

2 Corinthians 13:14 (R. Beacon) 69242

Bible Treasury: Volume 18, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Thoughts on (13:14)

The words "grace," "peace," and "love," and such as these, as used by the inspired writers, are transfigured words, or, more correctly, the vehicles of transfigured ideas—ideas being here synonymous with divine realities. Conceptions, that in a kind of embryo stage were current among men, are widened, deepened, sanctified, or even entirely transformed. Occasionally, as is pointed out in one striking instance by the late Abp. Trench, a word had become so debased as to be unfitted for the conveyance of the divine meaning—even to be what we should now call "impossible." Such are the classical Greek for "prophet" and "prophecy," "soiled with all ignoble use," and too deeply associated with corrupt mysteries to be taken into the service of the oracles of God. Hence a new word was adopted, signifying the precise opposite of a dark saying—plain and open declaration, from which indeed our own word "prophet" is derived. But "grace" and "peace" (as also "love," of which presently) are freighted with vast and blessed Meaning by the Holy "grace" and "peace," of which man knows so little by nature. It is true that "grace" was the dominant word in the Grecian salutation, as "peace" in the Hebrew one; but there is far more than the advantage of mere conjunction in the power with which they appeal to the renewed heart. In short we have grace and peace as measured by God Himself. With the Greeks it was a mere matter of outward courtesy, this greeting of "grace," even as the word was largely used to denote physical beauty and elegance by a people who deified beauty; with the less volatile Hebrew, the depositary moreover of the ancient oracles, "peace" was rather the desideratum, and the form of salutation was accordingly of this nature.

But how full and how blessed are God's grace and God's peace as we hear them in the apostolic greeting, and absent from none of the inspired epistles. Whether there were much to praise as with the Philippians, or to blame as at Corinth or in Galatia, "grace" and "peace" are the invariable benison, with the additional prayer for mercy in the individual case as to Timothy and Titus. And the close of each epistle contains a word of still more striking beauty, for we have there, in every one, the "grace of the Lord Jesus Christ." But while lacking in none of the apostolic letters, the benediction is fullest in 2 Corinthians; for here coupled with "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ," we have the "love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost." It will be profitable to dwell briefly on each of these three beatitudes, as the Lord may enable the writer.

And first of all we have the "grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" —the grace of Him, by Whom "grace and truth" came. Without controversy grace and truth as distinctly sum up Christianity, as monstrosity and corruption stamp oriental religions, as beauty and corruption marked the Hellenic world—vain dreams to which, alas, some are returning. How infinitely above both is Christianity, and this spite of the fragments of truth that, embedded in a mass of folly, bore testimony to man's primitive integrity, as well as to the dissemination (very slight it is true) of the Hebrew revelation. It is therefore the special personal grace of our blessed Lord that the apostles desired for the saints. It is a grace that combines the tenderest pity and the most unbounded love with the keen scrutiny of One Whose "eyes were as a flame of fire," —of One Who loves too well to pass over what is inconsistent with Himself; the grace of One, in short, Who is light as well as love, Who is the

Vast is the gap undoubtedly that practically separates the humblest and most spiritual saint from the Master; but at least we can "follow after." I apprehend then that Paul wished this wondrous grace of the Savior to be ever present with believers, both for consolation and for example.

And this brings us to the second beatitude (if I may so call it)— "the love of God," doubtless inseparable from the former one. For the eye that contemplates the surpassing grace of the Lord Jesus, the renewed mind "that covets the best gift," even the gracious ways of the Savior, will surely be conscious of the overshadowing love of God. And here it may be well to remark that while we cannot be too much occupied with Christ personally, we do well to remember that "we worship Trinity in unity," but we worship Trinity. It is most blessed to think of God the Father. "The Father Himself loveth you," as our Lord reminded the disciples. It is also most blessed to address now the Father, now the Son, as the Holy Spirit leads. Nor may we forget that when worshipping God as God, we include Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Is this sometimes lost sight of?

Finally we have "the communion of the Holy Ghost," equally inseparable from the grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of God the Father), as these from one another. What higher, fuller benediction could be conceived, what more blessed endowment! Contemplating the Savior's grace, conscious of God's love, our spirits become calm as they commune with the blessed Spirit of God, Who takes of the things of Jesus, and shows them unto us (John 16:15). Surely the sumnum bonum is here, that highest good, for which men vainly crave apart from Christ, finding all that seemed of fairest promise to be but apples of Sodom. They may take up with "idols of the market," of the schools, of the laboratory, of the studio; they may lust after power, riches, or grandeur, to say nothing of less respectable aims. Vanity is stamped upon all. But we "have not so learned Christ" (Eph. 4:20). And in this threefold benediction, which rings out sweet and blessed, and with the same divine freshness (characteristic of holy scripture) as when the great apostle penned1 it, the church collectively, though scattered and broken, and the saints individually, though feeble and faulty, have strong and abiding consolation. R. B., Jr.