

## 2 Corinthians 13:3b-14

**"Does the proper trinity guide you?"**

2 Corinthians 13:11-14 NIV

"Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. (12) Greet one another with a holy kiss. (13) All the saints send their greetings.

**(14) May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."**

We can look at this passage at least three different ways.

**This passage speaks of father, son and Holy Spirit:**

**The grace of Jesus Christ, "the love of God," and "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit."**

I checked the comments on this passage in the study Bible Norma has used for years.

**This popular commentary comes from a respected, major Christian publisher.**

The comments on our text in this Study Bible affirm the Trinity.

**John 3:16 states that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, meaning: "the only one of his kind."**

**Colossians 2: 9 reads: "In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form . . ."**

**The Gospel of John tells us the Word is God and "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (1:1, 14).**

**In Christ, God took on human form.**



A careful read of Acts 16: 6-10 helps us see the difficulty separating-distinguishing Father, Son and Holy Spirit (see text below).<sup>1</sup>

**For two reasons, the term "Trinity" concerns me. First: the Bible never uses the word Trinity.**

**From my understanding of the Bible writers, the term "Trinity" would have shocked them.**

By 100 A.D., all Bible books were completed.

**The word "Trinity" didn't appear until about 200 A.D.**

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<sup>1</sup> "Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. <sup>7</sup> When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. <sup>8</sup> So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. <sup>9</sup> During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

<sup>10</sup> After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."

**History shows that a man named Tertullian apparently came up with the term “Trinity.”**

**A few subsequent writers used it.**

Trinity became popular not because of its Bible basis, but because of Roman Emperor Constantine.

**By Constantine’s time (circa 315 AD) church people argued so much about the wanted the church to speak with one voice.**



The novice Christian Constantine had no more qualifications to speak about biblical matters than the average person.

**Constantine had recently become sole Emperor of the Roman Empire.**

**He wanted a logical—rational formulation of the Godhead on which the church could unify.**

By Constantine’s order, the Council of Nicaea (325 AD) officially adopted the term Trinity.

This occurred almost 300 years after Jesus died.

**Imagine having the President of the U.S. (any President of either party) decide what you should believe about God’s nature.**

The council adopted the formulation for the Trinity written by a man named Athanasius.

Athanasius promoted his view in opposition to Arius, who took a lesser view of Christ’s nature.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The Watchtower Society, i.e. Jehovah’s Witnesses teach a modern version of the Arian view. They promote the perversion that Jesus “is a god.”

**About 100 years later, church leaders wrote a creed and named it after Athanasius.**

**About that time, the Apostles’ Creed also came about.**

The Apostles didn’t write the “Apostles’ Creed.”

Most churchmen of the time stood by saying nothing. The majority of people since seem to accept the Trinity without question.

**As is evident, the Trinity formulation of God didn’t come from the Bible.**

**The newcomer to Christianity, Roman Emperor Constantine backed and pushed it.**

**Henry Sidgwick defined why many people believe what they do:**

“We think so because other people think so, Or because-or because-after all we do think so, Or because we were told so, and think we must think so,  
Or because we once thought so,  
and think we still think so,  
Or because having thought so, we think we will think so.”<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> *Lines Composed in his Sleep*  
Sidgwick, Henry 1838-1900

Any thinking that results in teachings that exceed Scripture should bother us.

**Here's the second troublesome cause:**

**Early Christians argued little about the Divinity. Bible writers assumed God's incarnation in Christ as the Scriptures we used earlier stated.**

Facing fierce opposition, first century believers bravely, declared the Good News of God's visit to this planet, and Jesus' resurrection power.

No one tried to precisely analyze and define the Godhead; they stayed too busy.

**After the fourth century AD, when Christianity became legal, some leaders influenced by Greek philosophy, wanted to exactly specify the relationship of Father to Son, to Holy Spirit.**

**They tried to apply logic to God.**

Norma and I have been married nearly 65 years.

In my eyes, she constantly gets sweeter, more beautiful, and loving.

Let's say she comes to me this afternoon and says, "Bob, I love you.

Evidence of her love has long overwhelmed me.

Yet, suppose I say in response, "Why don't we sit down and analyze this love that you say you have for me? Let's break your love down into its real components."

She'd say, "Bob, love has little to do with logic. Love has rational-logical factors, but one cannot chart, measure, map or define love."



**The Trinity represents efforts by churchmen to rationally or logically explain God.**

That's why you see triangles, circles divided into three parts, and all sorts of geometric and logical descriptions of God, the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

**Efforts to define God should trouble us.**

**Logical explanations limit our appreciation of God; they don't explain him.**

**Consider this:**

If God created the heavens and the earth (the entire Universe) and he existed before creation, conclusions based on what we experience can never be adequate.

For example as I've mentioned, in 1936 I was born to Frank and Jessie Blair in a Kansas farm house. I'll die at an unknown place, time, and circumstance. I had a definite start and I'll come to an abrupt end.

**In contrast to all of us, God has always been and always will be the same.**

The word Yahweh-Jehovah probably derives from the Hebrew verb ‘to be;’ God is the “I Am” God. **God’s Son shares his nature: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).**

When couples get married, ministers often say that wedding rings symbolize the perpetuity of love.

**The circular rings supposedly represent love’s “endlessness.”**

Yet the vows state: “**Until death do us part.**”

**I just hope rings don’t mean that the couple will go in circles until death parts them.**

A wedding band doesn’t represent eternity to me.

The ring Norma gave me reminds me and signifies to others the vows I made before God and witnesses to love and remain faithful to her as long as I live, a span which increasingly seems short.



**Only God is forever.**

**My mind is confined to the shrinking mass of substance in my skull.**

Yet all of space can’t contain God.

God remains present everywhere in creation—even beyond space and time—if we could get there.

**Unlike what happens to us, God never changes and He never dies.**

**2) A second way of looking our text regards it as a blessing or benediction.**

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

**This type of blessing fits all legitimate occasions, doesn’t it?**

**3) The third way to look at our text enlarges our views of all that God makes available to us.**

**A) First: the “grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

In 2 Corinthians Paul wrote of Jesus’ grace:<sup>4</sup>

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”

**The Lord expects us to extend similar grace to our neighbors and enemies.**

**We tend to make judgments about who is worthy of our love, don’t we?**



**What honor do I owe drunkards, dope addicts, hardened criminals? Or folks of other races, colors, shades, and languages?**

**What do I owe those of other socio-economic groups, intelligence, and education?**

<sup>4</sup> 8:9 NIV Above, 1980 photo of a beggar in Nazareth (by Bob).



**The Interpreter's Bible relates the story of a doctor speaking to colleagues at a medical school.**

On the table in front of them was a victim of poverty, picked up as dead, and sent to them for surgical study.

**Pointing to the wasted body, the doctor said to his colleagues in Latin: "What shall we do with this worthless wretch?"**



**To the doctors' amazement, that supposedly dead wretch said in faultless Latin, "Call not him worthless for who Christ died?"**

Considering how Paul treated people in Corinth, you know he imitated Christ, **"the friend of sinners."**

**He regarded no one as worthless.**

**People make judgments about Bible miracles.**

1 Corinthians 6: 9-11 describe noteworthy happenings—among the Bible's greatest miracles.

**"Do you not know," asked Paul, "that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders (10) nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God."**

**Many people stop reading at this point.**

They applaud: "That's right, Paul. All those sinners are worthy of hell. That's where those people are headed. They don't deserve our love."

**But note the miraculous statement in verse 11: "And that is what some of you were."**

The Corinthian church was made up of many exes.

**Those folks lived changed lifestyles.**

They stopped doing that stuff.

**Here's what happened, said Paul:**

**"But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."**

**What happened?**

**What brought the change in these people?**

They met Jesus, accepted him as their savior, made him their Lord, and then changed their lifestyles.<sup>5</sup>

**Someone had to introduce them to Jesus.**

**Someone befriended them, patiently loved them, and did not despise them.**

**Paul did not consider them worthless.**

Paul and other believers clearly spent time with them, ate with them, and taught them while they lived their former lifestyles.

<sup>5</sup> On this point, church folks have traditionally focused on "sins of the flesh" rather than greed and slander, practiced everyday by many religious leaders. More on this point, God willing, next week.

As Jesus did, Paul ate with sinners in order to show them God’s grace and let them know God expects all of us to change and become Christ-like.

**Paul demonstrated that in Corinth.**

**In the same way, Christ still wins the hearts of all kinds of people, and changes them.**

**Some of us struggle with sins of the flesh.**

**Others wrestle with sins of the heart that often manifest themselves in self-righteous pride.**

**We cannot separate the Gospel from repentance (change):**

Jesus to the Apostles after his resurrection:

**“This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”**

**“He (God) commands all people everywhere to repent.”<sup>6</sup>**

**B) In addition to God’s grace in Christ and God’s love, our text also speaks of fellowship:**

**“the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”**

When my book, *The Great Omission*, was published in 2008, Pepperdine University invited me to teach a class at their annual Bible Lectures in Malibu. On the first evening, I

sat among about 4500 people in the Firestone Field House, where Pepperdine sports teams play basketball, volleyball, etc. Though we sang and prayed together I knew none of the people near me.

As I descended the steps at the close of the worship program, I came face to face with a Japanese woman who instantly recognized me. Hiroko Suzuki attended the Hollywood Church of Christ about thirty years prior.



The Pepperdine president and his wife invited all the lecture teachers and speakers to their home that same evening. I talked with a teacher from Germany who knew our friend, Irmgard Cors, who still lives in Heidelberg, Germany.

Then I got acquainted with a professor from a Christian college in Portland, Oregon. He and his wife, both from Korea, stayed in the same dorm as I.

Later I ran into Nigel Wright from England. Nigel attended the Hollywood Church of Christ about 20 years before. In 2008, Nigel preached in South America. I met folks from Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya, Russia, Mexico—even a couple from Aurelia, Iowa.

Back in Hollywood, I stayed a few days with former fellow Hollywood church elder and native of Nigeria, Eno Otoy and his wife, LaVera, a Texan.

<sup>6</sup> Luke 24:46, 47 & Acts 17:30 NIV

**Except in Christ, where else do people of all nations, races, and socio-economic groups gather harmoniously for the purpose of helping others live better now and into eternity?**

**The common denominator: God’s love in Christ.**

**Norma and I questioned Iowa church fellowship somewhat when we first moved from California.**

In a town north of here, I filled in as a guest speaker for several Sundays. The church leaders assigned different members each week to feed us Sunday dinner. When we got to one young couple’s house, the husband made it known that though they gladly fed us, they wanted us gone by the time the Green Bay Packers game started. To be honest, we didn’t mind obliging them.

Max and Phyllis Stevens were a wonderful elderly couple from Kingsley. Not long after they went to an assisted facility in Correctionville many years ago, several from Kingsley went to help Max and Phyllis celebrate their 65th anniversary. It baffled me when all of the women gathered at one table with Phyllis and all the men sat near the food at other tables with Max. Men and women never sat separately in California—at least in our experience.

We even began singing to them with Max and Phyllis sitting several feet apart. I said to myself, “**This can’t happen.**” We had Max move close to Phyllis. We then informed Max that it was time to kiss the bride. Doc Hansen



was taking pictures. The first kiss wasn’t very impressive, so we insisted that Max really plant one on her the next time. That he certainly did. When finished, he exclaimed, “I’ve been waiting three years to do that.”

**Seriously, Iowa Christians extend their fellowship beautifully and unselfishly. We thank God for you and commend you.**

**“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”**

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