

The Communion of the Holy Ghost

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AM Service

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Text: 2 Corinthians 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

Introduction

These are the closing words of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians. He concludes this letter with a **benediction**. He closes his letter with a **pronouncement of blessing** on the people of God. Paul in many of his letters would close them with a benediction. He would pronounce blessings of **joy, peace, comfort, and security** to those who place their trust in God.

There are many benedictions recorded in the Scripture. Here are a few examples:

Numbers 6:24 The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: 25: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: 26: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

Psalms 121:7 The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. 8: The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

1 Thessalonians 3:11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. 12: And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: 13: To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

Then in our text we read this benediction ...

2 Corinthians 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

Here is **threefold benediction** pronounced by Paul to the Christians in Corinth. May the **grace** of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the **love** of God, and the **communion** of the Holy Ghost be with you all. This benediction is **doctrinally rich**, mentioning all **three persons of the Trinity**. And with the three persons Paul names, he attaches three gifts – grace, love and communion.

The first aspect of this threefold benediction is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. **The grace manifested by Christ**. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ **reminds us of Bethlehem** where Jesus became poor for us.

2 Corinthians 8:9 For ye know **the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ**, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

Then we have the love of God which **reminds us of Calvary** where the Father because of His great love wherewith He loved us, gave His only begotten Son to die for us.

John 3:16 **For God so loved the world**, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Romans 5:8 But **God commendeth his love toward us**, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 8:32 **He that spared not his own Son**, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

1 John 3:16 **Hereby perceive we the love of God**, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

The third aspect of this benediction is “**the communion of the Holy Ghost**”. What is this? Many times we use this phrase but I am afraid we say it without any real appreciation of the depth of its meaning!

The Greek word for “**communion**” is “**koinonia**”, and the same Greek word is used in the epistle to the Philippians.

Philippians 2:1 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any **fellowship of the Spirit**, if any bowels and mercies,

Though this phrase “**the communion of the Holy Ghost**” or “**the fellowship of the Spirit**” is only found in two places in the Scripture, the truth that they convey is very important. So this morning I want us to look at this phrase “communion of the Holy Ghost” and consider the **three precious truths** that it conveys, namely - **Partaker, Partnership and Pleasure**.

I - Partaker

2 Corinthians 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

The first idea that this word “**communion**” or “**fellowship**” conveys is **partaker**. The root of communion means **common** or **shared**.

Let’s see how this word “**communion**” or “**koinonia**” is used in the Scripture.

Hebrews 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are **partakers** (kekoinōnēken) **of flesh and blood**, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

Because we are children of parents with flesh and blood we participate in their nature; we share alike in their nature of flesh and blood. We participate in our parent’s humanity.

Romans 11:17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them **partakest** (synkoinōnos) of the root and fatness of the olive tree;

The branch partakes of the root and the fatness of the tree. The branch participates in all the life of the tree.

Now that is the meaning of the word the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. We have the **participation in the benefits of the Holy Ghost** and His work. We who have been born again by the Spirit are the blessed recipients of the benefits of the Spirit's work and the Spirit's work makes us **partakers of the divine nature**.

2 Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: 2: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, 3: According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: 4: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: **that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Partakers of the divine nature does not mean you and I will become gods or become co-equal with God. No, what Peter means is that **we share in the very life and nature of God**, so that we become more and more like Him. Because we have communion of the Holy Ghost **we become more and more conformed to the image of God's Son** the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, we are made new creations in Christ; we undergo a **radical spiritual transformation**.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, **he is a new creature**: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

When we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, we experience the communion of the Holy Ghost and **we are brought to partake of the divine nature resulting in a changed life**.

1 John 3:9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; **for his seed remaineth in him**: and he cannot sin, **because he is born of God**.

2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are **changed into the same image** from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Here is the work of the Holy Spirit as He works in believers; as He teaches them Christ; as He reveals Christ to them in the Word of God, He does a wonderful thing – He starts changing them into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. So that in the life of the true believer there is a reflection. It may be obscure but it is there.

I like what John Newton, the great composer of the hymn “Amazing Grace”, once said, *“I am not what I **ought** to be, I am not what I **want** to be, I am not what I **hope** to be in another world; but still I am not what I **once used to be**, and by the grace of God I am what I am.”*

What a wonderful change comes into the life because we experience the communion of the Holy Ghost.

II - Partnership

2 Corinthians 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

The second idea that this word “**communion**” conveys is **partnership**. Not only do we share alike in the divine nature but also we share common interests and purposes with the Holy Spirit. We share common participation with the Holy Spirit. That’s what it means to be in fellowship with the Holy Ghost - **we are partners with the Holy Ghost**.

1 Corinthians 3:9 For we are **labourers together with God**: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

We are laborers together with God. We are not simply working for God, **we are working with God and God is working with us**. We are workers together with God. That is a great privilege and honor to be called to work with God.

In the Great Commission we are taught that God wills and desires for the world to be saved, but this will happen **neither by magic nor by sudden miracle**. The salvation of lost people will only happen **by faithful human labor**.

There is an interesting passage in the gospel according to Mark that touched on this partnership that I have never seen before.

Mark 16:20 And they went forth, and preached everywhere, **the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following**. Amen.

The Christians are not the only ones working, nor is the Lord the only one working. They are **both working** and they are **working together**.

Acts 5:32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and **so is also the Holy Ghost**, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

The believers and the Holy Spirit share common interest and a common work. This does not mean we can do the work of the Holy Spirit. No, but what it means is that God has honored and privileged us by bringing us into partnership with the Holy Spirit in the work of God.

That is truly amazing. God could use angels and I have no doubt that they could do a better job than us but **He chose us to partner with Him** in this work of evangelizing the world.

A classic example of this is the story in Acts of a Roman soldier named **Cornelius**. Cornelius was a God-fearing man and prayed to God always, but he still was a lost man. One night Cornelius had a vision, an angel appeared unto him.

Acts 10:4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

Notice what the angel said to Cornelius,

Acts 10:5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: 6: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

The angel instructed Cornelius to send men to Joppa bring back Peter, for he will tell him what to do in order to be saved.

The Lord did not use an angel to lead Cornelius to Christ. No, instead God sent an angel to tell Cornelius **to go send for the preacher.**

Philippians 1:3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4: Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, 5: For your fellowship (koinōnia) in the gospel from the first day until now;

God has privileged us to be partners with Him in this work of saving the lost. This truth is both **humbling** and **encouraging**. It is **humbling because** who are we that God would choose to use us and allow us to partner with Him. How humbling it is that God would entrust frail and flawed beings like us, the great task of evangelizing the world. Also it is **encouraging, because** we are not called to work alone and go in our own might and power.

Matthew 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

He is always with us because we are partners with Him.

III - Pleasure

2 Corinthians 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

The third idea that this word “**communion**” conveys is **pleasure**. We don’t normally fellowship with people we don’t like and whose presence we don’t enjoy.

The idea of fellowship is **mutual pleasure**. We have pleasure in the experience of the presence of the Holy Ghost. Before Jesus Christ went to the cross He promised His disciples that He will send His Holy Spirit to dwell in them and to abide with them and to walk alongside them. This promise assures believers that the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is an ever present blessing to the people of God.

The fellowship of the Holy Spirit ought never to be stagnant. We must have an **ever deepening and growing fellowship of the Holy Spirit**. In this side of life, we will never have a fullness of this experience.

*There are depths of love that I cannot know
Till I cross the narrow sea;
There are heights of joy that I may not reach
Till I rest in peace with thee.*

Psalm 16:11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

This is a grand idea dominates the psalm - the idea of the joy and happiness and pleasure of being with God. Heaven will be the fullness of our experience. But between here and heaven there should be an ever increasing depth to the knowledge and enjoyment of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Why is the communion of the Holy Ghost so important? It is very important because **this fellowship of the Holy Spirit leads us to Christ.** If you are in fellowship with the Holy Ghost you will be led into sweet fellowship with Christ. That is where the Holy Spirit leads you.

1 John 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 2: Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: 3: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

The Holy Spirit always leads to Christ. If it leads anywhere but to Christ, it is another spirit, so **run as fast as you can and as far as you can.**

Our fellowship with the Spirit and His fellowship with us; our **participation** in His benefits; our **partnership** in His work with us; our **pleasure** in His person and work **leads us to Jesus Christ.**

Closing Thoughts

It is God's will that we should dwell continually in this blessed communion with the Holy Ghost. It is my prayer that He would lead you and me into an ever deepening experience of the Spirit's gracious operations so that we may more and more mirror in this present evil world the qualities of our blessed God and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is the true joy of the regenerate heart, anything less is a burden of heart. Anything less is a frustration of soul that's hard to bear.

If you are a Christian today let me invite you to cultivate the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and thereby enjoy spiritual vitality and victory which are our blood bought right in the Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Lord bless His word to all our hearts for His name's sake!

AMEN!