

Read: 2 Corinthians 13:11-14

The Triune God Blesses Us

2 Corinthians 13:14

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

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The pastor stands up in the front of church. He looks out at the people. They look back at him. The worship service has come to an end. The time has come for the pastor to bless God's people. He makes the sign of the cross as he says, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." The people respond, "Amen."

Why does the pastor bless the people at the end of a worship service? Is it just a nice, churchy way to say "We're done! Time to go home!"? Not quite. Perhaps to answer that question we need to ask why the apostle Paul wrote the words of this blessing to end his second letter to a group of Christians living in a city called Corinth.

These believers were having lots of troubles. Some thought they were better than others. They often acted before thinking. Rather than show love for one another, they fought and argued with each other. After teaching and guiding them back to Jesus throughout his letter, Paul prayed that Jesus, the Son of God, would bless them with his *grace*—his love-in-action that moved him to rescue sinful people like them. Paul prayed that God the Father would bless them with his *love*—that love that moved him to give up his Son for a world full of sinful people, even though they did nothing to deserve it. Paul prayed that God the Holy Spirit would bless them with his *fellowship*—that they would live as members of God's family and as brothers and sisters made holy in Jesus.

Those blessings that Paul wanted for his fellow believers 2,000 years ago are the same blessings that God wants you to take home every time you come to worship. The triune God wants to bless us, even though he knows we all have our own troubles. You think you are better than others. You act or speak before thinking. You fight and argue with people you know and love. You do not always listen when God's Word is preached or taught or read.

Yet God still loves you with a love far greater than what any of us deserve. It's a love that moved him to rescue you from the punishment we all deserve for our sins. With the kind of grace that expected nothing from you, Jesus took the punishment for you. He even died for you so you could be his brother or sister in his holy family again. So the next time your pastor stands up to bless the people at the end of a worship service, know that the triune God is blessing you with his grace, his love, and his fellowship now and forever.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for Younger Children

- What is one blessing the pastor gives at the end of a worship service?
- You and I both struggle with sin. When we hear that God gives us his grace, what does that mean?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Why did Paul ask for God's blessing on the people?
- What does it mean to have "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit"?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Identify what "grace," "love," and "fellowship" tell us about each person of the triune God.
- Explain why it is significant that God wants you to enjoy his "grace," "love," and "fellowship."

Closing Prayer:

O triune God, how amazing is the universe that you have created! How even more amazing to know that you care even about me! Use your Word to guide me to trust in you and all that you have done for me. Amen.

Hymn: CW 194:1,4,5 – Oh, that I Had a Thousand Voices

Glory and praise, still onward reaching, be yours, O Spirit of all grace,
Whose holy pow'r and faithful teaching give me among your saints a place.
Whatever good by me is done is worked by grace divine alone.

Oh, that I had a thousand voices to praise my God with thousand tongues!
My heart, which in the Lord rejoices, would then proclaim in grateful songs
To all, wherever I might be, what great things God has done for me.

Shall I not then be filled with gladness? Shall I not praise you evermore
And triumph over fear and sadness, although my cup of woe runs o'er?
Though heav'n and earth shall disappear, your endless love is ever near