

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.

The Collect.

KEEP, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy Church with thy perpetual mercy; and, because the frailty of man without thee cannot but fall, keep us ever by thy help from all things hurtful, and lead us to all things profitable to our salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28 (KJV)



What are those things that profit us and ground us firmly in the salvation of God offered in Jesus Christ? If you could name JUST ONE quality, what would it be? Do you possess those things which are profitable to your salvation? Would it be perfect obedience to the law of God, or courageousness in living, or possessing a thousand good gifts of the Spirit? What is the ONE blessing that bears fruit in all things and upon which all things depend for your salvation? Which ONE quality describes the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost most fully?

KEEP, we beseech thee O Lord, thy church with thy perpetual mercy. If the LORD keeps us in mercy, then perhaps mercy might be that one quality, but it is NOT! It is God's

mercy that grants us salvation, but that mercy rests upon an even greater principle. For what cause would God keep us with His perpetual mercy. May I suggest that it is LOVE whereby God is governed in His keeping, mercy, and grace! *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* (John 15:9-13) Love appears no less than eight times in the four verses above. It is the essence of God's nature to His people.

Herein lies a sobering question: What one thing can you carry with you when you depart this life? Is it wealth, social status, popularity, political power, good works? No none of these will accompany you beyond Jordan Waters. Then what? It is simply LOVE! And this is not JUST love, but Love in Christ Jesus: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

(Romans 8:35-39) Did you notice that LOVE will survive EVEN DEATH?

".....because the frailty of man without thee cannot but fall" This Collect emphasizes the need of the whole church for God's guidance as well as the need of the individual man whose frailty and hopelessness without that guidance and help would render him doomed. The Collect was first uttered at a time when the Roman Empire was being invaded by barbarians from the north and which threatened even the Church itself. This Collect points to God as our Shepherd in guiding us in all times and circumstances.

".....keep us ever by thy help from all things hurtful" The Good Shepherd stands watch over His flock to protect it from the wolves, lions, and thieves. His first concern is to protect His flock from hurt or injury just as the rule of the good physician is to 'first do no harm.' He has given us a powerful protection in His Word itself. If we commit those words to heart, we shall never be deceived by wolves in sheep's clothing. If we hide these in our hearts, we shall not sin against God. Man without God is in a ruined state already; therefore, man must have God to keep him and lead him where he ought to go.

We have petitioned for help and protection, and that is the desire of our Lord to perform. But we next ask another important consideration: *"....and lead us to all things profitable to our salvation"* Those *"all things profitable"* are founded on that beautiful love chapter of the New Testament – 1 Corinthians 13. Our Shepherd will not only protect us where we are presently, but lead into greater and better pasturelands and fountains of water. As He keeps the lone sheep on the lonely mountain, so He keeps the whole flock – the Church – inviolate. He is the Good Shepherd that KEEPS and LEADS His people and Church. Just as a magnet knows only those metals of like nature to attract, so the Good Shepherd His Sheep. And just as the ore of a like metal is attracted to the magnet, so the people of God are pulled and led by the Good Shepherd whose

nature they must share in Love.

This Collect is written to be repeated on the 15th Sunday after Trinity, but isn't its provisions and petitions appropriate for any occasion of the year? Has God KEPT and LED you, Reader, today? If not, who is responsible for the breach?