

**FELLOWSHIP WITH THE SPIRIT**

2 Corinthians 13:14

**Intro:** My text tonight is the last verse of 2 Corinthians, and so the last word of Scripture which the Apostle Paul wrote to the believers at Corinth. It is a prayer, a prayer for blessing, and so we call it a benediction. It is an illustration of how the Apostle Paul prayed for the church at Corinth, and each believer in the church. Undoubtedly it was his prayer for other believers in other churches as well.

If you give some thought to it, it seems like a Gospel verse. The word *grace* first came to mean something to us when we were saved. If it were not for that word, we would still be in our sins. Our sins ruined the possibility that we could in any way deserve to be saved. In fact, we deserved to be left in our sins and doomed eternally. But it was by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we were saved. Our salvation is the greatest of all of the blessings which we have ever received, and yet we did not deserve any part of it.

**I. “THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.”**

It was by grace that the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world to save us. It was by grace that He died on the Cross. It was by grace that He left nothing additional for us to do. In fact, the phrase, “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,” is synonymous with the Gospel. Paul, in writing to the churches of Galatia, spoke of them as having been called into “the grace of Christ.” It is the grace of God as well, to be sure, but there is no Gospel apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, Who He is, and what He did for the salvation of those whom the Father had given to Him.

But obviously for Paul to include “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” in his prayer for the Corinthians, means that we did not leave the grace of Christ behind us when we were saved. We were saved by His grace. We are kept by His grace. We live by His grace. Peter’s parting words in his second epistle were:

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen  
(2 Pet. 3:18).

But there is another meaning to the word “grace” which we need to understand. And Paul used it in that other way here in 2 Corinthians as well.

That is in 2 Cor. 12:9 where Paul quotes what the Lord said to him in answer to his prayer that his thorn in the flesh might be taken away from him. The Lord's answer was, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Grace always retains the idea of undeserved blessing, but instead of being weakness, it is strength, the strength of God, the strength of Christ, the strength of the Holy Spirit. But none of it is deserved.

And so it is important for us to recognize that we did not leave "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" behind when we were saved, but we were brought into grace then. We live by grace. We are sustained by grace. The Apostle John stated in John 1:17, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." And in that great council which was held in Jerusalem regarding what was required of the Gentiles if they were to be saved, Peter declared, "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they" (Acts 15:11).

Both at the beginning and the end of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul prayed concerning the grace which comes from God, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Cf. 1 Cor. 1:3; 16:23; 2 Cor. 1:2; and our text for tonight: 2 Cor. 13:14. There are no less than 110 times in the NT that grace is linked with our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul actually defined the grace of Christ in 2 Cor. 8:9.

And so as we have come to a new week, we can face it knowing that we are continually saved, and guided, and guarded, sustained by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And be sure to notice in our text that the full Name of our Lord Jesus Christ is given.

## **II. "THE LOVE OF GOD."**

It is in 1 Corinthians 13 that the Apostle gives us the most extended definition of love that is to be found anywhere in the Bible. Love really finds its definition in the love of God. And this is also a salvation word, isn't it? We see it in verses like John 3:16; Rom. 5:7-8; 8:35-39; 1 John 4:9-10, to name just a few.

We all agree that "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" is one of the greatest themes in Scripture. But we have to agree also that "the love of God" for us is just as great. In fact, the two go together. The grace of

Christ was a manifestation of the love of God, and the love of God helps us to understand what the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ means.

Now to take these two terms, “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ” and “the love of God” to be “with you all,” as Paul said, what did he have in mind. How would God answer that prayer? Well, He would do it by giving us constant evidences of Their grace and love in our daily lives. But along with that it means that we recognize our need of our Lord’s grace, and of the Father’s love, throughout each day. And this will result in worship for God and thanksgiving for His blessings. And what wonderful security there is for us in these two expressions. Life never is easy. We always have our trials and difficulties, just like Moses did in the message of Exodus 5 which we considered this morning. We are continually faced with the need for wisdom and strength as we go through each day. There are countless ways in which the grace of our Lord and the love of God give us peace and joy through all of our circumstances.

But we have one more expression. It has to do with the Holy Spirit.

### **III. “THE COMMUNION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.”**

The three Greek words that the Apostle Paul used here are “grace” - χάρις; “love” - ἀγάπη; and “communion” - κοινωνία.

This last word is usually translated “fellowship.” It is a word which suggests a sharing, or a participation that two parties have with each other. It is one of the first words that the Apostle Paul used in 1 Corinthians. See 1 Cor. 1:9. We had it a number of times in the opening verses of 1 John. See 1 John 1:3, 6-7. It is what Paul especially rejoiced in with the church at Philippi. Cf. Phil. 1:5. It is a word that Paul used in connection with the Lord’s Supper. See 1 Cor. 10:16.

We have fellowship with God, our heavenly Father. We have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. We have fellowship with each other in the family of God. We are not to have fellowship with the world, according to 2 Cor. 6:14. But our text tonight tell us that we have “communion,” or fellowship, with “the Holy Spirit.

So we have fellowship with all three Persons of the Godhead, and we have fellowship in Them with each other as fellow-believers. But what exactly does this mean?

Often we speak of fellowship just because we get together, and have a good time with each other. And this can be a part of it, but there are many times when believers get together, even in church, when there is no real fellowship. Fellowship means that we share what we have in the way of true spiritual life with each other. It means that you help me, and I help you.

When Moses and Aaron went to the Lord when everything seemed to go bad for them, they were seeking fellowship. They knew that the Lord had what they needed in the way of wisdom, and strength, and peace of mind and heart.

Maybe I can give you some simple illustrations of what is involved in fellowship.

Yesterday many of us went over to Geoff and Kristin Hill's home to congratulate Georgia on her graduation from high school. On our way I notice that on a wide path through the neighborhood close by there were some electrical towers which are continually carrying electrical power to many places. But a home could be right under those towers and yet not be benefitted by that power unless that power was directed into their home. And even when they are hooked up, unless someone flips the light switch, there will be no light. When the light switch is turned on, the power is there.

Or you could think of your car. You can have the most expensive car in the world, with a full tank of gas, four new tires, a battery fully charged. But you are not going to drive away in that car unless you have a key, and use it. When you do that car benefits you in a way that you could not do for yourself.

Now I am talking about inanimate objects. But perhaps it will help you and me to understand what fellowship is. In God, and in Christ, and in the Holy Spirit, we have sovereign, omnipotent, and eternal resources. But what Paul was praying about was that we would recognize our need, our need of the grace of Christ, and the love of God, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and daily look to Them to supply our needs, enabling us to bring glory to Them.

The Holy Spirit has been given to us to teach us. He has been given to show us the things of Christ. He has been given to change our lives, and

to empower us to serve the Lord. And I know that often the Lord ministers to us when we are not particularly seeking His blessing, but Paul was praying here that we would seek the Lord's grace, and the Father's love, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. They share with us, and then we share with each other how we have been experiencing the blessing of the Lord.

Have you had prayer answered recently? Have you told anyone about it? Has there been a verse of Scripture that has been of help to you in the last week or so. Have you told anyone about it? Have you just finished a book that has been a blessing to you in your walk with the Lord?

When Peter and John met that man at the gate of the Temple in Jerusalem who had never walked, they told him to look at them. He thought that they were going to give him some money, or something else that would help him in a material way. But what did they say, and what did they do? Peter said,

Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I to thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk (Acts 3:6). That man who had never taken a step before in his life suddenly started to walk, and then he began to jump up and down, all of the time he was praising the Lord. That is fellowship.

We receive, and then we give. Or others receive from the Lord, and then they give to us.

Let me ask you a simple question. I am not asking for you to answer me audibly, but I just want you to think about yourself for a moment. Here is the question: How much time a day did you give to the Lord this past week, reading His Word, asking Him to speak to you, and then praying, pouring out your heart to him in worship, praise, and petition – just for yourself? You see, you and I have nothing to give unless we are receiving. And we receive when we are really having fellowship with the Lord. Bible reading and prayer can be just a meaningless habit if we are not careful. It was when Moses knew that he was in big trouble that he really prayed, not a long prayer, but earnestly seeking help from the Lord. And this morning several as they went out thanked me for the message. Actually, you need to thank Moses, and thank the Lord for He was the One Who helped Moses so that Moses could help me and could help you.

**Concl:** What wonderful people we ought to be! Think of it God has called us into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ, not only because He

knows how much we need to be saved, but because He knows how much we need Him every day that we live. We share our needs and our burdens with the Lord, and He shares with us His wisdom and His blessings so that we can rise above our difficulties and manifest to others what it means to be enjoying the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God our heavenly Father, and that precious fellowship with the Holy Spirit by Whom we are drawn into a closer and better relationship with Him, with God, with Christ, and what is the fruit of all of that, a more precious fellowship with each other.

And so I send you away tonight with this prayer for you, and I trust you will pray this prayer for me. Let's bow our heads in prayer:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.