

13. Grace, Love, and Fellowship (3Q 2026 1 and 2 Corinthians)

Biblical material: 2 Cor. 8:9; Rom. 16:20; 1 John 4:8–11; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 2:1, 2; Gal. 4:4–6; 2 Cor. 13:14.

Quotes

- Grace is what matters in anything - especially life, especially growth, tragedy, pain, love, death. That's a quality that I admire very greatly. It keeps you from reaching out for the gun too quickly. It keeps you from destroying things too foolishly. It sort of keeps you alive. *Jeff Buckley*
- My trust in God flows out of the experience of his loving me, day in and day out, whether the day is stormy or fair, whether I'm sick or in good health, whether I'm in a state of grace or disgrace. He comes to me where I live and loves me as I am. *Brennan Manning*
- We should be astonished at the goodness of God, stunned that He should bother to call us by name, our mouths wide open at His love, bewildered that at this very moment we are standing on holy ground. *Brennan Manning*
- The grace of God is dangerous. It's lavish, excessive, outrageous, and scandalous. God's grace is ridiculously inclusive. Apparently God doesn't care who He loves. He is not very careful about the people He calls His friends or the people He calls His Church. *Mike Yaconelli*
- Legalism says God will love us if we change. The gospel says God will change us because He loves us. *Tullian Tchividjian*
- And the communion of the Holy Ghost. The word "communion" (κοινωνία koinōnia) means properly participation, fellowship, or having anything in common... This is also a wish or prayer of the apostle Paul; and the desire is either that they might partake of the views and feelings of the Holy Spirit; that is, that they might have fellowship with him; or that they might all in common partake of the gifts and graces which the Spirit of God imparts. *Albert Barnes*

Questions

Why are these three virtues so significant? What does the situation in Corinth help us understand how the Devil is working in our churches today? How do we replace conflict with grace, love, and fellowship? How does God operate in dealing with similar attacks on his nature and character? What are we to learn from all of this?

Bible summary

In 2 Corinthians 8:9 Paul reminds the church what Jesus has done for them through his grace. Paul prays for the Lord's grace to be with the church in Rome (see Romans 16:20). We are to love as God loves (see 1 John 4:8–11, also Philippians 2:1, 2). Paul's final plea is for the Corinthians to grow spiritually and be at peace and in agreement with one another (see 2 Corinthians 13:11). God shows his love by sending us his Son (see Galatians 4:4–6). Despite all he has had to write, Paul concludes with a prayer for the members of the church in Corinth: "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all." 2 Corinthians 13:14.

Comment

Not only is 2 Corinthians 13:14 a desire for all those things as in the title for this study, but it is also a very clear statement of the Trinity. It is surprising that so many, including the majority of early Adventists, did not accept the Trinity. However through the later influence of Ellen White, the church moved in this direction, though for sensitivity's sake she never used the word "Trinity" in her writings.

Leaving that comment aside, this final summary takes in the wide expanse of God's involvement in our lives. We are saved by the grace of Jesus that comes from the love of God and is exemplified in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Such aspects also need to be demonstrated by us, especially as we deal with one another.

The Corinthians could have been in such a better place if they had exhibited grace and love and communion to one another. So would we! Consequently it's helpful to ask exactly *why* there were arguments and divisions in the Corinthian church.

From what Paul writes, it seems that the conflict was really a power struggle, with those who wanted to take over leadership thinking they could do this best by demeaning Paul. While they would surely have used "Christian language," they took aim at Paul's supposed defects as a way of trying to supplant him and destroy his influence.

But by appealing to grace, love, and communion, Paul is showing how Christians are meant to treat one another, since they are beneficiaries of the same virtues from God. In addition this is the same way that God wins the great controversy—not by exerting power, but by demonstrating these same virtues in all he does. Satan the antagonist hurls insults at God, and tried to undermine his rule through lying misrepresentations. The same spirit was at work in Corinth, and in the church today.

We have a challenge to re-formulate the glorious good news about God in terms that will be understood by our contemporaries. That is why we are all called to be witnesses to angels and human beings, of what we know about God and his healing, transforming love. The creativity God has given to each of us means that we all can do this in our own unique way, and so be God's witnesses as he calls his defence since he is placed on trial. Each of us has this incredible opportunity to say in our own way what we understand about the grace of God in the universe-wide conflict that rages around us. While we are confronted with a whole new situation, we should not see the secular spirit of our times in defeatist terms, but rather as an opportunity. What a privilege to talk about God, to tell others what we have discovered for ourselves, and to convincingly speak of the God who is answering the charges in the great controversy through us!

Ellen White Comments

Christ came to manifest the love of God to the world, to draw the hearts of all men to Himself. He said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me." The first step toward salvation is to respond to the drawing of the love of Christ.... It is that men may understand the joy of forgiveness, the peace of God, that Christ draws them by the manifestation of his love. If they respond to his drawing, yielding their hearts to his grace, He will lead them on step by step to full knowledge of Himself, and this is life eternal. {BEcho, March 15, 1893}

Our little world is the lesson book of the universe. God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which "angels desire to look," and it will be their study throughout endless ages. Both the redeemed and the unfallen beings will find in the cross of Christ their science and their song. {DA 19-20}

In all the gracious deeds that Jesus did, He sought to impress upon men the parental, benevolent attributes of God. . . . Jesus would have us understand the love of the Father, and He seeks to draw us to Him by presenting His parental grace. He would have the whole field of our vision filled with the perfection of God's character. . . . It was only by living among men that He could reveal the mercy, compassion, and love of His heavenly Father; for it was only by actions of benevolence that He could set forth the grace of God. Christ came to manifest the love of God to the world, to draw the hearts of all men to Himself. . . . {AG 99}

Our sanctification is the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is the fulfillment of the covenant God has made with those who bind themselves up with Him, to stand with Him, His Son, and His Spirit in holy fellowship. Have you been born again? Have you become a new being in Christ Jesus? Then cooperate with the three great powers of heaven who are working in your behalf (Manuscript 11, 1901). {7BC 908} Prepared May 28, 2025 © Jonathan Gallagher 2025