

# Grace, Love, and Communion from a Triune God

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*Heidelberg Catechism*

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**Bible Text:** 2 Corinthians 13

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2 Corinthians chapter 13 is the portion of scripture we read this morning. The last chapter of 2 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians 13, and we read it because of that blessing, the familiar blessing that is given in the very last verse of the chapter, a Triune blessing. Let's read the chapter in its entirety, 2 Corinthians 13.

1 This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. 2 I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare: 3 Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you. 4 For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you. 5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? 6 But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates. 7 Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates. 8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. 9 For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection. 10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction. 11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. 12 Greet one another with an holy kiss. 13 All the saints salute you. 14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

So far we read God's holy and infallible word.

It's on the basis of this passage of scripture and on the basis of many passages of scripture that we have the instruction of Lord's Day 8 of the Catechism found on page 6 in the back of the Psalter, Lord's Day 8, pages 6 and 7.

Q. How are these articles divided? [That is, the articles of the Apostles' Creed.]

A. Into three parts: the first is of God the Father and our creation; the second, of God the Son and our redemption; the third, of God the Holy Ghost and our sanctification.

Q. Since there is but one only divine essence, why speakest thou of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?

A. Because God hath so revealed Himself in His Word, that these three distinct persons are the one only true and eternal God.

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, what does true faith believe? That's where we are here in the Catechism. If you remember about a month ago, we spent two sermons looking at Lord's Day 7 and we took the time looking at what true faith is and we pointed out a few things. First of all, true faith is a gift of God purchased for us through the cross of Jesus Christ. Second, true faith is the bond or the graft whereby we are united into Christ and receive all his benefits. True faith can also be understood as a faculty, the faculty whereby we have the fitness or the ability to believe. And then true faith can also be spoken of as the activity itself, the activity of believing, knowing, and being confident. And then we also considered the confidence that characterizes true faith, Hebrews 11, the confidence of those heroes of faith, and then briefly, we also looked at the object of true faith, what true faith believes and we were very brief and we pointed out true faith believes Jesus, and all the promises contained in God's word which are summed up in the Apostles' Creed.

So now this morning, as we make progress through the Catechism, we begin our study of the Apostles' Creed and we begin a study of the particulars of what true faith believes. And where do we start this morning? We start with the doctrine of the Trinity. That's where we start when we consider what true faith believes. I hope that impresses upon us just how fundamental the doctrine of the Trinity is for the Christian faith. The doctrine of the Trinity serves as the foundation of the Christian faith. It serves as the foundation really for everything. What we believe concerning creation, what we believe concerning redemption, what we believe concerning sanctification, how we view God, how we view his relationship with his people, the Trinity is foundational for all of it. You really cannot overestimate the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity. This is where we begin our treatment of what true faith believes.

Now again, to take a step back, I want to remind you of where we are in the Catechism and why we're going through the Apostles' Creed. Remember, we're in the second section of the Catechism. We are studying how God delivers us from our sin and misery and

there are two things involved. First, God delivers us from the guilt of our sins. He takes away our criminal record by sending Jesus, fully God, fully man, perfectly righteous, to stand in our place and live the perfectly obedient life and die the completely atoning death for us, clearing our guilt that we might have a righteous standing before God. We've looked at that, Lord's Days 5 and 6. And then second, God also delivers us not just from the guilt of our sin, but the corruption of sin, the bondage of sin, being enslaved to sin. He delivers us from the pollution of sin by actually uniting us to Jesus Christ and causing us to share in and be a partaker of his life and all the blessings that are hidden in him, and he does that through living faith, uniting us to Christ through faith.

And now the question is, what does that true faith believe? That true faith by which we are united to Christ, we're made partakers of all his benefits, what does that true faith actually believe? First thing we look at, the Trinity. That gives the structure to what we believe. This morning, we look at the doctrine of the Trinity using 2 Corinthians 13 to color our treatment of this doctrine this morning. We take as our theme, "Grace, Love, and Communion from a Triune God." Grace, love, and communion from a Triune God. First, we look at the blessed Trinity, and then second, the Triune blessing.

So we want to interact with that Triune blessing found in verse 14 of the chapter we read but before we do that, let's make sure we have a clear understanding of what the Trinity is and there are a few basic things we need to point out. The first thing that we need to point out is this, this is simply how God has revealed himself to us in his word, God is Triune. Now that word trinity does not appear in scripture, but this is how God has revealed himself to us. In fact, the reality is this doctrine of the trinity is so deep, so sublime and incomprehensible that if God himself had not revealed this about himself to us, we wouldn't even think of God as a Triune God. But the fact is scripture clearly reveals to us that this is who God is, he is Triune, and 2 Corinthians 13 verse 14 is just one verse that further reflects that reality of who God is as a Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Well, what does that mean that God is Triune? Catechism students, what does the Trinity mean? It means that God is one in being and three in persons, one in being and three in persons, or three persons in one being. First, God is one in being. That means that God is one in essence. That's the word that the Catechism uses. Those two terms are synonymous, being, essence. We could also use the word nature. We could use the word substance. All those are referring to the same idea, a being, an essence.

What is a being? A being can be defined this way, a being is that which makes something what it is. A being, an essence, is that which makes something what it is. We are human beings. That's what makes us what we are. We're not angels. Angels have a different being. Angels have the being of angels. They are angelic beings. We are human beings. What does that mean? It means we have a human body, we have a human soul, we have a human mind, a human will, human emotions. That's what makes us what we are. That's what a being is, that which makes something what it is. Angels are angelic beings. They have the being of angels, that's what makes them what they are. They have the essence of angels. And just so it is with everything, a rock has the essence of a rock. That's what

makes it what it is. A dog has the essence of a dog. That's what makes it what it is. And that's how it is with God. God is a being as well.

God has an essence. And what is the essence of God? Well, it's what makes him what he is. God is the divine being. We are human beings. Angels are angelic beings. God is the divine being. What does that involve? Well, we could say it this way, God is the one, only, simple, spiritual, uncreated, eternal, infinite, invisible, immutable, almighty, all-wise, all-just, good, gracious, merciful, loving being whom we call God. God is a being. He is the divine being. As the divine being, God is pure spirit. He is infinite. He is eternal. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere present. That's what makes him what he is and who he is. And as the divine being, God has one will, one mind, one life. That's all part of the being of God. His attributes, his perfections are also part of the being of God. Love, grace, all his perfections, his justice, his righteousness, his holiness, all of these are part of the being of God. They are what make God who he is.

God is love. That's his being. God is one in being. But just as God is one in being, all that we've talked about so far, so also this is true, he is three in persons. And a person is different than a being. If we say that God is one in being and three in beings, well, that doesn't make sense, that's a contradiction, but there's no contradiction here. God is one in being and three in persons.

And now what is a person? Well, a person is that which says "I." A person is that which says "I." Or if you want a synonym, an individual. That's what a person is, an individual. A person is an intelligent individual with consciousness and self-consciousness and the ability to interact with other persons. You are a person. You are a human being and you're also a person. A dog is not a person. A rock is not a person. They don't say, "I." They are not self-conscious creatures like us. You say, "I." You don't say, "My foot kicked the ball." You say, "I kicked the ball. This is what I did. I, with my foot, kicked the ball. Or, I chose to sin. I believe in Jesus Christ. I repent of my sins." That's who I am as a person. That's me doing it as I live out of my being. Yes, I'm also a human being, I've got a body and a soul, I've got a will and emotions and a mind and a heart, but I'm also a person, right? I'm not just a force, I'm not just a glob of random chemical reactions taking place in the brain. I'm a person, an individual. And as a person, I use my will to choose, I use my mind to think, and I live out of my heart and I live out of my body. So a person is who you are as you live out of who you are as a human being.

Now with God, scripture reveals to us that within the one being of God, within the Godhead, there are three who say, "I." There are three persons. God is not one person. He's not two persons. He's three persons. There are three distinct individuals in the Godhead who say "I," who are conscious, intelligent, rational, and moral, or to put it another way, there are three distinct persons who subsist in the one being of God. So God is one in being and three in persons and these three persons are Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So that's one thing to point out. Another thing to point out is this, all three persons are co-equal, co-eternal, and co-essential, or consubstantial, but all three persons are also distinct individual persons, distinct from each other, distinct according to their own personal uniqueness. All three persons are co-equal, co-eternal, consubstantial. The

Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each 100% fully God, each 100% partakers of the divine essence. The Father is 100% fully and completely God. The Son is 100% fully and completely God. The Holy Spirit is 100% fully and completely God. All three persons partake of the same mind, the same will, and the same life. They are all spirit. They are all omnipotent. They are all, they are each, however you want to say that, omniscient.

They all share in the divine perfections fully and equally by virtue of the fact that they are all partakers of the divine nature, the divine essence, the divine being. Yet the reality is also this, the Father is his own person, and the Son is his own person, and the Holy Spirit is his own person. They are not three identical persons. The Father is the Father so that he as a person knows himself and thinks of himself as Father, so that in the life, in the Godhead, he lives and acts as a Father. And the Son is the Son. He knows himself and thinks of himself as Son. In his life, in his life in the Divine Being, he lives and he acts as a Son. And the Holy Spirit in the Trinity is the Spirit. He knows himself and thinks of himself as Spirit. In his life in the Divine Being, he lives and he acts and he uses the will and the mind of the Godhead as the Spirit.

One mind yet three who think. One will, yet three who choose. One life, and yet three who live. And yet at the same time as we say that, we have to say they never act independently of each other either. They always act together in perfect harmony and unity, and yet as they act together in perfect harmony and unity, they also act according to their own personal properties as Father, as Son, and as Spirit. The phrase that we usually use is this, out of the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. That's how the one God creates. That's how the one God redeems. That's how the one God sanctifies.

Out of the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit, that leads us to one more thing we can point out, and that's this, that's who the three persons are in the Trinity, and now in their life and activity outside of the Trinity, in their works outside themselves, outside of the divine being, these three persons behave in a way that is in harmony with who they are within the Trinity and they act in a way that is reflective of their own life and relationships within the divine being. What I mean is this, in the Trinity, the Father is the Father. He is the one who eternally begets the Son as a spiritual act of love. He eternally brings forth the Son. He as Father is the source, fountain, and origin of the Son. In the Trinity, the Son is the Son. He is the one who is eternally begotten of the Father. He as Son is the word, wisdom, and image of the Father in the Trinity. And in the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is Spirit. He is the one who proceeds from the Father to the Son, and from the Son to the Father. He is the spiritual breath of love between Father and Son. As Spirit he is the eternal power and might which proceeds from both Father and Son.

That's the who the three persons are within the Trinity and now the point I want to make is this, who they are within the Trinity is reflected in how they behave outside the Trinity. So we put it this way, in God's work of creation it was the Father who spoke the word, it is the Son who is the Word spoken, he is the Word, and it's the Holy Spirit who's the breath by which God spoke all things into existence. Out of the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. All their activities outside the Trinity, in their acts of creation, redemption, sanctification, are reflective of their unique personal properties within the

Trinity. Yes, they all create, they all redeem, all three sanctify, but all three are involved in a way that is in harmony with their own personal properties as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit so that one of the persons, you might say, stands on the foreground, stands in the spotlight when it comes to creation, and one of the persons stands in the foreground, stands in the spotlight when it comes to redemption, and one of the persons stands in the foreground, stands in the spotlight when it comes to the work of sanctification.

In creation, in the creation of all things, it's the Father who stands on the foreground. He is the Creator. He is the source, fountain, and origin of all things. He's Father. That's descriptive of a father. In the redemption of God's people, it's the Son who stands on the foreground, who stands in the spotlight, you might say. He's the Son who becomes flesh, who does the work, you might say, of redeeming God's people. He is the Redeemer. Now, God Triune is the Redeemer, but it's the Son who stands on the foreground when we talk about redemption. And now, in sanctification, in God's work of sanctifying his people, it's the Spirit who stands on the foreground, because he is the breath of love. He is the one within the Trinity who devotes the Son to the Father, who devotes the Father to the Son and now outside the Trinity, he is the one who devotes us to the Triune God so that we live for him and we sanctify ourselves. He sanctifies us so that we live for him. He's the sanctifier. The point is, in all their activity outside the Trinity, the three persons act in harmony with who they are within the Trinity. They each have their own personally distinct personal properties and yet there is but one God. One God who creates. One God who redeems. One God who sanctifies. That is, very briefly, who God is as a Triune God. He is one in being and three in persons.

Now before we move on, we need to point something out. All of this is very significant for it's the foundation for everything, but it's precisely because of who God is as a Triune God that he is also a blessed God. That's why this first point of the sermon is entitled, "The Blessed Trinity." Not only is he a Triune God, but as such, as a Triune God, he is a blessed God, a happy God, and what I mean is this, to use the words of 2 Corinthians 13 verse 14, Jehovah God is the God who as a Triune God enjoys all grace, love, and communion, first of all, within himself. Our God is a God who is full of grace, full of love, full of communion within himself, first of all, and that's because of who he is as a Triune God. And the way it works is like this, everything that God is outside of himself, everything that he does in his dealings with us as his people, all of it is but the outflowing of the riches of his own dealings within himself. What I mean is this, God cannot be our Father unless he is, first of all, Father within himself. Right? If you enjoy who God is as your Father, it goes back to the Trinity. God cannot make us blessed and happy unless he is, first of all, blessed and happy in himself and God cannot show grace, love and communion unless he, first of all, as God, enjoys grace, love and communion within himself and he does that as a Triune God.

As we read in 2 Corinthians 13 verse 14, God is the God who blesses us with grace, love, and communion and so my point is, the very reason God can bless us with grace, with love, and with communion is because he is the Triune God who has these things in overflowing abundance within himself. That's where it comes from, we might say, and all of that is true, because he's a Triune God. So let's break it down a bit. What is grace?

Well, when we speak of grace as an attribute of God, we should understand grace as beauty. That's what grace is. Grace is God's beauty. Now grace can also be understood as referring to God's desire to make us beautiful, his favor towards us, to make us beautiful. We can also refer to grace as the power by which he makes us beautiful. Grace is a power but grace, first of all, is God's own beauty. God himself is full of grace. He is graceful. He's beautiful. And God himself, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, knows himself to be beautiful. He takes delight in himself as beautiful. The Father delights in the infinite beauty of the Son. The Son delights in the infinite beauty of the Father through the Spirit. And the Spirit delights in the infinite beauty of the Father and the Son through himself. And he also knows himself to be beautiful. And the three persons enjoy the beauty of the Godhead and enjoy the beauty of who God is as three persons in one being. See, God is the God who sees and enjoys his own gracefulness. He knows his own beauty.

Second, what is love? Love is the bond of perfectness. So that first point was, God is full of grace within himself and then second, what is love because God is full of love in himself. Love is the bond of perfectness. Love is that mutual longing and seeking and delighting in each other, an attractiveness for one another, and that's what exists within the Trinity. God is love. As to his being, his being is a being that has the attribute of love and within the being, the three persons of the Trinity see each other, or long for each other, seek each other, and delight in each other. They see each other as beautiful, full of grace, and then they long for each other, they seek each other out, and they delight in each other. That's the essence of God's own Trinitarian life, love.

And then third, what is communion? Communion is sharing or fellowshiping. God shares his own life with himself. The three persons of the Trinity don't hide anything from each other. They don't hold on to anything selfishly. They share. They commune with each other. They give themselves to each other fully and freely. That's the highest possible fellowship. That's what they do in the Trinity and that's what they are also doing in their works outside the Trinity. Outside the Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each act in such a way that brings glory and honor to the other persons of the Trinity. That's what they're doing as they create, as they redeem, as they sanctify. We'll touch on that in a second.

The Son becomes incarnate and takes upon himself our flesh out of his love for the Father. The Father creates out of his love for the Son, and the Holy Spirit sanctifies out of his love for the Father and the Son. That's what covenant life looks like within the Trinity. The point is, God is within himself a God of grace, love, and communion and when God blesses us, this is what a blessing is, when God blesses us, what he is simply doing is simply causing us to be partakers with him of these unspeakable blessings that already exist in his own Trinitarian life within himself. When God blesses a person, what God is doing is taking that person unto himself, and he's causing that person to share in his own life, his own relationship of friendship, his own covenant, which he already has within himself. That's what God is doing in your salvation. That's what salvation is, beloved, God taking you and bringing you unto himself to enjoy him and his own riches, his own life within himself.

The point is, I want us to see just how fundamental the doctrine of the Trinity is for everything. If you don't have a Triune God, you have a God who is dead and then you have a God who instead of bestowing upon his people out of the abundance of his own riches, out of the abundance of his own life within himself, what you have is a God who's doing the exact opposite, who creates us, who creates the world, because he's trying to fill up a lack in himself. Merely using us, right, using us to complete himself. That's not how it is, beloved, in God's relationship with us. The reality is far different. The reality is, God himself is already the God of overflowing blessedness, overflowing grace and love and communion, already within himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And what is God's work of creation? What is his work of redemption? What is his work of sanctification? It's but the outflowing of who God is in himself. God created you and me not to fill up some lack in himself but he did it in a real sense, not just because he, as a Triune God, has loved us from all eternity but also this, he created, and he created us, out of the overflowing love and devotion and sharing that exists within his own life as a Triune God.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit do what they do out of their overflowing love for each other so that who the Father is as the cause and origin of all things might be put on display. Let's put the first person of the Trinity on display so that he might receive the glory so that who the Son is as the Word, wisdom, and image of the Father might be put on display. Let's redeem a people so that the Son might be put on display in all his glory and so that who the Holy Spirit is as the eternal might and power might be put on display. Let's sanctify a people so that his power, the power of the Spirit in sanctifying a people, in sanctifying really the creation unto God might be put on display. So that the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are glorifying each other, they're glorifying their own Godhead through their works of creation, redemption, and sanctification. And then God in his unspeakable grace causes us to share in his own life and his own blessedness through the work of salvation so that we as his elect people might, you might say, further stand in awe of his glory and his own perfect life, and we might enjoy it with him and further glorify him as we taste it for ourselves.

That's who God is and what God does is exactly right. He knows just how glorious he is as God, as a Triune God, and he does all things to magnify and exalt and showcase that glory. And now, beloved, this is what we believe, this is where true faith begins, rightly knowing God for who he is as a Triune God. The doctrine of the Trinity is foundational for all of the Christian faith. It's foundational for our own perspective of who we are and what our lives are about. It defines everything. This is the blessed Trinity. Now, having considered that blessed life that God enjoys within himself, let us also consider the rich blessing God bestows upon his people. We've touched on this already, but we go further as we go into the second point of the sermon. 2 Corinthians 13 verse 14, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen." Now we could get into how this passage is a proof text for the Trinity. There might be some here even this morning who would say, "Pastor, prove to us from this passage that God is a Triune God." And we could take the time to do that, right, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Jesus Christ? He's the second person of the Trinity come in the flesh. So that's reflective of the second person of the Trinity, the grace of the



Lord Jesus Christ. The love of God, that's reflective of the Triune God as Father, but we will see in a moment that that's really where we can see the first person of the Trinity. And the communion of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost which was given to the ascended and exalted Jesus and has been poured out upon the church, that Holy Ghost is the third person of the Trinity given to the man, Jesus Christ.

So we see a reflection here in this structure of this blessing, we see a reflection of who God is as a Triune God, but what I want to focus on though this morning is how this text is a blessing and how to understand it because we hear it very often in church, don't we, when the pastor speaks that word of blessing as we're about to leave church. First, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember what grace is, grace is beauty, and then God's desire to make us beautiful. And when God shows his grace towards us, that is his attitude of undeserved favor towards us, that's what grace is, his favor towards us that we don't deserve. And then remember, grace is also a power, it's the power by which God actually makes us beautiful. And when we ask for grace, that's what we're asking for. Give me that strength. Give me that power so that I may walk in the path that's beautiful. How does God make us beautiful? Well, the second person of the Trinity comes in our flesh and blood, the Son becomes the Son and he dies on the cross to blot out our sins, to wash away our filth. God makes us beautiful by delivering us from the punishment of our sins through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ and then also imparting to us the eternal resurrection life of Jesus Christ.

So what does Paul write? The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the blessing of salvation itself, "For by grace are ye saved." That's salvation, grace. May God strengthen you and may God build you up in the salvation he has given you and continue his good work in you delivering you from all your sins, giving you the victory over the host of sin and empowering you. The salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, reference we might say to the second person of the Trinity, and his work of redemption, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then there's that second phrase, the love of God. Now the love of God we can say is the source of that grace that God shows towards us in Jesus Christ. So there's a reference here we might say to the first person of the Trinity. The love of God is God's deep longing for his people, his seeking them out and attaching them to himself and delighting in them and binding his people to himself so that nothing shall separate them from him. And the blessing here, the love of God, is that we might know God's deep love for us, we might know his longing for us, his seeking us out and his attaching himself to us and us to him so that nothing can separate us from him. May you experience God's smile shining down on you. May you enjoy the peace that comes from knowing that you are right with God through the work of Jesus Christ that he accomplished on the cross.

So the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, salvation, and then the love of God, the enjoyment of peace with God and then, third, the communion of the Holy Spirit. The communion of the Holy Spirit refers to the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. We could say that the communion of the Holy Spirit refers to that which is the result of the grace of Jesus and the love of God. It refers to God's act of sharing himself with us, giving himself to us,

making us part of his own life. It refers to covenant fellowship, covenant fellowship that's enjoyed through the bond of faith, which is worked in us by the Holy Spirit himself. May you experience God's fellowship and friendship and enjoy life as part of the covenant family of God. May you experience it knowing God's love is upon you through the gracious work of salvation Jesus has accomplished.

So the order of this blessing is maybe not what we would expect, maybe we would expect first God the Father, then God the Son, then God the Holy Spirit. In this blessing it's God the Son, God the Father, God the Holy Spirit. I think the best explanation for why Paul words it this way and why he lists these blessings is because he lists them in the order of our experience. When we think about our relationship with God, the first thing that we need and the first thing that we experience is grace as that grace comes to us from Christ. Before we know God as loving Father, we first need to know Jesus as gracious Savior because the reality is, we first know ourselves as sinners and to know anything more than that, we need to know that there is a Savior, that there is the forgiveness of sins. So the first thing we experience is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Second, as soon as we experience the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we see that this is all rooted in God's love for us. God is the one who gave Jesus to be the sacrifice, to be our Savior, so that we might actually be the adopted sons and daughters of God. That's the love of God the Father for us. And as soon as we experience God's love for us, we see that we've actually been brought into this relationship of fellowship and friendship with him by the work of the Holy Spirit. So the point is, this is how we experience God's blessings, this is the order in which we experience God's blessings every time we experience them: grace, love, communion. Grace exercised in the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. Love rooted in the ordaining work of God the Father. Communion enjoyed through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. And all of this is enjoyed through the instrument of faith, the instrument of faith which itself was ordained for us as a gift by God the Father. Now I don't want to separate the three persons of the Trinity, but this is the language we may use, ordained for us as a gift by God the Father, who is the cause, origin, and beginning of all things, obtained for us through the work of Jesus Christ and worked in us by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

This is how God operates. Out of the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. And what's the result of this blessing? Take note, first of all, this is not a wish. Paul is not wishing something. And take note, this is not a prayer either. This is a blessing. This is God's word upon you. It is effectual. That's also the same in the worship service, right? When the minister raises his hand at the beginning and at the end of the worship service, that's not a prayer. We're not praying at those times for God to bless us. Now, if you have a seminary student, he will pray, and then that is a prayer, but when you have the ordained minister raising the hands, the point, the intention of that is not a prayer. Maybe some of us close our eyes at those times, maybe we do what we are comfortable with, but it's not a prayer, it's a pronouncement. This is God bestowing an actual blessing upon his people, his church, his bride. When the minister raises his hands, we must interact with that not as a prayer, but we're receiving a blessing from God through his ordained servant.

So take note of that first of all, but then what's the result of this blessing? Well, the result is that grace, love, and communion are imparted to us as we receive them through faith. We are strengthened by the power of God's grace for our earthly sojourn the rest of the week. We are brought into the experiential knowledge of God's love for us. We know God's love for us through Jesus Christ and the result is that we continue to enjoy communion with God as we live out the rest of our week out of faith. Beloved, the Triune God blesses you with his blessing. You are people who are blessed of God. You must know that. You must experience that at the beginning of another week. God the Father loves you with an everlasting love. Jesus Christ endured the agonies of hell and bore the cross that you might enjoy grace. And the Holy Spirit has taken possession of you, he dwells in you so that you might enjoy the friendship and communion of God, your Creator, your Triune God. This is who you are, beloved, as the church of Jesus Christ, as the beloved of God, and this is all God's own Trinitarian work so that to him, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to him and him alone, the glory might go. So may it be. Amen.

Let us pray.

*Our Father, we respond with humility and we respond with great joy. To have a God this great gives us cause to celebrate and to have a God this great gives us constant occasion for falling on our knees and adoring thee. Lord, cause us to know thee more and more rightly, that we might hallow thy name, that we might keep thy commandments, that we might enjoy thee and live properly in this relationship of friendship, this covenant relationship that thou dost cause us to enjoy with thyself through Jesus Christ by the operation of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.*