to carry it out.

The absence of any of these elements is expressed and reflected in various ways in one's life. For example, the absence of peace results in a guilty conscience which can in turn lead to having a sense of inferiority. This often leads the person to search for compensations for this psychological need. As a result, one can put on various images that are alien or foreign to his true self in order to compensate for what is missing or lacking. Because of this, one may act as though he has two different personalities or sometimes tries to impersonate other persons. When he is with people, he speaks and acts in a way that is not his true self; when he goes home, he realises that he was not himself; he was acting out a different personality alien to who he truly is. Yet, he feels unable to do otherwise because he does not want to reveal his true inner self. He may not even know why he is behaving as such. In fact, this is often the result of having a guilty conscience for a long time which has led to having a sense of inferiority in certain areas and a

sense of superiority in other areas or even a sense of self-rejection. These things together form a fake personality which one presents before others. The true personality of this person remains hidden inside him because of his guilty conscience and the lack of a deep sense of peace.

The true and deep sense of peace comes only when one's conscience experiences true forgiveness. Forgiveness is a deep human need because man is created to be righteous. Because we fail to live in righteousness, we live with a sense of guilt. As humans, we cannot bear this sense of guilt; and so we suffer from it. We experience the outcome of this guilt which is often expressed as a sense of inferiority, a sense of superiority, or a sense of self-rejection, forming an outer fake personality for oneself while the true personality which is suffering and groaning remains hidden inside.

The same applies to the absence of the sense of belongingness. This can happen if one grows up in a family where his parents and/or siblings are not able to make him feel that he belongs, that he is a person who is wanted, accepted and loved. Even when families try to offer this acceptance and love, this is often done in a way that does not always fill one's deep and full need. This causes one to grow up suffering from a sense of rejection or a sense of being unwanted or unloved. This in turn results in various behaviours including anger, anxiety, stress and violence. Some may try to compensate for this missing need through the outer appearance including clothes, furniture, possessions, manner of speech and conduct. This happens because that person senses that he is lost, unwanted, of no value, and neglected. Consequently, this person may try to be violent by words or actions to prove and express his existence and draw the attention of others to him. He wants to say: 'I am here; why is no one noticing me?' He may

wear very attractive or different clothes to draw other people's attention. He may also attract the attention of others through his possessions by buying for example a very unique car that no one else has. By this, he is reacting to the negligence and lack of acceptance that he suffered from as a child. He tries to compensate for it when he grows up. This is of course an unhealthy behaviour that has its manifold results.

The third human basic need is to have a message and role in life and feel able to fulfil it.

Notice that each of these human needs is essentially based on and derived from God's mind towards man:

- God created man to belong to a family and be a member of a family.
- God created man to live in righteousness and holiness, reflecting to others who God is because he is the image of God. God is righteous and holy; and so man should also be righteous: *'Be holy, for I am holy'* (1Peter 1: 16).
- God created man to have a specific mission on earth which he carries out for the purpose of extending and proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

These three elements became man's deep need since he has been created to be a member of a family, to live in righteousness reflecting God's image to others, and to have a message and a role and carry them out proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

If any of these needs is missing, one feels lost and as if unable to find himself. As a result, one tries to make compensations and this is even more

painful and agonising because it makes one enter into vicious circles. This is the reason behind many psychological conflicts and abnormal behaviour. When escalated, they sometimes become mental health issues.

The ultimate solution is in God who revealed Himself as a Trinity who satisfies all the essential human needs:

- The Person of the Father fills and satisfies man's deep need to belong.
- The Person of the Son fills man's need for peace and forgiveness.
- The Person of the Holy Spirit reveals to each one his/her mission and role in life and He enables us to carry out this role from one stage to the other, step by step.

Let us clarify each of these points from the practical point of view:

- **The Person of the Father fills and satisfies man's deep need to belong.**

God is an eternal essence; yet, He chose to describe Himself using words that we can understand so that we can perceive His Character.

The Person of the Father who is eternal truth chose for Himself the word '*father*' because we all understand who a father is.

The father is the person who shelters me, protects me, looks after me, accepts me in my weakness, and rejoices in me. This is exactly what I need; something deep within me needs a person who can fulfil these needs. If these needs are satisfied, I will feel embraced and not lost.

In God the Father, I feel the divine arms embracing me, providing me shelter, cover, and a sense of belongingness and rejoicing in me. I feel loved, accepted, and wanted. I feel that I belong. I experience true warmth surrounding me, sheltering me, looking after me and after all my affairs.

The depth of man cries for the warmth that embraces and protects, that makes one feel loved, wanted, and accepted; and that makes him feel that he is a person not a thing. The deep agony within man is that he has lost the sense of being a person and feels as if he has become a thing. One wakes up in the morning having many responsibilities and things to do; yet, deep within he feels lost and in agony. However, if this need is filled and satisfied, one would wake up feeling that there is warmth surrounding him. How great if one experiences this warmth in his house where there is sacrificial and giving fatherhood and motherhood which are a reflection of God's Fatherhood and Motherhood! God is a Father and a Mother. When we grow up in a home where there is this giving fatherhood and motherhood, we wake up every morning sensing certain warmth which brings us deep comfort. Every day, he feels he is a person not a thing, who is loved and wanted, who belongs, who is protected, looked after, and all his steps are well planned.

This is in fact a reflection of God, the Father. God intended that each child would have a mother and a father who reflect to him the true Character and Person of God, the Father, because God is a Father and a Mother¹ at the same time. They are meant to offer this child these needs.

¹ Isaiah 63:16; 66:13

When this child grows up and starts to have spiritual insight, he would start to understand that his parents were the shadow or the small manifestation that reflects the Heavenly Father who has the true Fatherhood and Motherhood that offer true satisfaction, warmth, tenderness, and protection.

It is the divine hand that tells me every morning that I am wanted, accepted, deeply loved, belonging to the Trinity, and a member of the household of God.

When this person was a child, he needed to hear from his parents that he is a member in this family who is loved and wanted. He needed to be reassured that he is surrounded with love and protection and that all his matters are well looked after. When this child grows up, he realises that this is not sufficient because these needs are only a reflection of a much bigger need which is not earthly and limited but eternal.

From outside, one is a body, a tent that will be taken off; but, from inside, he is a spirit that is eternal. From outside, one needs to eat and drink love and tenderness; but from inside this need can only be filled by the eternal love and tenderness of God.

Psychologists maintain that at the age of 18 months a child starts to be aware of all the essential human needs. They also maintain that when a breast fed baby cries, he is not only crying for milk; his stomach needs the milk while his heart needs love; he is crying for milk together with the love and embrace of his mom's arms around him.

Some studies have shown that babies who are not breast fed and who grow up in nurseries not in their parents' arms have many problems. This is

because when a baby cries, he is asking for milk to be given to him through a person who embraces him and is tender to him; this person should reflect the eternal truth of God who is a Father and a Mother.

Many of us grew up in families where parents did not understand their responsibilities in accordance to the true Christian mind. As a result, many of us have unsatisfied needs. Unless these needs are healed and dealt with, they will continue to cause an inner groaning that will reflect on our personalities, relationships and future –no matter how clever we are in trying to hide them or overcome them.

If we desire to live the fullness of what we have been created for and carry out our full role and responsibilities in accordance to the divine will, it is crucial that our inner hidden needs would be healed.

Even if we succeed in hiding and silencing them, this will not work because the inner agony and groaning cannot be silenced or suppressed.

Therefore, if I desire to live my full humanity and carry out my full role, these inner distortions have to be restored. This is similar to a plastic container that has certain parts that has been squeezed in; and so its shape and size changed. As a result, this vessel or container cannot perform its function. Similarly, God will not show me my full role if my size and shape is changed. This is because my full role can only be carried out through the full size and shape of my vessel. Otherwise, God would be requesting me to do something that I am not capable of doing –since part of my vessel is squeezed or crushed! At the same time, the person would be in agony because deep within him, he has potentials that are not released since the area of these potentials is pressed in.

When one lives the fullness of his humanity, he experiences the fullness of peace and comfort; and he discovers his role and carries it out. This role should be like a *symphony* on earth.

The word '*symphony*' is very important and relevant in this context. We are the image of the Trinity, created to be a praise or symphony. This is the mind of God reflected in His word. In Ephesians 2: 10, we read: '*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them*'. According to the Greek origin, these words mean '*we are created as a poem or praise*'. In the Old Testament, we read that God often told His people that He wants them to be a song or praise on earth². Any song or praise consists of two components: *words* and *a tune*. God created each one of us as a poem. This poem needs a tune to give it its beauty.

Who composes the tune?

The Holy Spirit is the eternal tune; He composes a specific tune for every poem. He knows the tune of each one of us. Therefore, our fellowship with the Holy Spirit is very important. He in the One who shows me what's inside me; He shows me that there is a symphony printed on my spirit, that I am eternal not earthly; I am not mere flesh, but I have a symphony written on my heart. He also tells me that this symphony is not only words but words that have a tune. He asks me to give Him a chance to make it a song and praise on earth.

² Zephaniah 3:19, 20

When the Holy Spirit draws near and takes the lead in our lives, the tune starts to play and it becomes a symphony that pleases God's heart and also pleases the person's heart.

People around me will also hear the symphony³, the sung poem. It will be a light on earth and eternal comfort that shines from each one of us. Each one of us is a symphony which is different from the other; there is no end to these symphonies.

We will remain an unsung poem and a symphony that is not played until we are corrected and restored from within and our deep inner needs are healed through the Holy Trinity. The poem will then be discovered and the tune will be given and our life will become a sung poem, a true symphony sung and played for the glory of God and for the visitation of the world around us.

- **The Person of the Son fills man's need for peace and forgiveness.**

The Son granted us this peace and forgiveness through His redemption⁴.

The work of redemption of the Son on the Cross is transferred to me through the Holy Spirit, purifying my conscience, washing away my guilt, and healing my hidden sins. These were sins at some point, but they are no more mere sins but rather pits inside me that are full of puss and form pockets of guilt.

³ They will hear it in spirit

⁴ Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 1:20

This reflects on the outside in the form of conflicts, sense of inferiority, attempts to compensate, and various other kinds of psychological struggles and conflicts. Guilt is the reason behind all these conflicts.

One wants to live in righteousness because something deep within him urges him to do so. Yet, he often fails and is unable to. He often feels that he is full of mistakes and sins. This makes him frustrated and causes him to be filled with pockets of guilt and despair. This reflects in his relationships with others. It also causes him to suffer self-rejection because he feels that he is bad, defeated, and unable to be victorious.

The forgiveness of Jesus, His love and His redemption heal the guilt and transform the weakness and despair into strength and hope: *'For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind'* (2Timothy 1: 7).

- **The Person of the Holy Spirit helps us and enables us in all the above matters**

He is all powerful. He is tender. He is the eternal tune.

He is the living and purifying waters.

He is the Lord, the Giver of Life.

He is the companion who comforts us and walks with us in our sojourning on earth.

He is the *"Paraclete"* who defends us before our enemy, the accuser.

Through Him, we have fellowship with the Father and the Son.

He transfers to me the Fatherhood and Motherhood of God the Father; and hence, my needs are healed. He transfers to me the warmth of the Father and surrounds me with it.

The Holy Spirit transfers to me the divine plan, my role that the Father has for me. The Son reconciled me to the Father allowing this role to be granted to me and it became possible for me to discover it. The Holy Spirit opens my eyes to see this role and message. After I see my role, the Holy Spirit enables me to carry it out. He is my strength. He walks with me and fulfils this message through me. He accompanies me every day.

The Holy Spirit is the Person of the Trinity who shows me my role and who accomplishes it in me and through me.

He dwells in me and walks with me, granting me His sweet comforting companionship.

He enables me and grants me strength.

He is the Divine energy, '*dynamos*', as the book of Acts describes Him.

He generates energy when I feel cold and frustrated.

He is the Generator of love when I feel unable to love others.

He is the Generator of Life when the death that is deep within me manifests and imposes itself on me.

He is the Generator of ability when I feel unable, crippled, and that things are beyond my ability and I cannot deal with them.

He is the continuous Generator of all that I need from the well of redemption that has already granted me these things and the Holy Spirit transfers them to me.

This is God the Trinity whom we often fail to understand and do not wish to talk about; He is the final and ultimate deep answer for the broken and destroyed humanity. This is what we should proclaim and be proud of before all the earth because wherever man is and whatever he believes, his inner depth will continue to need and call upon God the Trinity.

The ultimate restoration, satisfaction, and correction of the human soul are through the Trinity who should be our boasting and proclamation to a world that has rejected the Trinity or stumbled in the Trinity; and hence, became lost and destroyed.

To sum up, we highlighted the importance of having a correct vision of God, of oneself and of our enemy. I need to have a correct vision of God so that I may be transformed to His image. Inasmuch as my vision of God is correct, my transformation will be correct. Inasmuch as this vision is complete and rich, my transformation will be rich. If this vision is small, limited or constricted, my spiritual growth and understanding will be hindered and constricted.

The correct vision of God includes understanding that God is a Trinity. God reveals Himself to me in various ways depending on my need in order to satisfy and fill all my deep needs.

He fills my need to belong, my need for fatherhood and motherhood, for warmth and embrace, for love and being a person not an object, a person who is loved and wanted.

God also fills my need for forgiveness. I have been created to live in righteousness. He fills my need for forgiveness, purification, and righteousness; the work of redemption washes me, cleanses me and enables me to walk in righteousness.

I should also have a role and a message. The Holy Spirit reveals to me this great and eternal message and role. He makes it become a true symphony that has words and a tune; it fills me with joy; it makes me become a song and praise on earth; and it heals the wounds and the groaning of the people around me because we are called for this. This is the work of the Holy Spirit who has chosen to be our companion in our sojourning until the very end of our life.

Finally, I want to conclude with the passage in Ephesians 1: 3 – 14. Apostle Paul looks at the divine icon where sometimes he sees the Father, at other times, he sees the Son, and at times he sees the Holy Spirit:

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons [the reference here is about the Father] by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved [the Beloved is Jesus; since we are in Jesus, the Father looks upon us as beloved and as His children. When I receive this, it heals me and works wonders in me]. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, [the reference here is to the Son who grants forgiveness of sins] according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in

all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance [the reference here is about the Holy Spirit when He works in me making me taste eternal life] until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.’

- Verse 6: ‘*to the praise of the glory of His grace*’ (the reference is to the Father).
- Verse 12: ‘*to the praise of His glory*’ (the reference is to the Son)
- Verse 14: ‘*to the praise of His glory*’ (the reference is to the Holy Spirit)

This is the Trinity and His revelation in this passage.