

Sermon Outline

“LIFE IN HIS NAME”: THE PURSUIT OF WHOLENESS AND THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

THREE EVERLASTING GIFTS: A BAPTISMAL MESSAGE (2 CORINTHIANS 13:14)

I. Joy Before the Angels

Our Lord Jesus tells us, “there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Lk 15:10).

II. A Good Pronouncement

- A. A benediction is not just a nice wish. It is a blessing, an impartation of God’s grace through words, on God’s people.
- B. Consider the explanation attached to Aaron’s benediction: “So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them” (6:27), the Lord says.
- C. When a benediction is pronounced, God is placing his most holy Name upon his people. He reminds them that they belong to him and that he will take care of them.
- D. When we come to this benediction in 2 Corinthians 12, we must have this understanding in mind: *The apostle Paul is placing God’s triune Name upon his people.*
- E. God places upon us this blessing through the benediction of 2 Corinthians 12.
 - 1. You will find that there are three gifts that God gives to his people in this benediction.
 - 2. These gifts are also contained in baptism, because baptism joins us to God’s Name.

III. The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ

- A. The first gift: *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ*
- B. “Grace” is basically unmerited favor. It is the good treatment we receive from God even though we, as sinners, do not deserve it.
 - 1. Ephesians 2:8: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.”
 - 2. Romans 11:6: “But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.”
- C. The One who gives us this grace is the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - 1. Jesus is more than the founder of the Christian Faith.

2. He is “the Lord.”
 - a. The term “Lord” can have two meanings.
 - i. To call Jesus “Lord” is to acknowledge him as the rightful Master of our lives.
 - Heidelberg Catechism 34:

Q. Why do you call him “our Lord”?

A. Because—

not with gold or silver,

but with his precious blood—

he has set us free

from sin and from the tyranny of the devil,

and has bought us,

body and soul,

to be his very own.

- ii. To call Jesus “Lord” is a reference to the divine Name of God himself.

3. He is “Jesus”—“The Lord Saves” or “The Lord Is Salvation.”
 - a. This God and Lord who comes to us in the person of Jesus is a God who has a very specific attitude toward his people.
 - i. He is not a God who comes to punish his people for their sins.
 - ii. Instead, he is a God who comes to save his people from their sins and from his own judgment.
 - 2 Corinthians 5:19: “that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.”
 - iii. This is the God we meet in Jesus. He is the God who loves sinners; and calls them to turn from their sins and come back to him. He is the God who cares for the weaklings and the losers of the world. He is the God who shows mercy to sinners. And that’s all of us.

4. He is “Christ,” the long-awaited King sent by God to establish true peace on earth forever.

D. This name, “the Lord Jesus Christ,” is the Name of...

- Absolute being
- Absolute power
- Absolute grace
- Absolute mercy
- Absolute royalty

- E. For believers, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ has come to us. We are forgiven. We are pardoned.

IV. The Love of God

- A. The second gift: “the love of God.”
- B. By “God,” Paul means the first person of the Trinity, God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Eph 1:3).
- C. In terms of the order of things, the love of God actually precedes or comes before the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.
1. Christ does not do anything apart from the commands of his Father.
 2. If God had not chosen to love us, we cannot receive the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - Galatians 1: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, *according to the will of our God and Father* [.]”
 - 1 John 4:10: “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that *he loved us and sent his Son* to be the propitiation for our sins.”
 3. It is because God loves us that he sent his Son Jesus Christ to give us grace.
- D. In this particular list of blessings, Paul lists the love of God as second on this list.
1. He places the love of God after the grace of Christ perhaps to communicate that it is only through the grace/mercy we receive from Jesus that we connect with God’s love.
 - a. In other words, apart from the grace that Jesus bestows on us, you and I cannot know the love of God the Father.
 - b. Only when our sins are forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ are we ushered into the love of God.
 2. The world in which the Christians live, whether they are always aware of it or not, is the realm of God’s love.
- E. God’s love is the most important love of all, because it is the love that never ends. It is the love that secures us forever.
1. If we are loved by God, the world can fall apart and we will still be safe.
 2. If we are loved by God, we can fail on our exams and still rejoice.
 3. If we are loved by God, the doctor can give us the worst prognosis—and we can still be at peace.
 4. To be loved by God is to be fully accepted by the Creator and Source of all life.
 - a. If God is *with* us, no power in the universe can stand against us (Rom 8:31).
 - b. If God is *for* us, we can be courageous in all the challenges of life (Dt 31:6; Josh 1:6).

- c. If God *loves* us, we can truly love others, without demanding anything in return. Why? Because God's love satisfies all our deepest needs.
- F. The love of God is the highest prize that we who are followers of Jesus Christ can receive.
1. Since God has forgiven our sins through Christ, God has enfolded us into his love.
 2. Samuel Bolton wrote:

God has thoughts of love in all He does to His people. The ground of his dealings with us is love (though the occasion may be sin), the manner of His dealings is love, and the purpose of His dealings is love. He has regard, in all, to our good here, to make us partakers of His holiness, and to our glory hereafter, to make us partakers of His glory. (*The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*, 25)

3. The love of God is the most fundamental reality from which all Christians live.

V. The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit

- A. After God forgives us and embraces us into his love, he comes to us. This is “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.”
- B. The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity.
1. In the Bible, the Holy Spirit is depicted by symbols of power, dynamism, and strength (e.g. rushing wind, water, fire).
 2. The Holy Spirit is the Power of God himself. He is the One who conforms people as well as events in history to the sovereign will of God.
 3. Yet, the Holy Spirit is not a mere force or energy. He is very much a Person in his own right.
 4. When we are forgiven by God through Jesus, and when we are loved by God, the next thing God does is move toward us by his Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Father and of the Son.
- C. This is what “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit” entails—God the Holy Spirit has befriended us.
- He teaches us through the sacred Scriptures (and those who teach it).
 - He touches us through the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Table.
 - He encourages us through our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - He forms us more and more into the likeness of Jesus Christ.
- D. In another letter, the apostle Paul describes the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives as “the guarantee of our inheritance” (Eph 1:14). The Holy Spirit is the guarantee that we would one day be perfected in the sight of God.
- E. What is the fellowship with the Holy Spirit? It is the experience of God in our lives. The Holy Spirit is God *in* us and *with* us.

VI. Three Everlasting Gifts

These are the three everlasting gifts that God gives to each of his children. Our Lord Jesus Christ gives us the forgiveness of God. God the Father embraces us into his love. The Holy Spirit ushers us into the very presence of God by bringing God to us. Through baptism, you and I have the privilege of living in this reality. May God help us to grow in our awareness of these three gifts, so that we can live more fully for him.

Questions for Reflection

1. Was there anything in particular about today's sermon that blessed and encouraged you?
2. What does a benediction do?
3. What is the significance of the name, "the Lord Jesus Christ"?
4. What is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ? How do we experience this gift in our lives?
5. What is the love of God? How do we experience this gift in our lives?
6. What is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit? How do we experience this gift in our lives?
7. How do the lessons in this sermon affect your relationship with God? How do they change your attitude toward God? How do they teach you to relate to God and show God your love? How does your new relationship with God affect your relationships with others?