

The Best Blessing

2 Corinthians 13:14



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

In a recent poll conducted by the magazine “Christianity Today”¹ it was discovered that there are actually “Five Kinds of Christians in America”. The poll defined “Active Christians” as the 19% interviewed who believed that salvation comes through Jesus Christ. They are committed to their local Church, accept leadership positions in their Church, share their faith, and practice the spiritual disciplines of Bible reading and prayer. Compared with “Active Christians” was the group called “Professing Christians”. This group believed that salvation comes through Jesus Christ, though they spent less time in Church or following the spiritual disciplines of prayer or ministry of the Word. The “Professing” group was around 20% of the local Churches polled. The other three groups of “Christians” polled: *Liturgical* (the 16% who believe salvation is vested in the Church), *Private* (the 24% who downplay the claims of Christ), and *Cultural* Christians (the 21% who are “Christian” because they don't want to be affiliated with any other mainstream religion) make up the bulk of those who attend Church. Quite frankly I don't believe that this last three *kinds of Christian* – about 61% of those who claim to be “Christian” are actually “Christian” at all. Why can I make such a bold claim? Because Jesus said:

John 10:8-9 All that ever came before me are thieves

¹ From the *Christianity Today* article “5 Kinds of Christians Understanding the disparity of those who call themselves Christian in America. A new national survey co-sponsored by Leadership” Reported by Helen Lee

and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. {9} I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

These are *very exclusive claims made by our very exclusive Savior*. He is THE Door – all others are **thieves and robbers**. Salvation is only available by entering in through Him, not through a local Church. The local Church was founded by and is ordered by Jesus. He shed His Blood for the Church:

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

And orders that she be fed. He is the Head of His Church:

Ephesians 5:23-24 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. {24} Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

And directs its business and its missions as He so desires. The Church is His Body:

Colossians 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

And He has directed her to go forward and lead others to Him through His Great Commission.

What does this have to do with our message tonight? Simply this.

If your foundation is wrong, nothing else will ever be right.

If you build a house on an improper foundation (like many of those houses we hear about subject to California mud slides) it will not stand. The Bible says:

1 Corinthians 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the Foundation on which the Church is built. He is the Foundation on which the Christian life is built. Jesus Christ is the Foundation of every good marriage, the basis of one man being successfully married to one woman all the days of their lives. The last words that Paul wanted to leave with the Corinthian Church – a Church often divisive and confused – were these golden words:

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

If the foundation is wrong, the Church – though overflowing – will be wrong. Jesus prayed for His Church:

John 17:11, 15-18 {11} And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil {one}. {16} They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. {17} Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. {18} As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

Jesus prayed for *unity for His Church*. He wanted those who believed in Him to rest in Him and in one another. He prayed that *we be kept from the evil One, Satan, and that the world not infuse the Church*. He prayed for our focus on the Word of God, the Truth that He gave us, that we cling to this great Truth as we go into the world for Him.

In order that we take the land for Jesus, we need to change the numbers. Let's forget the world for a moment, forget what all the other local Churches in the world are doing, and let's focus on this local Church. How can we impact the land for Jesus? Only by resting on the foundation that is laid, Christ Jesus our Lord.

1. Rest In The Grace of Your Lord Jesus Christ

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

There are many in the local Church – and I am sure even at our local Church – who have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who have not believed in Jesus cannot have rest or peace. Dear Ones, to *say* that “I am a Christian” does not make you a Christian. The great evangelist **Billy Sunday** once said:

“Sitting in a Church will not make you a Christian, any more than sitting in a garage will make you a car”

What makes a Christian if it is not Christ. Rest in Christ.

Psalms 116:7 Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.

There is a rest available to all, if all would but come to Christ. It is wonderful to rest in Jesus, to know that you have peace with God because He is with you.

May I say that the land will not have rest until the land is filled with Christians. The land will not have rest until the seed of the Gospel is scattered throughout it.

The Apostle Paul closed his final letter to the Corinthian Church with:

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

That is a wonderful testimony to what we are studying today. Though Jesus Christ is the second Person of the Trinity, and though we often see Him mentioned following the Father, as in “**the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit**”, Jesus Christ is nonetheless first in the hearts of His people.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is mentioned by Paul first because, in our experience, Jesus was the first Member of the Godhead that we met.

Jesus said:

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Where does “rest” begin? It begins in the **Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ**. Where does Grace come from? **Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17)**. What makes our Grace valuable before God? **We are justified freely by His Grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:24)**. One of Paul's most frequent prayers to the Church was that she remember the Grace that Christ gave us. He said:

Romans 16:24 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

This *favoured motto of Scripture* is repeated to the local Churches of **Corinth (1 Corinthians 16:23)**,

Galatia (Galatians 6:18); Philippi (Philippians 4:23); Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 5:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:18); and to the household of Philemon (Philemon 1:25).

In fact, the very last Word in Holy Scripture is:

Revelation 22:21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Though this text was written by the Apostle John and not the Apostle Paul you see the inspired hand of God at work. There is a place of rest for the soul, and that rest is found only in the Grace we receive through Jesus Christ. His Grace keeps on working in us. When you came to Jesus you received Grace – and more than enough Grace – to cover all your sins. Look what the Scripture says:

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

No condemnation. You who are saved stand before God clean. We are clean because of His washing.

Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

ILLUSTRATE ... and are now at a state of peace with God. Back in 1988 I received orders to go to Seoul, South Korea, an assignment that I shall never forget. I became a part of the vast military structure that guarded

the 38th parallel, that *no man's land* between North and South Korea. Most people don't realize that the Korea War never really ended. Though North Korea signed an “armistice” or what you might call a “truce – with cease fire” on July 27 1953, the war was never really resolved. As a result America – along with other NATO Forces – continually patrol the lower 38th parallel while North Korea patrols the upper 38th parallel.

The peace that we have with God, the peace that the Christian rests in, is not a “cease fire” or an “armistice” sort of peace.

When you received the Grace of God by faith in Christ Jesus the Bible says that:

Ephesians 5:30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

Our success and our peace is bound to Christ in an intimate way.

Sin cannot disturb us because it has been drowned, like the Egyptians, in the Red Sea of His Blood.

2. Rest In The Love of God

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

Here is a Golden Chain: **the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God.**

Having received the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are recipients of the **love of God**. What a joy it is to rest in the love of God. As Israel was going to cross into the Promised Land she knew that Grace saved her from Egypt, but the **love of God would keep her as she crossed the Jordan**. God saved you because He loved you – and He loves you still.

Having rested in Christ's Grace, we are also to continue to **rest in God's ever present love.**

The Lord tells us:

Jeremiah 31:3 ... Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

One follows the other. The Lord called you, wooed you to His Grace because He loved you – He loves you still. We need to focus our minds on that great truth. The God Who took Israel out of Egypt would not abandon her now at the outskirts of the Promised Land. In Love He saved her, and in love He stays with her. God told His Israel:

Isaiah 43:3-5 For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. {4} Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable,

and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. {5} Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west;

If God redeemed Israel and stayed with her as she moved into the Promised Land, will He do any less for us? If He treated our forefathers with lovingkindness, promising them:

Isaiah 43:1-2 ... Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. {2} When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

Would God love one people who He has redeemed with a different love than He would love YOU, Blessed Church?

You have been redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb. You have come away from the world, from the Egypt of sin to follow Him. Rest in Him!

Some of you say “But I am under such affliction. This is what is robbing me of rest”. Yet the Lord says to you:

Psalms 116:7 Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.

God's love is continuing, as continuing as is His Grace. Every trial, every enemy that Israel met once they crossed the Jordan were known of God. The God Who loved Israel at Egypt loves Israel as she meets trials. **Return unto thy rest, O my soul. The Lord hath dealt bountifully with you!**

When the trial comes ask yourselves “Am I in Christ's Grace? Does God love me?” If so, then rest in that love. If not, seek out that love. God's love is there, every ready to bless us. We need to surrender to that love.

If you are saved by Grace, and in the love of God, then it is your calling to *grow as believers until you are aware of God's Presence at all times.*

Adrian Rogers once preached²:

“Many Christians think of God as an absentee landlord, leaving His people on earth to do the best they can. They think that the Lord, after forgiving us our sins, has shoved us out into the world while He peers down from heaven now and again to see how we're doing. That causes Christians to pray for God's presence, even though He has already said He is with us. If you feel your prayers don't seem to get above the lights in your room, perhaps you need to know that God doesn't just exist above the lights. He is also alive and at work below the lights, where we live.”

2 In his sermon *How To Practice The Presence of God*, found at <http://www.bellevue.org/templates/cusbellevue1103/details.asp?id=1360&PID=33058&Style=>

What causes the Christian to lose his rest? It comes when we try to take the place of God. Focus on God. Commune with Him in prayer. Commune with Him in His Word.

Seek His face through His Holy Word. What does God want for your life? What does your God require of thee?

3. Rest In Your Divine Design, The Communion Of God

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

God has designed you to have communion with Him. Seek out and rest in that communion! Rest in the *right thing*.

Many believers lose themselves and lose the joy of their salvation by trying to carry a load that only God can carry. They will not rest in their Divine Design. When King David sinned with Bathsheba he lost his peace of mind. What did he do? He shifted the weight to God. David prayed:

Psalms 51:12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

We must rest in the Grace of Christ and the love of God. Put away from among you *conscious sin and*

lovelessness, and you shall enjoy the **communion of the Holy Spirit**.

An old Puritan once said “Sinning will make thee leave off communing, or communing will make thee leave off sinning”.

ILLUSTRATE When is the last time you spent a moment with God in prayer with your Bible open before you? Your rest is in the Grace of Christ, the love of God, and the certain **communion of the Holy Spirit**. There is nothing sweeter than to awaken in His Presence – nor to fall asleep in His arms. The world spends its time seeking rest in the dirt of this life. Like the blind mole, the worldly make their bed with dirt. An eagle cannot do that, and you are one of God's eagles, if you are in the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord has more for you than the foolish treasures this world has. King Solomon profoundly said:

Proverbs 30:24-28 Four things on earth are small, yet they are extremely wise: {25} the ants are not a strong people, yet they store up their food in the summer; {26} hyraxes are not a mighty people, yet they make their homes in the cliffs; {27} locusts have no king, yet all of them march in ranks; {28} a lizard can be caught in your hands, yet it lives in kings' palaces.³

What was Solomon saying? These small creatures – ants, prairie dogs, locusts, and lizard – naturally follow their

³ Holman Christian Standard Version of the Holy Scripture

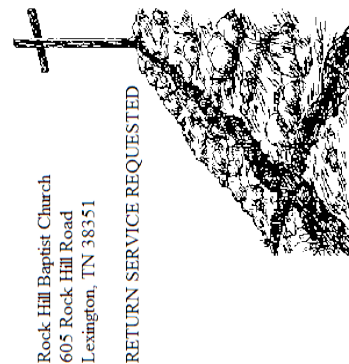
Divine Design, and are blessed because of it. Ants store up food, prairie dogs live and survive in the rocks. Locusts have destroyed great nations (remember the plague of locusts that God sent to Egypt?), and lizards live in palaces.

While the seasons of life are good, store up the Word of God in your hearts. Grow in the **communion of the Holy Spirit**. Get to know God while on the mountaintop, for sooner or later a valley will come. Be able to say **“I have obeyed Him, now the rest is up to the Lord. It is vain for me to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows. (Psalms 127:2) I will rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.** Follow Him and His leading. Rest in Him. Let God be God.

ILLUSTRATE I remember when I was in the Air Force we always had to perform what was called a “Weight and Balance” on the aircraft. You cannot just put equipment and weight in a plane willy nilly: the engine and the structural integrity of the aircraft can be damaged. Thus everything had to be weighed, reported, and placed in the right place. The life of the pilot could be lost if a poor “weight and balance” was established.

Here is your “Weight and Balance”, your checklist for flight. Let God be God, and you be you. Trust Him every step of the way. Seek His face, commune with Him. When you sin, cast that sin upon Him, confessing it in the Name of Jesus. Read His Word, and ask Him “Lord, what would you have me do?”

May God touch your hearts with His Word.



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