

June 15, 2014
Trinity Sunday Father's Day

"Your Future Is in the Hands of a Triune God"

2 CORINTHIANS 13:11-14

Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. ¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. ¹³ All the saints send their greetings. 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.

I grew up in an environment where people often wished each other "good luck." If you graduated from high school or college they said, "Good luck in your future." If you started a new job, they said, "Good luck on your new job." Even if you were facing major surgery they said, "Good luck on your surgery." Even as a child I thought it was strange to wish people "good luck." Is there some giant hidden roulette wheel that determines our future?

The Apostle Paul wrote this letter to Christians living in the Greek city of Corinth. Before they become Christians they believed that their lives were controlled by the Fates or luck who were even more powerful than the Greek gods. Then they became believers in the true God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They were baptized in the name of this true God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They knew their future was in the hands of this one true God. You can see the smiles on their faces as they listen to these final words from Paul's letter, "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of the God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

It has been said that we don't know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future. Your future is truly bright and beautiful when you know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

You know the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ

You know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is his undeserved love and kindness that rescues people who do not deserve to be rescued. This amazing grace has rescued us from our past life of sin as we sing in the hymn, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me."

In his letters to these dear Christians in Corinth Paul wrote more about the grace of Christ that had rescued him. In 1 Corinthians 15 he wrote how he did not deserve to be rescued and saved by this amazing grace. "For I am the least of all the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect." In the second letter he wrote of the riches of grace we have in Christ, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might be rich." He wrote about suffering a terrible affliction, a thorn in the flesh, that Satan used to afflict him. He pleaded for Jesus to take it away from him, but then the Savior spoke directly to him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is

made perfect in weakness."

When you do an honest assessment of your personal life you become painfully aware of how much you need the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to rescue you from the pit of hell, from eternal death and destruction. Why do I desperately need the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ to rescue me? My efforts to be a good father to my children don't measure up to what God expects of me, nor do yours. My efforts to be a good neighbor and faithful friend don't measure up to God's standards of perfection, nor do yours. I struggle to keep the Lord first in my life and not let other things become more important, and so do you. I fail to measure up to God's standards of glory and so do you. When the roll is called up yonder we cannot say, "I'll be there" based on our performance. We sin. We fall short of God's glory. We desperately need Jesus to leave the riches of his glory, become one of us, live the life we could not live, die for the sins we could not pay for, and then raise himself to life again to prove beyond a doubt every sin of the past has been forgiven. Never once did Jesus ever fail to love his heavenly Father and his earthly father perfectly. He lived a perfect life of obedience to his father on earth and Father in heaven, so he could substitute his perfect obedience for all our failings of the past.

What does the future hold for you? What does the future hold for me? Today, tomorrow and until we die, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ will be with us. The word grace has been defined with the acronym GRACE -God's redemption at Christ's expense. That redemption at Christ's expense is with us 24/7. Nothing in all creation will ever separate us from the love of God that is ours in Jesus Christ our Lord. You were baptized into this grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You know the love of God the Father

You were also baptized into the love of God your heavenly Father. I deeply appreciate on this Father's Day how much my father cared about me and loved me. I appreciate even more how much my heavenly Father cares about me, and so do you. How often Jesus spoke about his heavenly Father's love for him. In John 15 he told his disciples, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you." How Jesus longed to be back to the glory and the love he had with his heavenly Father from all eternity. He prayed, "And now Father glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began." Jesus wants us to share in that glory for he prays, "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world." My father's love for me was not perfect. My love for my children was not and is not perfect. But through Jesus you and I have the perfect love of our heavenly Father.

Jesus often spoke of his heavenly Father's love for us. In Matthew 6, he tells us to look at the birds of the air and watch as our heavenly Father feeds them. I watched in amazement at the bird that sat a branch at the top of our apricot tree feasted on a ripe apricot that we were not able to reach. That bird was in its glory as it ate the sweet fruit and then wiped its beak back and forth on the branch. The birds have more than enough to eat because our heavenly Father provides them bugs, and worms, and seeds and even nice sweet apricots. Jesus said, "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"

We see the depth of our heavenly Father's love for us in his willingness to give up his Son to die on a cross for people like us. Paul writes to the Christians in Rome, "God demonstrates his love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." How much does your heavenly Father love you and care about you? You have the answer in the words of John 3:16, "God so loved the world (insert your name), that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

An elderly lady was talking to her friend who was richly blessed with large bank account to sustain her in her retirement. She said to her, "You sure are blessed!" The lady shot back, "Blessed? What do you mean by being blessed? I worked hard for my money." The food we eat, the homes in which we live and the cash we have in our pockets all come from our loving heavenly Father who deeply cares about us. As the book of James tells us, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, from the Father of lights, who does not shift like shifting shadows."

Our Father in Heaven even shows his love for us by the way he sends his angels to watch over and keep us. Does anyone remember what Daniel said after he was thrown into the lion's den and the king then called down to him the next morning, "Has your God whom you serve continually been able to rescue you from the lions?" Daniel replied, "My God has sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions." As hungry as they were, the lions could not open their mouths to make a meal of Daniel, because the angels were protecting him. What does the future hold? You will live each day of your life on this earth under the protection of God's holy angels whom he sends to you because he loves you.

You know the fellowship of the Holy Spirit

What else does the future hold for you as children baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? You have the Holy Spirit in your life to comfort you and strengthen you. Paul encourages the Christians to be there for each other. He tells them to be of one mind and live in peace. He tells them to greet each other with a holy kiss. What a blessing it is to be surrounded by Christians who care about us and who will comfort us and encourage us. We are even more blessed to have the Holy Spirit with us to encourage us and comfort us. The Holy Spirit brings us to faith in Jesus and keeps us in that faith by constantly encouraging us. Jesus said, "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

Christian fathers, I would have you think of all the times the Holy Spirit has comforted and encouraged you personally from God's Word so you could be there for your children and direct them into God's Word. The word for comforter or counselor is the Greek word *parakaleo* with has the thought of walking alongside of a person and constantly talking to them. If we could keep a journal of how often the Holy Spirit counsels all of us and then uses us to counsel others from the Word, we would be astounded how many journals there would be on the bookshelves of our homes. The Holy Spirit constantly testifies to you that you are a dear child of your heavenly Father through Jesus. Romans 8 says, "The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are sons of God."

This past week Steve Daugherty and I attended the AZCA District Convention in Scottsdale, Arizona. We heard seminary professor Richard Gurgel leads us in a Bible study to encourage

us to in our devotional life of reading the Bible and prayer. At times our prayers are just groans and sighs especially as we face difficult times. What a blessing to know that all of the groans and sighs we have in the future will be turned into intercessions by the Holy Spirit as we hear in Romans 8 says, "The Holy Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express."

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