



The Church of England  
in Essex and East London  

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Diocese of Chelmsford

## **The Trinitarian Grace**

Sunday 31 May 2026

2 Corinthians 13: 11-end

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Team Rector for Wickford and Runwell and Area Dean of Basildon

“The grace of the lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.” It is common practise in church meetings for those present to close the meeting by saying the grace out loud, and to each other. (<https://tauntonurc.org.uk/grace-for-trinity/>) John Wesley wrote of this prayer, “Let us study it more and more, that we may value it proportionably; that we may either deliver or receive it with a becoming reverence, with eyes and hearts lifted up to God.” ([https://www.lords-prayer-words.com/famous\\_prayers/may\\_the\\_grace.html](https://www.lords-prayer-words.com/famous_prayers/may_the_grace.html))

I would like us to do what John Wesley commends and study the Grace more and more today by reflecting together on the amazing grace of Jesus, the extravagant love of God, and the intimate communion of the Holy Spirit.

Let’s begin by thinking about where this prayer comes from. “It comes right at the end of a letter, or letters probably, that Paul wrote to a church he founded, but a church that had turned on him.” “It’s clear when you read between the lines that Paul had been getting the first century equivalent of on-line abuse, that this church that he had set up had been getting at him for being too poor, too scruffy, for working with his hands, for not having the right qualifications.” He’s under attack and has to defend himself but, “at the end of this long, passionate, sometimes weary and difficult correspondence”, he “writes these simple and ageless words, ‘The grace of the lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.’”

So, “These are not just pious, empty, words. He is saying them to people who have criticised him, hated him, attacked him, and abused him. He is wishing the grace of Jesus, the love of God, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, upon those who cast him as an enemy. He says, in a way, it doesn’t matter what you say about me or what you think of me. Your abuse and attack isn’t going to make me anything different from the person I am determined to be; a person shaped by God’s grace, living God’s love, seeking fellowship, friendship, community with anyone.”

The effect of the Grace here is “to offer us the full resources of the faith”: “When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he and they were both aware that they were doing and enduring some pretty terrible things. But Paul told them that God wanted to give them the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. That is what God wants to do with all of us – to bless us with the gifts of the beautiful Trinity and to show us what human life – touched by such blessing – could really be like.” (<https://tauntonurc.org.uk/grace-for-trinity/>)

Let’s now look briefly at the individual parts of this prayer, beginning with amazing grace. U2’s song called ‘Grace’ defines the amazing grace of Jesus as follows: Grace “takes the blame”, “covers the shame” and “removes the stain”. “What once was hurt / What once was friction / What left a mark / No longer stings / Because Grace makes beauty / Out of ugly things / Grace finds beauty / In everything / Grace finds goodness in everything.” (<https://www.u2.com/lyrics/53>)

Jesus told a story about a son who squandered his father’s inheritance (the parable of the prodigal son). When the son returns, rather than rejecting or disciplining him, the father runs to greet him and celebrates his return. That story gives us an insight into the kind of love that God gives. Grace is the unmerited favour of God which finds goodness in everything. We do not deserve the love and

goodness that is freely and unconditionally given from heaven and all we can or need do is receive it. That is truly amazing grace.

When we understand grace in this way, we can see why God's love is described as extravagant. There is no holding back in the economy of God's love, the currency of the kingdom of God is of abundant generosity of things that never run out. Sam Wells suggests that:

"The secret of happiness is learning to love the things God gives us in plenty. There's no global shortage of friendship, kindness, generosity, sympathy, creativity, faithfulness, laughter, love. These are the currency of abundance.

The Church of today needs to rediscover this teaching because God gives us the abundance of the kingdom to renew the poverty of the church. In our generation God has given his Church a financial crisis, and this can only be for one reason: to teach us that abundance does not lie in financial security, and to show us that only in relationships of mutual interdependence, relationships that money obscures as often as it enables, does abundant life lie."

As John McKnight and Peter Block have noted in their book 'The Abundant Community', we live in a consumer society which is an economy of scarcity because it "constantly tells us that we are insufficient and that we must purchase what we need from specialists and systems outside of our immediate community." Instead, they argue that "we can do unbelievable things by starting with our assets, not our deficits. We all have gifts to offer, even the most seemingly marginal among us. Using our particular assets (our skills, experience, insights and ideas) we have the God-given power to create a hope-filled life and can be the architects of the future where we want to live." Finding ways to thrive in our churches and communities by releasing the gifts of all and building on one another's assets is a sign of the extravagant love of God.

Finally, we come to the intimate communion of the Holy Spirit. Sam Wells and Abigail Kocher have noted "the subtlety of the word 'communion': com means with and union means in – we are at the same time with God and in God, which combines our two heavenly aspirations."

<https://www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org/keeping-the-feast/>

In communion God takes our lives into the Godhead, the Trinity, and blesses us. In a Communion Service that happens particularly when the bread and wine and money and prayers are brought to the altar: "In that moment we each bring our different qualities, resources, hopes and dreams to God. And then the pastor recalls the sacred story of how God took what we are and made it what he is. And in that transformation we each receive back the same. What this is depicting is a new society in which we each bring our differentness to God but we each receive back from God the same bread of life. We each have different hungers, but God satisfies them all.

And in this dynamic of transformation we see how salvation works. God takes a simple people and their simple offerings and gives them a sacred story and sacred actions and in the regular telling of that story and performance of those actions they are transformed into God's holy people. And that's exactly what the regular celebration of the Eucharist is about: God taking an ordinary people and through this story and these actions turning them into the body of Christ, God's companions

forever.” (<https://chapel-archives.oit.duke.edu/documents/sermons/Sept20TeachingEucharist-1.pdf>)

As we have been exploring grace, love and communion, notice that the Son, the Father and Holy Spirit are all involved all the time. It's not that Jesus is the only expression of grace or the Father, the only expression of love. All three are one, so they are all involved in showing and sharing grace, love and communion. We are drawn in to the relationship of love at the heart of the Godhead where grace, love and communion are constantly being shared and exchanged between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is out of this relationship of love that Jesus comes into our world to be with us and thereby open up a way for us to participate in the relationship of love that is constantly being shared between Father, Son and Spirit.

So, this wonderful prayer - “The grace of the lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you” – is not simply for the ending of meetings but for the whole of life and the whole of eternity. It is what Christianity is all about. It is a description of the Trinity and the love that exists at the heart of all things because it exists at the heart of God. And it is an invitation for us to become part of that love and participate in it. So, let us, as John Wesley commends, “receive it with a becoming reverence, with eyes and hearts lifted up to God.” Amen.