



Service – 03/19/2017

2 Corinthians 13:13

Matthew 24:36

John 1:1 - 3

We come to the last verse in 2 Corinthians 13. It's the last verse in the book. And I think it's extremely important that we understand why he put that in there. Now when you go to seminary they do a really good job teaching you how to craft a sermon. They give you all the cards, all the points. One of the things they talk to you about is the introduction. That you need a couple things in the introduction. Number one, it needs to be short. Number two, it needs to connect to the text that you're preaching from. And the third thing is that it needs to give you a reason to listen to the sermon. So here's my introduction today. One sentence. Here it is. I'm going to explain to you today what I don't understand. So there it is. That should compel you to either leave or we'll see what in the world this guy has to say.

Now he ends the book with two things, right. Last week he talked about the book, about the fact that you and I need to engage in each other's life. Then he ends the book with a description of the role of God in your salvation based on the understanding of the trinity in the Godhead. Now this is important and I think it fits what he's trying to do in the book. In the book, remember he spent the entire book defending himself against these false teachers. These false teachers, apparently from everything we can tell, were the beginning of a huge cult that enveloped early Christianity. You find its strength in the book of 1 John. 1 John makes a weird little statement. He says, "Anybody that calls Jesus accursed does not do this by the Spirit of God." This cult was known as docetic Gnosticism which is fancy terms, but basically comes from two Greek words: *dokeó*, which means to appear, or something seems to be, and then gnostic comes from the word *gnosis*, knowledge. Remember this group was coming in saying we know something Paul doesn't know and we're really better apostles. And what they were teaching, that just started with Paul dealing with it in Corinth, but it spreads and really goes crazy at the end of the first century. And that was the idea that Jesus did not really come physically. It looked like he did. It appeared like he did, but he really didn't have a physical body because the physical is bad; only the spiritual is good. So he only came spiritually. And that weird cult really began to sweep across the churches. It's starting here in the Corinthian church. Which is why Paul's so passionate about his defense because if Jesus didn't come physically you're not saved. You don't have anything without his shed blood. If all he did was come spiritually, you're not saved. So it was a tremendous heresy and Paul is seeing it begin to seep into the church. So he ends the book with an explanation of the trinity because that, he believes, is what will save them from this

cult. And that is absolutely correct. So let me walk you real quickly and then we're going to come back.

The Bible talks about God in terms of a one God in three persons. You, you have God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit. They are one God, Deuteronomy 6, hear, oh Israel, the Lord your God is one God. But it's one God in three persons. Now we're going to cover a little ground today. We're going to come back to 2 Corinthians 13 in a minute. But I want to walk you through some verses. I want you to listen to the first chapter of John. Listen to what it says. John starts out with Jesus. He says:

¹In the beginning was the Word, and Word was

And he says three things. Now listen to this: the Word was face to face with God, that's literally the Greek. In other words God the Son was face to face with God the Father. They are distinct. But then it says:

and the Word was God. ²And this was in the beginning with God. ³All things have come through him, and nothing has been created, not even one thing, which has happened through him.

So he says to you that Jesus and God the Father are distinct and yet they're the same. Now the Holy Spirit's the third person. You say, "Well how do you now that?" We don't have time to go all in the scripture. But let me give you two things. In John 14:18 Jesus says, "I am leaving you but I will come back to you." When the Bible says Jesus is in you, the hope of glory, in Colossians, but then it talks about your body's the temple for the Holy Spirit. Obviously Jesus and the Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit is Jesus in us. One God; three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit. It's not three different Gods. Do I understand that? Not even close. I've heard all the metaphors. And this one that sort of has a little bit, it falls apart. But you put three glasses of water here; all the exact same glass, all filled with water, all the same amount, three distinct, but they are the same. Now metaphors all fail at some point, but I simply want you to understand we worship one God in three persons. Now and it's not the idea that God shows up sometimes as a father, sometimes as a son, sometimes as a spirit; that's heresy. No He does not. It is God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit; one God, three persons.

Now why is that so important? Because it's the key to whether or not the cult's getting you. And what we're discovering today, the same kind of junk he dealt with, the cults are on a rise again. Now there are two kinds of cults in America. There are mainline and there are what's known as extremist cults. We, last couple of weeks in staff meeting, have been dealing with one that is coming to Texas A&M. It's here. It's in the area. And the extremist cults are really powerful. They grab people and they do a little form of brainwashing. And they're good. It's what we dealt with in the '70's. I thought it had kind of died out in the '80's and '90's, but obviously it's back. We pulled this particular cult up on the website in staff meeting and it's about 30 people, all young couples under 30, well dressed, all smiles, young couples, children, a very family oriented photo. And they are now coming to Texas A&M. They're on our campus. And they're doing what the extremist cults do so well. They stalk students and they generally do exactly what this cult did. This cult isn't going after lost people in Corinth. It's going after

the church at Corinth. Cults don't go after lost people. They find believers to pull them away from Jesus Christ. Who wants to do that? So you understand what their source is. So they're coming on the A&M campus. They're finding kids that are in college that are lonely. And they've tried churches and Bible studies, but they've got maybe social skills, maybe they're just introverted, maybe they don't want to work at it, but for whatever reason they've struggled. They've come to Central; haven't fit in. They've gone to Grace; they don't fit in. They've gone to New Life; don't fit in. And you find them going to class by themselves; returning to class by themselves, living by themselves in an apartment. These people are stalking these kids and they're finding them. What they're doing is they're coming to them and saying, "Hey! Listen. We want you to come to a Bible study." "Well, don't know." "Listen. It's not like what you get at church. We just want you to come. Just give us one night." So they walk into the room and it's, it's an emotional pull. Several people there. Smiles. Kind. Loving. Friendly. They hug them. Some of these kids haven't been hugged by family or friends in 15 years. They're hugged. They're brought into the Bible study. It's engaging. It's uplifting. God loves you. Everything's great. We love you. We want.... And you go to a couple Bible studies and then within just a couple of weeks they say, "Listen here's what we want to do. We want you to take a week with us on a retreat. We pay for everything. We're going to have a great time. You have to leave your phone at home, your iPad at home, we're not going to talk to your family, whatever friends you might have, we're not going to communicate with them. We just want you to really focus on who Jesus is." So they go to a camp for a week. It's always the same. It's amazing to me what they're doing today is exactly what they did in the '70's. Breakfast at 7. Everybody smiles. Everybody's warm. Everybody's friendly. Never is there a hint in this group of anger or dissension. You go to breakfast; these people love you. You go to a Bible Study; it's engaging, the song service is great. You play some games. You do this from 7 until about midnight or 1:00. So by the end of the week several things have happened. Your focused on their interpretation of the scripture which always, by the way, all cults, you know how to define them, they always deny, as this one did, they always deny either Jesus as God or the Holy Spirit as God. That's the definition. They never deny God the Father. They always deny the other two people in the trinity. So they pull you in and at the end of the week you're exhausted, but you are, for the first time in your life, loved on. It's powerful. They've told you about Jesus. They've brought you into the Bible. They've loved on you. You're exhausted. You've talked to no one else. And then they begin to tell you, now listen, family's going to tell you this is wrong, family's going to tell you this is dangerous, but we know who Jesus is. We want to love on you and pretty soon you're pulled into a group that will deny the very historic basis of all that we believe and they will pull you in and that's what they're doing on the A&M campus today. What my hope is, if you get a kid that it is ingrained in him, it's God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit, that at some point no matter how much he's pulled in there, that an alarm bell will go off here when they start saying, "Look! Jesus really isn't who he says he is. He's a great man, but he's not really God. He's subordinate to God. Remember he said he only does what the Father says. He's submissive to God. He's dependent on God. He couldn't do that if he's really God. So my hope is, and this is Paul's hope here, that if you just understand one truth, that you worship one God in three persons (God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit) and this cult begins to denigrate that, that an alarm bell will go off in this kid's head and he'll realize something's wrong and pull out. That's what the extremist cults do.

But the mainline cults, the Mormons and Jehovah's witness, attack you intellectually against Christ. As a matter of fact, I'm going to do that now. I'm going to prove to you from that book that Jesus is not God. I'm going to come to your house and I'm going to sit down with you and I'm going to ask you, and you answer me this. What are the three terms that we always use to describe God? What are they? What are they? Omnipotent. What's the next one? Omniscient. What else? Omnipresent. Is that right? That's how we define God. He is what? All knowing, he can be anywhere at any time, and He's all-powerful. I'm going to take you to this Bible. First things we're going to do is go to John 4. Now I'm going to show you Jesus Christ sitting at a well. He's so tired, now I want you to turn actually to Matthew 24:36, but we're going to sit at this well and realize Jesus is so tired he can't even get water from the well. A Samaritan woman comes up and he says, "I need some water." Where are his disciples, by the way, in John 4? They're gone to the store to buy food because He's starving. He's so famished, He's so weak, He can't even get a thing of water from the well. She has to get it for him. Now how in the world is he all-powerful when he's so exhausted he can't even pull water out of a well.

Number two: you cannot find anywhere in the Bible where if He's in Nazareth, He's also in Jerusalem. Everywhere He is, He's only in one place at a time. Nowhere in that Bible is He in two places at a time. Nowhere. So He's not omnipresent. But here's where they nail us. Matthew 24:36. Nor is He omniscient. Listen to this. Talking about his own return:

³⁶"But concerning that day and hour nobody knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, except the Father only."

Jesus says, "I don't know when I'm coming back. That's up to the Father." So He's not omniscient. He's none of the things that we define God as. So how in the world do you sit there and tell me that Jesus is God when he is defied by all three items? How do you do that? And so when the Mormons are done with you, and remember they get 75% of their converts from Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian. So when they're done most Christians, and my bet is there's a lot of you in this room, that can't answer my question. How is Jesus not omnipresent, not omniscient, not omnipotent, and yet He is God fully? How does that happen? And so what they do is they come into your house and bring that in. Most Christians have no idea how to answer it and pretty soon they're pulled in to this cult and what happens when you get in, for example, what Mitt Romney believes, the Mormon, what happens when you get in there. What do they tell you about Jesus? That he and Lucifer are half-brothers. But you begin to believe it because what you've been taught apparently by all these preachers all these years is not true. So how do you deal with it? So it's imperative that we understand how to face this. You say, "Well what's the answer?" 2 Corinthians 13:13. Listen to what he says. He's careful. He's precise. Listen to this.

¹⁴The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (one), (two) the love of God, (three) the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

There's your answer. Now here it is. Now walk with me carefully. There are two times we see the Trinity in scripture. It's not explained, but there are two times we see it. We see it in creation. Where do we see it in creation? Somebody tell me. Let us make man in our image. You have the Godhead conversing together and they make a decision that they will create us in

their image. The reason you and I sit in this room is because that was answered. The Godhead talked about themselves inside the Godhead and said we will make man in our image. Now here's the key. What you do not see in that creation narrative; you don't see any division of labor. You don't see God the Father making the animals, God the Son creating the land, and God the Spirit creating the water. You don't see division of labor. They are all part of creation. It calls God the Father the creator. Calls Jesus Christ the Creator. John 1. There is no division of labor but when you come to redemption, now we have a complete division of labor. And that's what you see in 2 Corinthians 13:13. You see a complete difference. Now the Trinity divides the labor of our redemption. Look at the first one. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now listen. He brings grace. You don't have it without what He did on the cross. It's not some ephemeral feeling. And this thing we Baptists say about unmerited favor. That is simply not even close to what it is. God's grace is in the act of Jesus Christ on the cross. It is not what God feels about you. It is what Jesus Christ did. And that grace is why you answer the question to the Mormon when he says He's not omnipotent, He's not omniscient, and He's not omnipresent. You look at him and say, "Oh yes His is." But Philippians 2 says that he emptied himself. He didn't quit being God, but he emptied himself taking on the form of a man, he's still fully God and fully man, but he lived this as a man, so he chose not to use his omnipotence, he chose not to use his omnipresence, and he chose not to use his omniscience. Why? Why would he do that? Because he said it's part of the sacrifice. God put him, God the Father, put God the Son through God the Spirit in the womb of a woman. He took on flesh. Why would he do that? Why would he not use his omniscience, not use his omnipresence, not use his omnipotence. Why would he not do that? Because there are two things God can't do. He can't be tempted to sin and He can't die. So God the Son, there was a decision of the Godhead, God the Son was the one chosen. He took on flesh. He put it on. He didn't quit being God, but He did not, He chose not to utilize His deity and He lived as a man so that He didn't sin. How do we know the Spirit, for example, is the third person of the Trinity? Because in the middle, in Matthew 4, the Bible says the Spirit pulled Jesus in the wilderness for 40 days. Listen. If Jesus spent 40 seconds outside of the will of God he's not my redeemer. He spent 40 days at the direction of the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. Jesus graced with us because God clothed him. He came fully God, fully man, He was tempted in every way like we are, what does the Bible say? No sin. So that when he died on the cross in six hours, God took my filth, my shame, my humiliation, and put it on His back. They killed him. When He came out of the grave, I don't come out of the grave because I'm dying because of my sin. He came out of the grave because He died for mine. Reason He chose not to utilize those things he possessed is so that he could be tempted to sin and so that he could die. God's grace is not some goofy ephemeral feeling. It is the grace of God given in the blood of Jesus Christ shed on that cross. That's His grace. What makes it grace? You didn't do anything to earn it. It's a gift of salvation he gives to us. He brought us grace.

Look at the next thing. The love of God. The motivation behind Jesus on the cross was God's love. And it is not God's love for himself. It's God's love for you and me. The Bible's explicit. He loves you and me and here's the kicker. If there was only one of us on this planet, one, God's love would still have put Jesus on the cross. You say, "Where do you get that really preacher?" Simple. When He's dying and He's on that cross do you think it was easy for the angels in heaven to watch the one they valued being beaten? It took all the power of God to hold them back. And when He died, He spent three years with the disciples, right. How many times did he

say to them, "Listen. Chief Priest is going to reject me. I'm going to die. I'm going to die. I'm going to come out of the grave." How many people when He dies believe in him? Any disciples? Not one. His mother, Mary? No. His brothers? No. Nicodemus? No. Joseph of Aramathea? No. Anybody at all? One guy who never saw him before that day. They crucify him at nine. Take him off at three. For three hours this guy, with his buddy, mocked him. We have no idea what happened, but somewhere around noon this guy looked over at his buddy who was mocking him, he said, "Stop it. We're getting what we deserve. He's not. Lord remember me when you come in your kingdom." He died with God holding back every angel and only one person when he died believed in the cross. If you're the only one alive he'd still die for you.

And the fellowship of his Holy Spirit, literally in the Greek, partnership. So God loves us, caused Jesus to die, and then the Holy Spirit steps in. He does two things. John 16:8 says that he convicts us, that is, he calls us to Christ, he convinces us that what I just told you is true. You can read all the apologetic books you want. Until the Holy Spirit of God convinces you what I just said is true, you cannot be saved. But then if you take your faith and yield to what the Holy Spirit tells you, then the love of God that put Jesus on the cross, his blood cleans you up, and then the Holy Spirit indwells you permanently until the day you die. And you have a relationship with the Father because Romans 8:16 says His spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are God's children. Now you understand why the last thing Jesus said to his disciples was, "Make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the, what, Father, Son, Holy Spirit." Why? Because the Father's love put the Son on the cross so the Spirit could indwell us. And here's the deal. You're entire Christian life is based on the Trinity. Even your prayer life is based there. You can pray to Jesus. You can pray to the Spirit. Nothing wrong with that. But on the whole here's how you pray. You pray to the Father through the blood access of the Son under the direction of the Holy Spirit of God. So the Trinity guides everything you do. And then when you come to the end it all flips backwards. It starts with God the Father's love, the act of Christ on the cross, the indwelling of the Spirit, right. That's the order. When you die what does the Bible say? Your body's a temple for the Holy Spirit. When you die your body doesn't work anymore. The Holy Spirit leaves, right. John 14; Jesus says, "In my Father's house are many mansions. I come to take you to where I am." Jesus shows up and takes you to where His Father is. If you can lock that down no one can ever take you from the presence of Jesus Christ. And they're out there and they want us because the enemy wants us and all I have to do is believe 2 Corinthians 13:13. One little verse and they can't have me. We have a great God.