

2 Corinthians 13:14

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Date: 07 August 2016

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[0 : 00] This morning we want to talk about our God. The God who has saved us. The God that we know, the God that we worship, the God that we serve.

You know, there is something about our God that is wonderful, thrilling, stunning, glorious, beautiful, unbelievable. There's something about our God that is a reason for unceasing wonder and adoration and praise.

What is it? It is this, that our God, the God of our salvation, the God with whom we have to do is triune. Our God is a Trinity. Our God is both one and three.

Let's be very clear what we mean by that when we say that God is a Trinity. Our God is one God. He's not three gods. And yet, within that one God, there are three eternally distinct persons.

You know, we have hints of this in the Old Testament. And then it becomes very clear in the New Testament. And then when you go back and look at these verses in the Old Testament, in light of the New Testament, it is so clear.

[1 : 29] Old Testament and New Testament. The triune God, the Trinity is there. This is Deuteronomy 6.4. This is the creed of the Old Testament called the Shema. Very famous words.

Deuteronomy 6.4. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And yet, within that proclamation of God's oneness is a hint that this God is more than just a single person. The Hebrew word there for one is not just the oneness of absolute singularity. It is the oneness of unity. That word is used twice in the Old Testament.

In Genesis 2. And in Malachi 2. For the oneness of unity of a husband and wife in marriage. Very interesting.

Let's look at another verse in the Old Testament. And when you really think about it, this is an amazing verse. This is the prophet Isaiah writing in Isaiah 44. This is verse 6. Listen carefully.

[2 : 38] Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and His Redeemer, the Lord of hosts. I am the first. I am the last. Besides me, there is no God.

Who's talking here? The Lord. The one who says, I am God and there is no other God. And yet, the one who is the Lord is also the King of Israel and His Redeemer.

Here's one God who is, at least here, two persons. So there are hints in the Old Testament, but it's even clearer in the New Testament.

The baptismal formula that Jesus gave to His disciples in the Great Commission in Matthew 28, verse 19. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

You know, we are baptized in a name, one name, singular, the one name of one God. And yet, this one name consists of three persons.

[3 : 48] Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You know, like it or not, understand it or not, this God, the God of the Bible, this God, the God who has saved us, this God, the God whom we are to tell people about, is both one and three.

How can that be? That doesn't seem to make sense. That doesn't seem to be logical. It defies our understanding.

At times, we just cannot wrap our mental arms around it. I want to suggest to you this morning that I think as Christians, we tend to take the wrong approach to the Trinity.

We tend to view the Trinity in the wrong way. We tend to think of the Trinity as a theological puzzle. We tend to think of the Trinity as an intellectual oddity.

It's kind of a quirky doctrine. We know it's true. We know it's in the Bible. We have to believe it. But do we have to talk about it? And you know, sometimes we're slightly embarrassed when people ask us about the Trinity.

[5 : 02] I remember when I first came to this church 11 years ago, I started to work on the book table. Every Saturday morning, we'd meet people on the book table with David Barnes. And we would talk to lots of people.

And very often, people who were Muslims would come up to us. And I knew that sooner or later, it would come up. I hoped it wouldn't come up. But it always did.

They would ask about the Trinity. And somehow, I would just inwardly cringe. You know something? I was so wrong in my attitude.

Our God, the Triune God, is a cause for wonder, awe, amazement, worship, and love. Our Triune God is our greatest treasure.

Now, let me give you the point of this sermon right at the very beginning. The Trinity is not so much to be understood, intellectually comprehended, but is to be experienced, enjoyed, appreciated, loved, and worshiped.

[6 : 10] I'll say it again. The Trinity is not so much to be understood and intellectually comprehended, but to be experienced, enjoyed, and loved, and worshiped.

In other words, I believe God calls us to go with our hearts, where maybe our heads cannot go. Our intellect cannot go. But with our hearts, we can love this God, whom we cannot fully comprehend and understand.

We can worship this God and be filled with awe because of this God, who is both one and free.

That's kind of been a long introduction before we get to our text.

Our text is 2 Corinthians 13, 14, just one verse. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Have you ever heard that verse before? I think you probably have. Where have you heard it? Well, you've heard it here. At church, at the end of every service, we have what is called a benediction.

[7 : 28] And that is one of the benedictions that we use. The word benediction simply means a word of blessing. A benediction is not exactly a prayer.

You notice we don't necessarily close our eyes during a benediction. A benediction is a word spoken in faith that the blessing described in the benediction may actually be imparted and made real by God in the people to whom it is spoken.

Many Old Testament books end in benediction. Many Old Testament books end in benedictions. So here at the end of 2 Corinthians, Paul wants to impart a blessing to these people. He gives them a written benediction.

This is, it describes the blessing that he wants these people to experience. And what is so striking about this blessing?

It is so very Trinitarian. The blessing that Paul wants these people to experience is the work of the whole Trinity. The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

[8 : 34] So we are going to unpack this benediction this morning. And I want us to see the specific blessing that comes from each member of the Trinity in our salvation.

Within the Trinity, we have already mentioned this morning, there is a distinction of persons. But there is also a distinction of roles in salvation.

In this verse, from our Lord Jesus Christ, what do we receive? We receive grace. In this verse, from God the Father, what do we receive?

We receive love. And in this verse, from the Holy Spirit, what do we receive? We receive fellowship. So let's think about the first part.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Brothers and sisters, we are sinful people. Brothers and sisters, we need God's grace. We usually make this distinction between grace and mercy.

[9 : 37] Mercy is when God spares us what we deserve. Mercy is good. We all need mercy. We need God to spare us what we deserve. And that is an eternity of separation from him in hell.

But we need something more than just mercy. We also need grace. We define grace by saying that grace is when God gives us what we do not deserve.

Grace is when God gives us things undeserved, unearned, unmerited, absolutely free. What do we need? We need forgiveness. We need righteousness. We need heaven.

By grace. As a free gift from God. Now the thing that I want you to notice here, in this blessing, grace is particularly associated with Christ.

And if you look at the rest of the New Testament, you find that grace particularly is associated with Christ. This is John chapter 1, verse 14.

[10:35] I'm going to read this quickly. You don't have to turn here. John chapter 1, verse 14. And we have seen his glory. The glory as of the only Son of the Father. Full of grace.

Verse 16. For from his fullness we've all received grace. Upon grace. Verse 17. For the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Crystal clear. John's emphasis here. Jesus is the conduit of grace. Grace is through Jesus. Same thing in Romans chapter 5, verse 2.

By whom? That is Christ. We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand. Access to grace is by Christ. Very interesting.

The second part of that same chapter. Romans chapter 5. Maybe perhaps you've studied that. You know that is the contrast between Adam and Christ. Paul writes about the heads of two races.

[11:35] Adam the head of the human race. And Jesus the head of a new humanity. The head of the church. The head of his people. And Paul here in this passage talks about what the human race receives from their head.

From Adam. And what we as Christians receive from our living head. The Lord Jesus Christ. And notice the emphasis. What we receive from our head. The Lord Jesus Christ.

This is Romans 5, verse 15. Much more the grace of God and the gift of grace which is by one man. Jesus Christ has abounded to many.

Verse 17. Much more they which receive abundance of grace. And of the gift of righteousness. Shall reign in life by one. Jesus Christ. Even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life.

By Jesus Christ. Three times do you see the connection. Grace by Christ. Grace is exclusively in the person of Christ. It is in verse 15.

[12:37] It's by one man. Verse 17. It's by one. In other words. Grace. Is nowhere else. But in Christ.

Those who are united to Christ. Those for whom Christ is their head. There's an abundance of grace. I mentioned earlier that at the end of many New Testament books we have benedictions. We just read the benediction that is at the end of 2 Corinthians. But listen to the one at the end of 1 Corinthians. 16. 13. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

The benediction that is at the end of 2 Thessalonians. 3. 18. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. One last verse here.

This is Hebrews chapter 4. Hebrews of course about Jesus Christ. As our great high priest. Who stands before God for us. And this in light of that.

[13:37] Here's the instructions we receive. This is Hebrews chapter 4 verse 16. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace. That we may obtain mercy.

And find grace to help in time of day. When you and I come to God in prayer. What do we come to? We come to a throne. This is a throne of grace.

That's what we find when you and I come in prayer to God's throne. Now the question is. Why is the throne of grace? Why is it a throne of grace for you and me?

We're sinful people. What should it be? It should be a seat of judgment for you and me. But when we come. It's a throne of grace. And the question is. Why is it a throne of grace? If we look just two verses earlier.

In verse 14 there in Hebrews chapter 4. Here's the answer. Seeing then that we have a great. A great high priest that is passed. Into the heavens.

[14:35] Jesus the Son of God. Jesus passed through the heavens. Jesus ascended to the throne of God.

Why is the throne of God for you and me? A throne of grace rather than a seat of mercy and judgment. Because Jesus is there.

Jesus has transformed the throne of God for you and me. From a seat of judgment. From a seat of punishment. To a throne of grace.

You see the connection. It's so clear in the New Testament. Christ in grace. He's the source. He's the conduit. He's the receptacle. He's the reservoir. It's in no other place.

There is no other source. But in Christ. It's in abundance. The blessing of God. It's.

[15:33] Trinitarian. From Christ. Grace. But what about the Father? That brings us to our second point. Again 2 Corinthians 13. 14. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And. The love. Of God. You know. Maybe I've shared this with you before. I know I've shared this with some people. You know. As a young Christian. I had a false concept. About God the Father. You know. When I would think about Jesus. Oh. Hey. Jesus. Love me. Jesus. Left heaven. He came to this earth. To suffer. He came to this earth. To hang on a cross. And to die. For me. To bear my sins. Jesus. Loved me. Oh. But the Father. He's different. He's holy. He's righteous. He's wrathful. He's a judge. [16:29] He must judge sin. So what did Jesus do? He died on the cross. And because of his work. Now he forces God the Father. To forgive me. And to accept me. And to let me into heaven. You see the false concept that I had.

The loving Savior who died for me. The stern. The stern. Harsh. Father. For Jesus. Forced. To accept me. And to let me in heaven. You know.

I could not. Have been more wrong. My thinking could not have been more unbiblical. What is behind. Behind. The work.

Of Christ. What is behind. Christ coming to earth. To. To die for us. To give us. Grace. Where does it come from. What is the ultimate reason.

For everything that happens. To us. In salvation. It's the love. Of the Father. John 316.

[17:26] For God so loved the world. That he gave. His only son. Romans 5a. God shows his love for us. And that while we were still sinners. Christ died for us. 1 John 410.

In this is love. Not that we've loved God. But that he's loved us. And sent his son. To be a propitiation. For our sins. What is the source. What is the fountainhead. What is the cause. Of our salvation. You know. When I was growing up. My parents would very often. Put us as a family. Into the car. And we would drive up. 20 miles.

Drive north. Up into the mountains. We lived at the foot of the mountains. So very easily. We could drive up. And be. In the mountains. And there was a place. That we liked to go to. We called it for life.

We better turn the stumping around. Why do we call it that? I'm not exactly sure. But anyway. We would pull over. And we would get out of the car. And there was a trail.

[18:20] And we would begin to follow the trail. Up the mountain. And very shortly. There was a beautiful spot. And it had a mountain stream. And it caught in a pool.

And here was a waterfall. And another mountain. And another pool. Of cool mountain water. And another waterfall. You had these cascading streams.

These waterfalls. And pools. With cool mountain water. And it was a beautiful place. It was a quiet place. It was a gorgeous place. But where did the water come from?

So what did we do? Several times. We climbed up the mountain. And we would follow that stream. Up the mountain. We would go around trees. We would go around rocks.

We'd jump from rock to rock. Going up the mountain. And then finally we got to the source. The spring. You know the Bible tells us about our salvation.

[19:22] It tells us about the Lord Jesus Christ. What he's done for us. It tells us about what the Holy Spirit does for us. But what is the ultimate source behind it? What is the thing that set it into motion?

What caused it to be? The love of the Father. That is the source.

Let me tell you. If you know the Lord Jesus Christ. No one could love you more than the Father. Now what did he do?

Before you ever worked. He looked out into the future. And he saw you. And he saw you in your sin. He saw you in your need. He saw you in your condemnation. And he chose you. And he fixed his love upon you.

[20:20] And he sent his son to die for you. And he sent his Holy Spirit. To work faith and repentance in you. Who loves you? Who is the source of all love in salvation?

It is the Father. No one could love you more. Let these words wash over you. This is 1 John 3.

1. See what kind of love the Father has given us. That we should be called children of God. And so we are. The blessing of God.

The triune blessing of God. From the Son, grace. He is the repository of grace. From the Father, love. He is the ultimate source. His love.

Now what about the Holy Spirit? What is his role in the triune blessing of God? That brings us to our third point here. Let's read again. 2 Corinthians 13. 14. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[21 : 16] And the love of God. And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Be with you all. What is particularly connected here with the Holy Spirit? The fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

The great word koinonia. Koinonia means communion. Fellowship. Participation. Together. Mostly we use the word fellowship to talk about what? Our fellowship with other believers.

With other Christians. Recently I went with Paul to Spain. And we went to a conference of Spanish pastors. Got to meet lots of new brothers.

Got to share with them. We got to talk together. We got to build a relationship. And enjoy hearing their stories. And they enjoyed hearing our stories. It was a great time of fellowship.

You know, fellowship. The word fellowship implies a relationship. It implies communication. It implies that we share something together. That we enjoy something together.

[22 : 19] But here, the fellowship is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. It's not talking about our fellowship with one another. So what is it talking about? Is it talking about our fellowship with the Holy Spirit?

With the third person of the Trinity? You know, I don't think so. Rather, I think this is a reference to what? Our fellowship with the Father and with the Son by means of the Holy Spirit.

Listen to 1 John 1, verse 3. That which we have seen and heard we proclaim to you so that you too may have fellowship with us.

There's that fellowship, Christian to Christian. Notice what follows. And indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

As Christians, we have a relationship with the Father and the Son. He speaks to us through His Word.

[23 : 21] We respond to Him. We have a real relationship. We're conscious that God the Father, God the Son, these are real people that we have a relationship with. But what is it that makes them more than words on a page?

What is it that makes them more than theological concepts? What is it that makes them more than just ideas in our mind? It's the Holy Spirit that makes them real to us.

And takes it from the realm of merely intellectual to the realm of a real experience of fellowship. With a true and a living God.

So the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. That's the fellowship with God the Father, God the Son. That the Holy Spirit makes real to us. But let's take this a step further.

You know, I believe that fellowship of the Holy Spirit here is not only our fellowship with the Father and the Son. But I believe it's also sharing in the fellowship within the Holy Trinity.

[24 : 25] You know, I think that one of the most helpful illustrations is to understand the illustrations of the family. And there are lots of illustrations that are not helpful.

But the one that I believe is the most helpful is to think of the Trinity as a family. A family of love. Where there are wonderful loving relationships. Where there's wonderful communication going on. Where appreciation is expressed.

Where love is expressed. The Trinity is a family of love. Have you ever been to a family reunion? Did you go to those as a kid?

I remember going to family reunions as a kid. And you'd go. Maybe you went to your grandparents' house. And there'd be lots of different aunts and uncles. Lots of cousins there. They had come from far and wide.

[25 : 25] Everybody had gathered together as a big family. You remember what went on in those family reunions? I didn't ever have an aunt come up to you. A kid cheer on the cheek and say, Oh, how you've grown.

You're such a big boy. You're such a big girl. Or this line. You ever hear this line? Oh, you're so cute. Family reunions.

You'd all get together. You'd eat together. You'd spend time together. And sometimes they're very good. Sometimes it's a loving family. And it's a delight to be together.

And to communicate together. And to catch up together. But sometimes they're not so good. Sometimes there's tension.

There's stress. There's anger. There's bitterness. There's unforgiveness. Sometimes when families get together, you can cut the tension with a knife. You know, human families are what?

[26 : 26] They are a mixture of what? They're a mixture of good and bad things. But I want to tell you, there is one family. It is only good things.

There is one family in which there's only love. There's one family that perfectly expresses appreciation for the other members of the family and loves the other members of that family. What is that family? That family is the Trinity. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It's the most loving family that's ever been.

It's the happiest family that's ever been. It's the most joyous family that's ever been. The Trinity, it's constantly a party. It's constantly celebration, delighting in each other, loving each other.

And what happens when you become a Christian? You are united to Christ. And you share in the life of that family.

[27 : 33] You and I as Christians, we get to share for all eternity in the fellowship, in the achievement, in the communication of the happiest family that's ever been. And that is the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

And I think that's one of the things that is referred to here. The blessing of God. The fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

He makes that real to us. What have we seen this morning? The blessing of God is Trinitarian. What do we receive from the Son? He's the source of grace. He's the depository of grace. It flows from Him, from His work, from His death, from His resurrection.

Flowing to us is grace. An abundance of grace. What do we see from the Father? Father, the Father's love. He's the reason behind it.

[28 : 33] He's the source of it all. And what do we receive from the Holy Spirit? He makes real our relationship with God. It's not just a theological concept, but God is a real person.

The Father is a real person. The Son is a real person. The Holy Spirit is a real person. We feel that and know that and experience that in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit enables us to join in the life of the most wonderful, blessed family that has ever been.

I want to give you two points of application here. Number one, enjoy the Trinity. Don't try and figure out the Trinity.

Don't get twisted in knots trying to figure out the Trinity intellectual. Don't get wrapped around the axle by trying to figure out the Trinity. Let your heart go where your head cannot go.

Enjoy the Trinity. Begin to discern as you study the Scriptures. Begin to discern the roles of each member of the Trinity in our salvation. and as you pray, as you worship, begin to praise each member of the Trinity for what they've done.

[29 : 58] Let your worship be Trinity. And begin to love each member of the Trinity for what they've done. You know, I believe that one of the marks of Christian maturity is we grow in love for God, but I believe we get to know God better.

But part of that is beginning to know each member of the Trinity better and developing an appreciation and love for each member of the Trinity. Let that be part of your prayer life.

Let that be part of your worship. Love the Trinity. Worship the Trinity. Let this God that we cannot understand and intellectually comprehend, let Him fill you with awe.

As your mind thinks, He's one, He's three. As you go back and forth, this God that we cannot understand, this God we cannot intellectually grasp, let that fill you with awe.

Awe is a component of worship. Awe. Let the Trinity lead you to worship. Love this God. Enjoy this God.

[31 : 05] Second and last point. Experience the Trinity. experience the Trinity every day. How? You know, there's something that we do as Christians that is very, very Trinitarian.

There's something that we do as Christians that is an experience of all three members of the Trinity. It couldn't be more Trinitarian. What am I talking about? I am talking about prayer.

Prayer. If you say just one or two words in prayer, that involves the whole Trinity. If you open your mouth and you say, O God, that very act involves the whole Trinity.

One last verse I want to read to you. This is Ephesians 2.18. Paul writes here, For through Him, that is through Christ, we both, that is both Jews and Gentiles, have access in one Spirit to the Father.

When you pray, it is always this way. When you pray, it is always through Christ. In the Spirit to the Father.

[32 : 27] Prayer is the most Trinitarian thing you can do. And so truly, when you are praying, you are beginning to participate in the life of the Triune God.

In His desires, in His pleasures, in what is on His heart. Brothers and sisters, do not be embarrassed by the Trinity.
It is the most wonderful treasure that we have about our God. Enjoy this Triune God.
Pray to this Triune God. Worship this Triune God. Love this Triune God. Now, and then He'll do it forever. Let's bow and pray.