

INI Hymns:

Sermon 26-29

Sunday after Trinity **2 Corinthians 13:14**

6/7/26

Last week we looked at the inner working of the Trinity, how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit all work together in perfect harmony for you and for your salvation. Today we will take a closer look at **The Pauline Benediction**. That is the Benediction given to us by the Apostle Paul. It is found in **2 Corinthians 13:14**.

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

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Do you find, as I often do, that words you are very familiar with, you have a hard time explaining what they actually mean. How about the word Benediction? We all know what that is. It is the closing words of the worship service, sending us away with a nice thought. But a benediction is so much more than a nice thought to take with you when you leave. Paul is not expressing a wish for us to have the grace and love of God. He does not say, “MAY the grace of our Lord, the love of God and the fellowship of the Spirit be with you.” Though some translations wrongly add the word “may.” A benediction actually bestows these blessings upon us. We can see that if we look at what God says when He gave Aaron the Benediction that we more commonly use. “The Lord Bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.” (Num 6:24-26) Then God said, “So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.” So you see, a benediction is actually bestowing the blessings of God upon those who receive it with believing hearts.

Through this Benediction, God is actually giving us His **Grace, Love and Fellowship**. Those words are also very common and we probably all know what they mean, but do you ever find that those words become so common and familiar that you don’t really think about them? Let’s dive a little deeper that we **Receive the Grace, Love and Fellowship of the Triune God**.

I would like to start in the middle with

“The Love of God!”

Do you ever wonder what God did before He created the world? He existed for all eternity before He created the world. What did He do before there was a world to care for and people to save? There is no way of knowing what God did, but there is an amazing verse in John 17:24. It’s part of Jesus’ prayer for all His disciples the night before He was crucified. He says, “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” That is what the Father was doing before He created the world, He was loving His Son. And the Son was loving the Father. Whatever they did, I don’t know, but they did it together in perfect love and harmony. That gives us a beautiful

picture of our God. God is not some impersonal cosmic force, like in Star Wars. He is a very real, personal being who is love.

Love is the defining quality of God. It defines His nature and character. “God IS Love,” the Apostle John says. Is there anything more wonderful than Love? Love makes life enjoyable. It makes life worth living. Without love, life would be truly miserable.

Yet we can't really comprehend PURE LOVE. God created us with the ability to love and enjoy love, but in our fallen state, mankind has corrupted true love and turned it into a selfish thing, loving someone because they make me happy and feel good. When love is based on your feelings and depends on the actions of the other person, that's not really true love. That kind of love can quickly fade. That's why Paul prays that we may be able to “comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.” Eph. 3:18-19 We can only learn true love when we know God and His love, because, as the Apostle John tells us, “love is from God.” 1 John 4:7

The love of God is first of all INTERNAL. His love doesn't depend on anything outside of Himself. He is love. His love doesn't depend on how good or loveable we are. It doesn't depend on anything in us or about us. Love flows entirely from Him.

The love of God is also GIVING. Love always gives it doesn't take. It doesn't demand. Love gives without thought of the cost. You know how it is: “God SO LOVED the world that He GAVE His only Begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Love saw our need and our lost condition and was determined to save us. He gave the very best for the very worst.

Now Paul says “the love of God... BE WITH YOU ALL.” What a blessing! The perfect, eternal love the Father has for His Son is with us. His Love is the Fountain and source of all true Love. The Apostle John says, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves (that is with the true agape love) is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” 1 Jn 4:7-8 By this we can **know** God's Love and **receive** God's love, and that enables us to **show** God's love.

However, before that is possible, we need the

“The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ!”

Ohhh, Amazing Grace! The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ stems from God's love and it is what gives us God's perfect love. That's why Paul mentions that first. Without God's Grace there would be no love for us to enjoy. Without God's grace in Christ we would have no hope! So why do so many people object to the idea of being saved by grace? That's because Grace implies that we do not deserve God's love.

You often hear people complain that there is a whole generation of entitled people growing up. People think they deserve to have everything that they want, and you owe it to them. And it is having a very negative affect on our society. But you know, this is nothing new. That idea that we deserve better is a part of our human nature. It is a part of every one of us. And where that is allowed and even indulged, of course that attitude is going to run rampant. For over three decades now our whole society has been focused on building the

self-esteem of our children. Now we are reaping the fruit of that.

We often hear people saying something like: “I don’t deserve this!” Or “My mom didn’t deserve to get cancer.” Where does this idea come from that we deserve better? That is a part of our sinful human nature. And it’s not just the world. We all desperately want to feel like we are good enough. People want to prove that they are good enough. If you watch any TV, people are constantly telling each other they are good enough. We try to convince ourselves that we are enough. And if we are good enough we deserve better.

That’s why the teaching of God’s Grace is so objectionable, because it screams out to us all that we are NOT good enough. We fall miserably short of being good enough. God demands perfection and we do not even come close. We have quite literally broken every law in the book. But for all those who recognize and acknowledge the truth about ourselves, (that we are not good enough; that we are wretched sinners; that what we deserve is God’s eternal wrath and punishment), for them the teaching of God’s Grace in Christ is the most wonderful, relieving, joyful truth. God had mercy on us and did not give us what we deserve.

Our Lord Jesus Christ took what we deserve upon Himself. He bore our punishment. God’s Grace in Christ means He gives us what we do NOT deserve—He gives us His love and salvation and peace. Try to imagine a defendant on trial for mass murder and the death penalty is on the table. He is found guilty, but then in an unexpected twist, the Judge says, I love you. I will suffer your punishment for you. You are free to go. That will never happen in this world, but that is what Jesus Christ has done for us. That is Grace! Unbelievable Grace!

Now, because of God’s Grace in Jesus Christ, we have the Love of God in our hearts and lives, and therefore we also receive

“The fellowship of the Holy Spirit!”

Like the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God, “The fellowship of the Holy Spirit” is talking about the fellowship that God already has and enjoys. It is the perfect fellowship that the Father, Son and Spirit enjoy together. They live together as one in perfect love and unity. Think of it, Paul says, “The fellowship of the Holy Spirit BE WITH YOU ALL.” That perfect fellowship that God has had for all eternity, we can now be a part of it. When we, by faith, receive God’s infinite Love because of His Grace in Christ Jesus, we have fellowship with Him, just as the Apostle John says: “That which we have seen and heard” namely Jesus, “we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” 1 John 1:3

The whole Triune God worked together to make that fellowship possible. For “When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” Galatians 4:4-6. There again the whole Trinity is working together so that we could be adopted into His family. That is the intimate fellowship of the Holy Spirit that is

given to us.

This fellowship with God may seem like a rather abstract thing that is difficult to relate to since we cannot see God or feel Him physically. Let's try to make it more concrete. Think of it in terms of a loving family. Sadly many families are not close at all. Some don't even want to spend time together. But think of a family where love truly reigns. In that atmosphere of love, members of the family truly enjoy doing things together; whether it is doing work together, or sitting around the living room telling stories, playing games, laughing and just enjoying the time together. That is a great picture of the fellowship the Holy Spirit has worked for us with God. Jesus says that the Father and Son have quite literally come and made their home with us. And we just read, "God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts." We live together with God as His children.

In that fellowship, we daily receive His forgiveness so that our sins do not ruin our relationship with Him. In that fellowship we receive His love and blessings every moment of every day. Isn't that fellowship the place you want to spend your time? Isn't that the most fulfilling, comforting, enjoyable place to be? Our Triune God is everything our heart longs for and more, so live together with Him.

This fellowship also joins us together as fellow believers. More than that, we are brothers and sisters. If God has adopted you as His child and Me as His child, that makes us siblings. We can best enjoy that fellowship with God when we are together, gathered around God's word with Jesus and the Father and the Spirit right here in our midst. This is all what God gives to us in this Benediction. Receive it all with believing hearts. May we live together in that love and grace of God. May we remind and encourage each other to continue in the grace and love of God. May we sit around together listening to God tell His stories about all the wonders He has done in His love for His people and be reminded by all His warnings how foolish and dreadful it is to turn away from that fellowship of love to a life of sin. Or even to follow false teachers who pervert the ways and blessings of God.

And this Fellowship means we can tell Him what is on our mind and heart. Talk to Him like our loving Father and our trusting Brother. And may we live together in genuine love for each other, sharing the unconditional love that He has for us. We can do so because He daily, richly and freely gives us the **Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit to be with us all forever.**

Amen.