

Introduction

For many Christians, the doctrine of the Trinity can seem like something that has very little to do with the Christian life. The Trinity seems like a difficult doctrine that pastors and theologians talk about from time to time but doesn't really mean anything for the Christian practically.

But this could not be farther from the truth! The Christian life is thoroughly Trinitarian even if you don't realize it. The theologian Fred Sanders writes in his book *The Deep Things of God* that many Christians are much more trinitarian than they are even aware of. The Trinity is something that Christians *experience* more than they *understand*.

But the Bible says that we should love God with all our minds *and* that we should be transformed *by* the renewing of our minds. Christians should seek to understand what the Bible teaches about the Trinity so that they might worship and give thanks to God more and more.

What I hope to show this morning from our passage is that in Paul's mind, the Triunity of God is the **foundation**, **source**, and **power** for Christian life in the church.

When Paul writes to churches about how they should live together in fellowship, he does so in the assumption that this is only possible if they are doing so in the life and power of the Triune God.

In [2 Corinthians 13:11-14](#) Paul gives his final exhortations to the Corinthian Christians on how they are to live together in community. There are three things to see from these verses:

1. In verse 11a Paul presents the **rules of Christian community**
2. In verse 11b-13 Paul shows the **nourishment of Christian community**

3. In verse 14 Paul establishes the **foundation of Christian community**

The Rules of Christian Community

In verse 11 Paul gives a list of commands for the Corinthians to follow. But he begins with “***Finally, brothers, rejoice.***”

This word that Paul uses for “rejoice” is from the same word that we get “eucharist” and “thanksgiving”. As Paul concludes his letter to the Corinthians, he calls them to be a eucharistic community, a community of rejoicing and thanksgiving.

What you should also understand is that this word is also connected to the word for “grace”. The reason the Paul calls upon the Corinthians to “rejoice” is because rejoicing is the proper response to grace. The grace of God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit is what has created and what sustains Christian community. Therefore the Corinthians should rejoice.

The Bible teaches that God’s grace in Christian community **changes** things. When Paul speaks of his own experience of God’s grace, he speaks of the grace of God working through him so that he might accomplish great things.

All this makes sense of what Paul goes on to say in verse 11. He tells the Corinthians to “***Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another,***” and to “***live in peace***”.

These are all the outworking of grace in the lives of the Corinthians.

Grace brings **restoration** in relationships. The idea here is that things are put back into their proper condition. The dutch theologian Herman Bavinck is famous for stating “Grace restores nature.” Our natures are marred by sin and grace comes, not to destroy that nature, but to restore it and glorify it. So the presence of grace in the church should also bring restoration to relationships in the church.

The presence of grace **comforts and encourages** in the presence of a sinful and fallen world. Even though Jesus won the victory over sin and death in His death and resurrection, Christians still live in a world that is beset by sin. Grace enables Christians to **comfort** to one another in the midst of the struggles of this life.

The power of God's grace brings Christians into **agreement with one another** as they are continually renewed in their thinking in accord with God's Word. Christians are all committed to submitting to the authority of the Word of God. Therefore, one of the fruits of the Spirit in Christians community is increasing agreement in the Word.

Paul concludes his opening list by telling the Corinthians to **live in peace**. The peace of the Christian community is one of the most under appreciated aspects of Paul's writings. Paul continually calls Christians to live at peace with one another.

One of the reasons for this is the ever present tendency for Christians to fall into the temptation of spreading discord in the community. Gossip, bearing false witness, and slander are all sins that the Bible gives way more attention to than many Christians in the church today. In the Mosaic covenant, bearing false witness was a capital offense.

Like a still pond, peace is easily upset and difficult to recover once the waters have been disturbed. It is much easier to keep the peace than it is to recover the peace once it has been lost.

- › Practically speaking, this means guarding your words closely. Be very weary of talking about other members of the church when they are not in your presence. Just like in the game of telephone, things are easily misunderstood, misremembered, and misrepresented.
- › All too often, the peace of the church is upset because an original misunderstanding that is then misrepresented to someone else and rumors begin to spread. If you have a concern with someone, go speak to them directly or bring your concern to the elders (who will likely go tell you to speak to the person directly).
- › And when the peace is disturbed, remember, God forgave us and restored us to peace when we had rebelled against Him. Confession, forgiveness, and restoration are the ways forward.

The Nourishment of Christian Community

In the second half of verse 11 through verses 12 and 13 Paul expands out from these rules of living in Christian community to show how Christian community and relationships are nourished.

These commands to restore, comfort, agree with, and live in peace with one another, are all reciprocated by the presence of “**the God of love and peace**”. In other words, Paul calls the Corinthians to live in love and peace with one another and says that God is living at love and peace with them.

There is a reciprocity in view here. As we live in the grace of God we see the fruit of the Spirit grow in our community. God’s presence, by the Holy Spirit, enables Christians to live in fellowship with one another. This fellowship with one another creates more avenues for God’s presence to be even more abundant in the community.

Paul speaks of keeping “in step” with the Spirit in [Gal 5](#) and he speaks of quenching the Spirit in [1 Thess 5](#). As Christians keep in step with the Spirit of God they find that there are more opportunities to experience God’s grace and presence.

But the same pattern holds true in our relationships with one another and with other saints. The reciprocity of our relationship with God is mirrored in our reciprocity in our relationships with one another.

In verse 12 Paul tells the Corinthians to “**Greet one another with a holy kiss.**” and in verse 13 Paul says that “**All the saints greet you.**” Paul is overflowing here with language of reciprocal love.

God has loved you and given you His grace. So this is how you should love and be at peace with one another. And as you do these things, God will be with you and you will experience His love and peace even more. And as you greet one another with a holy kiss, remember that all the saints greet you as well.

Christian love and community are nourished by these relationships of reciprocity. Without this reciprocity, relationship and community dies.

Imagine reaching out by phone to catch up with a friend who has moved away and they never answer your call or work with you to make time for the relationship. If the traffic is all one way, it is hard for the relationship to be

maintained. If they never call back or make an effort to sustain that relationship, it will be difficult for that relationship to have the nourishment needed to go on.

What Paul is saying here is that as the church responds to God's grace in thanksgiving and applying it to their life together, they will find more and more avenues to love and serve God and one another. These things expand as you pour into them.

The Foundation of Christian Community

As I mentioned in the beginning. For Paul, all of this talk is founded on his understanding that it is the Triune God who makes all of this possible.

In verse 14 he states, "***The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.***"

The Christian life is thoroughly Trinitarian. The grace and love of God comes from the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit.

These things that Paul calls the Corinthians to are all things that find their source and power within the Corinthians' experience of the Triune God.

The Corinthians can seek restoration because their own restoration has come from the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit.

The Corinthians can comfort one another because they serve the God of all comfort who has sent the Holy Spirit who is the comforter!

The Corinthians can agree with one another because they have the mind of Christ who humbled himself.

The Corinthians can live in peace because they have peace with God through Jesus Christ.

All three persons of our one, Triune God, are involved in all aspects of our salvation and life with God and one another. As you experience God's grace, you do so in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, that grace comes to you only through the Son. And the Son was sent by the Father.

Let therefore ***The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.***

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.