“Love Plus Grace Plus Communion”

December 6, 2015

John 10:22-33

This past week I was again blessed and blessed by something that I just don’t want to ever take for granted. Janet and I have four married children. And we’ve got nine grandchildren. Now, all nine of those children are growing up in Christian homes. And all of those children have parents *and* grandparents who know and serve the LORD. All of them also have close relationships with their grandparents. So, they have Christian parents with Christian grandparents in every case.

And Janet and I are hugely blessed by those relationships. We also know all of the other grandparents. But here’s what’s so wonderful: **relationships matter**. And good relationships matter more.

So, consider this with me today. For each of you who are saved, you have an even closer relationship than the ones you have with your siblings, your spouse, your parents, your grandparents, etc. You are directly related; not only to God; but with three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Think with me about that.

Today’s sermon title is “Love Plus Grace Plus Communion.” But my topic is the trinity and your relationship to the trinity. Please take your Bible with me and open it to the last chapter of II Corinthians; chapter 13.

Shall we pray?

Look with me, please, at just one verse II Corinthians 13:14. *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”*

As you can see, this comes as the last verse of the book. And the last lines of a book are often quite memorable. In this case, it’s the last line of a letter; written to the Church at Corinth by the Apostle Paul. So, the last lines of a letter are also important and memorable.

But did you notice that the verse is one of the many Trinitarian verses in the Bible? There are those writers and even preachers that don’t believe in the trinity. There are entire religious groups that take a definite stand against the doctrine of the Trinity. But what does the Scripture teach and what does this passage say here?

II Corinthians 13:14. *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”*

The Bible presents God as He is. It teaches us the trinity. And this verse is just one of the many verses that tell us that. And we take it by faith. If the Bible describes God as He really it, then that’s what we should not just believe. But that’s what we should live by.

Let me begin with a definition. How would you define the trinity? The trinity is God as He really is; One God and three distinct Persons, co-equal and co-eternal, and completely co-operative; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

And since that is Who God is, we should see ourselves in a relationship with God as the Trinity.

First, believe the theology of the Bible.

Theology = “the science or the study of God.”

Now, why study God? There is a constant need in the heart of every man to study theology; to discover for himself just what the Bible teaches about God. And why? My answer is this. How can you have a relationship with Someone you know little or nothing about?

Janet and I met in college. And, for sure, when I met her, I didn’t know her at all. I saw her at a distance. I liked her at a distance. Today, after being married to her and now having lived with her for over forty years, don’t you think I know her much, much more than I did in 1973?

Folks, the same holds true with every relationship; but especially when it comes to the true and living God. When I became a Believer in Christ, I knew very little about Jesus, the Son. I knew little about the Father, and even less about the Holy Spirit. Now, having walked with the LORD for nearly fifty years and having studied theology; I’ve learned, to some degree, what God is like.

And why is theology so significant? Why is the study of the Person and work of God so important to our daily lives? Folks, the LORD is your Creator. He’s your Heavenly Father. He’s your Savior and a whole lot more. Now, how is it even possible to live a life that pleases God when you know so little about Him? You were created to know, to enjoy, and to please God.

But look at this from the opposite side? What if you found time for everything you liked to do, but never took the time to study and learn what He’s like; to learn God’s word personally and discover all you can about Him? Where does that leave you?

Here’s where.

I Timothy 6:2 *“…these things teach and exhort (3) If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness;*

*(4) He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting [foolishly harping] about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife [quarrelling], railings [dissension], evil surmisings [suspicions], (5) Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.”*

All this because we won’t consent to the wholesome words of Scripture, even the words of our LORD Jesus Christ and His doctrine, the teaching which is according to godliness. Folks, when you won’t take the time to do your own homework in the Bible; when you don’t study or learn God’s word at home, you make yourself into something or someone that you don’t want to be.

And, as we observe our present-day society in America, are we the kind of nation we’d like to be?

So, theology is important. Practically speaking, it makes you into both a happy and a godly soul.

Martin Luther said this about God. He writes here as though God is speaking to you. “See to it that you let Me alone be your God, and never seek another,” i.e. Whatever you lack of good things, expect it of Me, and look to Me for it, and whenever you suffer misfortune and distress, creep and cling to Me. I, yes, I, will give you enough and help you out of every need; only let not your heart cleave to or rest in any other.”

So, first, believe the theology of the Bible. If and when God says something about Himself, trust it. Believe it. And, as Jesus says, “the truth will make you free.”

Second, believe the benedictions of the Bible.

II Corinthians 13:14, this last verse of this epistle is a benediction.

A benediction is a good word. There are some twenty or twenty-one benedictions in the Bible; some you will find at the beginning of the epistles and some at the end.

Here are just a few benedictions. Romans 1:7 *“To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

And at the end of Romans, we find this. Romans 15:33 *“Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.”*

Ephesians 6:23, the last verse of Ephesians says this. *“Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (24) Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.”*

II Thessalonians 3:16 has this benediction. *“Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.”*

And here’s the last verse of II Thessalonians. II Thessalonians 3:18 *“The grace of our LORD Jesus Christ be with you all.”*

I Timothy 1:2 says this *“Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

And the closing words of Hebrews says this. Hebrews 13:20 says this. *“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, (21) Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”*

And there are plenty more where those come from. Benedictions are wishes and hopes and prayers of the one writing or speaking this good word.

And we still use benedictions today. Many, if not, most colleges and universities use a benediction when closing a graduation ceremony. Well, here’s an interesting one.

“In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful, O Creator of All Things, Evolver of all things, Necessary Existent, known by many names, Who has spoken to all people in all times through an abundance of prophets monopolized by no one race or land, we gratefully acknowledge your presence with us here today.”

This one was said by Imam Imad-ad-Dean Ahmad, President of the Minaret of Freedom Institute at the American University of Public Affairs 2012 graduation.

A benediction is simply “a good word.” The Apostle Paul often says a good word when he begins and he adds one when he’s done saying what he wants to say.

I quite often say this as I close up a phone call “God bless you.” That’s a benediction.

Now, this one here at the end of II Corinthians is clearly Trinitarian. II Corinthians 13:14. *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”*

And this one stands out because it reminds you of that sweet and glorious relationship you have with the Trinity.

First, then, believe the theology of the Bible.

Second, believe the benedictions of the Bible.

Third, believe the message of II Corinthians 12:13.

Here we see three of the greatest needs in the human heart.

First, there’s the grace of the LORD Jesus Christ.

Whenever anyone recognizes he or she deserves the opposite of consideration and love, they are offered the grace of the LORD. Grace is God’s undeserved concern and favor.

Grace is the doorway into a relationship with God.

Ephesians 2:8 says this. *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: (9) Not of works, lest any man should boast.”*

Coming into a right standing and relationship with God has never and can never be found by our good deeds. Rather, it’s through His grace that we are saved.

Romans 5:17 *“For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one,* *Jesus Christ.)”*

And here’s another word from Paul in Romans about the grace of the LORD Jesus Christ. Romans 11:16 *“And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.”*

There is nothing more pronounced in Scripture than grace versus works when it comes to the matter of personal salvation.

You see, apart from grace, all you have is works. Grace is what God extends to you and me. Works is what I think I can offer to God so He will do something for me.

Your relationship to the LORD is a grace-based relationship. He is perpetually and persistently gracious towards you and me. And there is not a single thing I can do to deserve anything from the LORD.

Here’s the basis of my relationship with God: unconditional grace.

I Corinthians 3:21 *“Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are your's; (22) Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's; (23) And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.”*

If you live any other way, you are reverting to a works-based relationship to the LORD. If God tells you that something is yours, why do you doubt it? And why do you live as though all things are not yours?

Romans 8:17 *“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;…”*

II Corinthians 9:8 *“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:…”*

II Corinthians 12:9 *“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”*

Look at your life in Christ like this. Suppose Jesus said to His Father, “No, all things are not mine, as You say.” Can anyone here conceive of Jesus saying such a thing to His Father? Never! Then, how are you living in relationship with Christ? Are you trying your best? Are you trying to be the best Christian you can be?

Folks, it’s your relationship. If it’s by grace you live, then, it’s not by works. Any and all of your works are the effect of Christ living in you. So, when it comes to the grace of Christ, are you saying to Him that your relationship to Him is based upon you or based upon Him? What is true is that your relationship, Christian; everything in your life; every part of your life is a grace relationship. He operates and deals with you solely based upon His grace; not your works.

First, my relationship with Jesus is a grace-relationship.

Second, my relationship with the Father is a love-relationship.

This little phrase is one of the most important phrases I have ever heard. “The love of God” is found in twelve different places in the Bible. Here are just a few of them.

II Thessalonians 3:5 *“And the Lord direct your hearts into* ***the love of God****, and into the patient waiting for Christ.”*

Titus 3:4 *“But after that* ***the kindness and love of God*** *our Saviour toward man appeared,…”*

I John 3:16 *“Hereby perceive we* ***the love of God****, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (17) But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth* ***the love of God*** *in him?”*

I John 4:9 *“In this was manifested* ***the love of God*** *toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.”*

Jude 1:21 *“Keep yourselves in* ***the love of God****, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”*

Earlier I mentioned the unconditional grace of Christ. Here we find the unconditional love of God. Folks, there is no conditions on the LORD’s love for you and me.

Genesis 2:7 says this *“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”*

“A pair of hands methodically began to scoop up the loose ground, moving it into a pile. When a sufficient amount of earth had been placed in the pile, the hands began to move the earth around swiftly. The earth began to take a shape unseen before. When the earth had been fashioned into the desired form, the Creator bent down, looked approvingly at the shape and placed His mouth over the earthen lips of the form. He breathed, forcing air into the earthen vessel He had fashioned. Suddenly, miraculously, the form responded to the breath and sprang to life. Adam was aware that he was the culmination and climax of creation and that the Creator had just formed a special bond with him. And what was that special bond? It was a relationship of love.” [Found on [www.biblestudytools.com](http://www.biblestudytools.com) “The Unconditional Love of God” by R. Keith Witt].

From the first day of man’s creation, God has loved mankind. Folks, He *is* love. It’s God’s purest essence. All that He is, is love. And what does that mean? It means that God always has our best interests in mind. Love is what motivates the LORD.

But what does our verse say? II Corinthians 13:14 *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and* ***the love of God****, and the communion of the Holy Ghost,* ***be with you all****. Amen.”*

Paul’s wish and prayer for the Believers in Corinth is that they might know that love one on one; personally. You see, we human beings were born in sin. We chose sin and sin was our habit – until Christ came into our hearts. And, at that moment, the moment we trusted Christ and were saved, we became personally aware of that God.

Yet, so many Believers don’t believe. So many Christians live daily trying to get the LORD to love them more. Folks, this is the closest relationship you can have with God.

How? By every moment thanking Him for loving you.

We live in a world that teaches “I’ll love you as long as I am benefitting in some way from you; as long as you add value to my life. When you stop pleasing me, then I stop loving you.”

Each day this week, quiz yourself. Ask “Do I believe God’s love for me right now?” No matter what you’ve done or who you’ve sinned against; His love is aimed directly at you. We know that from John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

I John 3:16 *“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because* ***he laid down his life for us****: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”*

One wise soul puts it this way. “Intense love does not measure, it just gives.” (Mother Teresa).

Who has laid down His life for you? God has. Folks, whose love for you is unfailing? Whose love is moment-by moment? Whose love endures forever? Whose love is trustworthy? Whose love is never motived by personal gain? Answer: the love of God.

First, my relationship with Jesus is a grace-relationship.

Second, my relationship with the Father is a love-relationship.

Third, my relationship with the Holy Spirit is a communion-relationship. II Corinthians 13:14 *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and* ***the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all****. Amen.”*

When I am in communion with you, I know that things are very good between us. So is the communion of the Holy Spirit. The original word here is κοινονια. It means “participation.” It also means “sharing.” It also means the Holy Spirit and you have a lot of things in common. And it’s often translated in the Bible “partners.”

Your partner is the Holy Spirit of God. It’s almost too good to be true. But it is.

Folks, how much of your life is “shared” by the Holy Spirit? Or do you neglect Him?

Before Jesus went to the Cross, He taught the Disciples about the coming Holy Spirit. And He told them that the Holy Spirit would be in them and that He would teach them. But HE also gave to the disciples this word about the Spirit. He told them He would be their Comforter.

John 14:16 *“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever;…”* John 14:26 *“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”*

Is He that to you?

 You see folks, this benediction is all about relationship; having a good relationship with the Trinity. You who are trying your best to live the Christian life; you who are not walking in the LORD’s grace, the love of God, or the communion of the Holy Ghost are missing the joys and the satisfaction of your salvation.

Jesus taught us this. John 10:9 *“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”*

So, what will it be today, Christian? Will it be love plus grace plus communion? Or will you go on without the simplicity and blessedness of the one marvelous benediction?

These benefits and blessings are yours for the enjoyment and to treasure each day this week. Don’t let your own thoughts throw you off course any longer. Today is the day to receive the benediction of the LORD into your life.

So, what will you do today? Will you admit that your stubborn ways are not what the LORD intended for you? Will you join in with “love plus grace plus communion” band? It’s a vital part of your salvation to enjoy your relationship with the Trinity. Why go on without this benediction any longer?

“LORD, I admit I have been going my own way. I’ve been missing out. I want to know the blessedness of this benediction upon me today. I’m going to memorize it LORD and I’m going to pray it on someone else this week. But I need it LORD for myself too. Thank you for love plus grace plus communion. In Jesus’ Name.

Now please turn with me to Hymn # \_\_\_\_\_\_ “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”