

Calvary Protestant Evangelical Free Church

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CALVARY CHRONICLE

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GOD'S TRIPLE TEAM

J.I. Packer is perhaps one of the most influential theologians of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Like C.S. Lewis before him, he has spent a lifetime popularizing complex theological ideas and reaching a diverse audience through winsome writing alive with passion and charisma. I would like to share with you one of Packer's articles. I think you will be better equipped in your walk with Christ.

Pastor Charles Lucchesi

The Trinity isn't a technicality, but the central relationship of the Christian faith.

**AN INTERVIEW WITH J.I. PACKER | POSTED
FEBRUARY 3, 2014**

Some elements of Christian doctrine are like the catalytic converter of a car. Drivers know it's "in there somewhere" and the car probably couldn't function without it. But if ever asked to explain exactly what it is and how it works, they wouldn't know where to start.

J.I. Packer fears that many preachers have adopted this attitude concerning the Trinity, one of the most important tenets of the Christian faith. But the Trinity isn't a technicality; it's the central relationship of the Christian faith.

Why do you think preachers shy away from the topic of the Trinity in their sermons?

I think it's because most of them have been taught the Trinity is what in the trade we call a *theologoumenon*, that is, something that Christians are supposed to spit out as part of their orthodoxy without needing to understand it very well. Preachers know that the people in the pew aren't interested in that sort of lumber for the mind, and so they try to dodge it simply because they're afraid that people will be bored if the truth of the Trinity is focused on in any way at all.

We have the idea - one we've taken for granted and never examined - that we can get on without any knowledge about the Trinity. That is a problem.

Why is the Trinity important for preachers facing a postmodern, or post-Christian, culture?

The postmodern/post-Christian culture has jettisoned the Trinity, just as it has jettisoned the rest of supernatural Christianity. As a result, what it embraces is a sort of syncretism - this idea that all religions are more or less the same, that all religions can be melded together in a sort of general, unfocused religiosity of mind. And as long as we retain this religiosity as a feeling and decency as a lifestyle, well, we're all sharers in whatever good things Christianity once offered - call it salvation if you like. But everybody's in it together.

And so there's no sense that people need to be born again. There's no sense that Christians are different altogether at root level from non-Christians in society.

It's this blending and melding that we have to battle, because it isn't true. It doesn't match what God tells us in his Word. In fact, it will lead people into the delusion of supposing they're all right when they're all wrong.

(continued on next page)

So what essential truths about the Trinity must accompany our preaching of the gospel?

The gospel comes to us in the New Testament through the lens of the Trinity. In preaching the gospel, the Trinity is part of our message.

That is what the Lord Jesus did, in fact, when Nicodemus came to him by night. Jesus told him about the kingdom of God, which Nicodemus and all his Jewish peers were anxious to be a part of. Jesus explained that, in order to enter the kingdom of God, you've got to be born again, that is, born of the Spirit of God. And in order to be born again, of the Spirit of God, you must attend to the message about Jesus and learn to trust him as your sinner-bearer.

So the gospel involves all three persons - the Father, whose kingdom it is; the Son, who was to die on the cross; and the Holy Spirit, who brings you to new birth.

And I would stress that you cannot preach the gospel without that Trinitarian frame of reference.

What happens if you leave one or another aspect out?

If you leave out the Holy Spirit, you'll give people the idea that it's entirely up to them whether or not they come into the kingdom, even though it's actually a work of God changing the heart that is needed to bring them in.

If you leave out the Cross, you're buying into this post-Christian ideology of religiosity - the religious feeling, unfocused but sobering to the heart, that people mistake for real religion.

And of course you have to speak of God and his kingdom, because that's what it's all about: a relationship with a God who in fact turns out - at least, when you look with the guidance of Scripture to help you - to be three persons in unity.

This unity is beyond our understanding, but is displayed in the work of the gospel and the message of the gospel. The simplest way to explain it to anybody is to say that God is a Divine Team - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - working together in all of God's works, but now particularly through the gospel for the salvation of us needy sinners.

Concrete metaphors explaining the nature of the Trinity invariably break down, and perhaps mislead us as much as they teach us. Is there a way to overcome this?

It's certainly true that all the classic illustrations of the Trinity break down. You only have to look at them twice to realize that the Trinity is not like water, which at different temperatures can be liquid, solid, or steam. The Trinity is not like a cloverleaf, where you have the three little leaves making one big leaf. The Trinity is not like a cube, which has a number of sides but nonetheless is one cube.

Those illustrations all miss the truth that the Trinity is three *persons* - persons who are more personal than we

are, persons whose personhood ought to be highlighted and shouted from the housetops. Neither the Father nor the Son nor the Holy Spirit is inanimate. Each of the three is not a *thing*, but a living *person*.

If we have to use a formula, the best formula is this: he - that's God - is they. And they - that's the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - are he. Three persons, one God. But you're highlighting the fact that we are talking about three persons.

As we preach, we can talk about the individual members of the Trinity and their uniqueness as persons. Or we can talk about their collective unity. How do we preach on the Trinity collectively?

Pick up and run with the idea of the Team. In all human teams, of course, the players are separate persons, even though they work as a team. But in this particular team we're talking about, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all involved. The New Testament says so.

And then stress the fact that we are not tritheists, because the Bible all the way through insists that there's only one God. That's as much New Testament as it is Old.

The New Testament all the way through holds to the relational pattern of the Son doing the Father's will, the Spirit doing the will of the Father and the Son, and three being together in every stage of everyone's Christian life. But each is still distinct in the ministry that he has to the Christian, and in the relation that he bears to the other two persons.

So preaching about the Trinity is essentially about describing relationships?

Yes, describing the relationships within the reality of gospel grace at every stage.

Conversion is a good example. It's a process, and there is a lot to say about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the process of conversion.

Sanctification is another stage. It's seeking to do the will of the Father in the knowledge that the Lord Jesus is with you always - he is beside you to encourage you. And the Holy Spirit is in your heart to strengthen you and enable you to understand what all this requires of you. So it's the Father, Son, and Spirit together.

In Christian witness, it's the same story. The Father and the Son both send us to be the Lord's witnesses in the world. And they promise that the Holy Spirit in us will be prompting us about what to say in witness situations. And we witness to Christ in the power of the Spirit. We witness to the Father in the power of the Spirit who comes from the Father and the Son. It's a Trinitarian reality.

So, if you ask, "How do we get around to preaching about the Trinity?" I say, "If we preach the Bible properly, the question really should be, 'How can we ever *stop* preaching about the Trinity?' Because the whole Christian life is a Trinitarian business."

Update On Worship Service

Slowly our area is starting to open again and get back to some kind of normalcy, but some restrictions still apply where gatherings take place. To keep everyone's safety in mind, Calvary will continue to have two worship services on Sunday mornings. **The 9:00 a.m. service will be held downstairs** in the Family Fellowship Room, and **the 11:00 a.m. service will be held upstairs** in the sanctuary.

Safety guidelines will still be observed such as wearing a face mask, safe distancing from one another, and having hand sanitizing stations available. Sunday School, Nursery, and Meet & Greet are still on hold for now. Children's Church will continue to meet on-line on Sunday mornings.

Some of you have asked how to financially give to the church - when attending the service, an offering plate will be in the back of the room; donations can be mailed directly to the church or even dropped off; or you can donate on-line through the church website using PayPal.

For those who cannot attend the Sunday service, the worship service is still being recorded and will be posted on the church website (www.cpcbaldwin.com - click on "YouTube") and streamed on YouTube at www.youtube.com (search for Calvary Church, Baldwin, NY).

Church Business Goes On

The Annual Congregational Meeting will be held **Wednesday, September 23rd**, at 7:30 p.m. This is a business meeting where church members will be voting on the proposed budget and for those to serve on the Church Board.

In moving forward, **the Nominating Committee is now seeking nominations for those who wish to serve on the Church Board.** The Church Constitution has an outline of qualifications and duties of a Church Board Trustee. To nominate someone, please contact Harold Verity, the current chairperson of the committee. Harold can be reached at 516-208-3483, or e-mail sanman3829@aol.com.

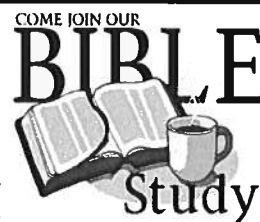
Keeping Connected

It has been challenging to keep in touch with family and friends these past five months, but we are all doing the best we can.

To keep the church family connected, communications are sent out weekly via e-mail (sometimes more frequently) with current information, updated health concerns, and prayer requests.

If you have not been getting the church's e-mail updates, please contact the church office (516-223-4070) and give your information to Sharon. We will gladly add you to the e-mail list.

Bible Studies



The Wednesday Night Bible Study has resumed and is meeting at the church at 7:00 p.m. During the study the group is socializing (although physically distancing themselves), studying from the book of Galatians, and having time for prayer.

The Thursday Night Ladies Bible Study meets via Zoom at 7:30 p.m. The ladies are studying the book of Acts. To get connected, contact Barbara Lucchesi. Her e-mail is: barbiluc@aol.com.

Fall Schedule Changes

There have been many changes to events at the church, and now we enter into the fall and have more changes to announce.

For safety measures, **Neighborhood Night will not be held this year**, and as we don't know what will happen in the next few months, the **October Seniors Luncheon will not be held** as well.

To keep up-to-date on all events you can either call the church, information will be sent out by e-mail, or keep connected with the monthly newsletter.

Calvary Chronicle

Calvary Protestant Church
2801 Park Avenue
Baldwin, NY 11510

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BIRTHDAYS

SEPTEMBER

4th David Jones
5th Denis Sandoval-
Vallejos
6th Zoraida Rose
7th Miki Hilburger
7th Amanda Pink Hoffman
9th William Hilburger (Jr.)
10th Kathryn Chalavoutis
13th Laura Hetzel
14th Becky Carman
14th Myrtle Glover
18th Fred Valentine
19th Karen Dowling
20th Lou Capasso
21st Fitz Alcindor (Jr.)
24th Derek Watts
26th Gabrielle Alcindor
29th Pete Ekstrom
29th Thalia Waldvogel

OCTOBER

4th Samantha Hetzel
Schultz
6th Victoria Manuel
10th Barbara Corcoran
13th Vincent Elcock
15th Robert Brown Jr.
17th Stephanie Wong
18th Brett Rose
18th Eden Nembhard
21st Connor Watts
22nd Ellen Heneghan
23rd Barbara Jamison
25th Vickie Mandato
29th Ryan Waldvogel

**Happy
Birthday!**

ANNIVERSARIES

SEPTEMBER

7th Bob & Nancy Bennett
8th Harold & Lois Verity
18th Tom & Peg Corcoran
19th Leigh & Barbara Grant
24th Jeovanni & Daniele Nembhard
26th Fitz & Magalie Alcindor
27th Jimmy & Ellen Heneghan
28th Mike & Rebecca Senita
29th Jason & Dianne Miller

OCTOBER

2nd Howard & Maryann Brockway
8th Vincent & Rosemary Rotolo
10th Denis & Giselle Sandoval
12th Wes & Becky Carman
16th John & Lisa Conroy
16th Tony & Sarabeth DiCostanzo

**Without faith, a person can do nothing;
with faith, all things are possible.**