

The Gospel of John (89) **The Christian in Communion with the Triune God**

Last Lord's Day we arrived to John 14:16 and 17 in which the Lord Jesus informed His disciples of the Holy Spirit that the Father would send to them in answer to His prayer. The Lord Jesus promised that His disciples would be assisted by the Holy Spirit and that He would be "in them" (14:17). Today we desire to continue this very important subject that we have before us, that we find not only here but also in the next two chapters of this Gospel.

In these last words of Jesus to His disciples He spoke of the close fellowship that His disciples would enjoy with all three Persons of the blessed Holy Trinity. Although the Lord Jesus was about to leave them, He would not leave them alone. After He left them, He would pray to His Father so that "another Helper", the Holy Spirit, would come to them (v. 16). But He also promised that He Himself would "come" to them, along with the Father who would also "come" to them (v. 23). We see in our passage, therefore, that our Lord Jesus promised His disciples that they would experience and enjoy fellowship with each of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. And so, today, I would like to introduce this matter of the Christian in communion with the Triune God.

To begin today let us reread a few verses and then read beyond what we have already covered in the last few weeks. Here is John 14:12-24.

¹²"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. ¹³And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

¹⁵"If you love Me, keep My commandments. ¹⁶And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— ¹⁷the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. ¹⁸I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

¹⁹"A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. ²⁰At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. ²¹He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

²²Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?"

²³Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. ²⁴He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.

Upon the departure of Judas Iscariot from the Twelve, the Lord had opened this discourse to the remaining eleven disciples with an exhortation to believe on Him. Jesus said in 14:1, "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me." He was soon to leave them, but He did not want them to be overwhelmed with fear and distress. He desired that they be comforted, not troubled. They were to believe in His Father and they were also to believe in Him.

How was this faith in Him to be shown? First, they were to believe that He was soon leaving them for their benefit. He was leaving in order to make access for them to dwell in His Father's house. Secondly, they were to have in faith in His deity, that He was the eternal Son of God. He was in the Father and the Father was in Him. They were to believe this reality. Jesus said to them in verse 11, "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me." Thirdly, to believe in Him was to be assured that He would answer their prayer offered to the Father through Him. Jesus had said to them "And whatever you ask in

My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it” (vs. 13f). “Faith in His person was now to be manifested by prayer in His name!” (Arthur Pink).

It was then in verse 15 Jesus gave His disciples this exhortation, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” As we emphasized last Lord’s Day, as Christians we have the law of God as our rule of life, but that law is under Jesus Christ. This is a very important matter for us to understand. Whereas before we were saved, we were under the law toward God, since becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ, we are under the same law under Jesus Christ. This is what we stated last week:

Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, the commandments of God the Father became the commandments of Jesus Christ. This is not overtly stated, but we do read our Lord’s words by which we conclude this truth. In John 15:15 we read our Lord Jesus saying, “If you keep *My commandments*, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept *My Father’s commandments* and abide in His love” (John 15:10). The commandments are the same, but whereas Jesus Christ kept the commandments because they were His Father’s, we are to keep the commandments because they are the commandments of Jesus Christ. In other words the law of God is mediated to us through Jesus Christ.

This week I was given a confirming word of this understanding by **Arthur Pink**.¹ In writing about the Christian’s relationship and regard for God’s law, He wrote these words:

“It is God’s moral Law, but in the hands of the Mediator (Gal. 3:19; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:6), it is the Law which was “in His heart” (Psa. 40:8). It is the Law which He came to “fulfil” (Matt. 5:17). The “law of God” is now termed “the law of Christ” as it relates to Christians. As creatures we are under bonds to “serve the Law of God” (Rom. 7:25). As redeemed sinners we are “the bondslaves of Christ” (Eph 6:6), and as such we are under bonds to “serve the Lord Christ” (Col. 3:24). The relation between these two appellations, “the law of God” and “the law of Christ” is clearly intimated in 1 Corinthians 9:21, where the apostle states, that he “was not without law to God,” for he was “under the law of Christ.” The meaning of this is very simple. As a human creature, the apostle was still under obligation to obey the moral Law of God his Creator; but as a saved man he now belonged to Christ, the Mediator, by redemption. Christ had purchased him: he was His; therefore, he was “under the law of Christ.” The “law of Christ,” then, is just the moral Law of God now in the hands of the Mediator and Redeemer—compare Exodus 34:1 and what follows!”

There you have it confirmed. The law of God is the moral standard for our lives. But thankfully the law of God is mediated to us through Christ. What does this mean? First, because the law is mediated to us through Jesus Christ, the law can no longer condemn us. As Paul wrote, “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2). Second, because the law is mediated to us through Jesus Christ, its threats and harshness are removed from it. There is no longer the fearful threat of God’s law hanging over us, rather as it is administered to us in Christ it provides tender guidance, even clear direction. Third, because the law is mediated to us through Jesus Christ, the desire and delight to do His law has replaced the former antipathy and rebellion toward His law. Paul wrote, “For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being” (Rom. 7:22). This cannot be expressed truthfully by a non-Christian, “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7). But the longing of every Christian is to be governed by the law of God, which is to be conformed to the image of Christ. **Arthur Pink** (1886-1952) wrote that true love for Christ is shown in obedience to Christ:

“All sentimental talking and singing about love are vain. Unless, by grace, we show a truthful obedience, the profession of affection is worse than affectation. There is more hypocrisy than we suppose. Love is practical, or it is not love at all” (Mr. P. W. Heward). “If ye love me, keep my

¹ Actually Bruce Binney found this for me this week in Arthur Pink, **The Law and the Saint**, which is a free PDF book from Chapel Library at: <https://www.chapellibrary.org/book/lats/law-and-the-saint-the-pinkarthurw>.

commandments.” How this verse rebukes the increasing Antinomianism of our day! In some circles one cannot use the word “commandments” without being frowned upon as a “legalist.” Multitudes are now being taught that Law is the enemy of Grace, and that the God of Sinai is a stern and forbidding Deity, laying upon His creatures a yoke grievous to be borne. The terrible travesty of the truth is this. The One who wrote upon the tables of stone is none other than the One who died on Calvary’s Cross; and He who here says “If ye love me, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS” also said at Sinai that He would show mercy unto thousands of them “that love me and KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS”! It is indeed striking to note that this tender Savior, who was here comforting His sorrowing disciples, also maintained His Divine majesty and insisted upon the recognition of His Divine authority. Mark how His Deity appears here: “Keep *My* commandments”: we never read of Moses or any of the prophets speaking of *their* commandments!²

And so, again, Jesus told His disciples in verse 15, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” But how is this to be done, for we are so weak and ignorant? Though we have the desire and delight to do so, how can we keep His commandments given our propensity to sin and the difficulty we will encounter in this fallen world for doing so? The Lord Jesus declared to them that He has made provision for our problem. He would pray to His Father that He would send to His disciples “another Helper”, who would always be with them to assist them in whatever He had called them to do. The Lord Jesus declared to them in **verses 16 and 17**:

¹⁶And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—
¹⁷the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

Last Lord’s Day we stated 6 qualities of the Holy Spirit that the Lord Jesus gave to His disciples in these verses.

1. God the Father would give the Holy Spirit *in answer to the prayer of Jesus*.
2. The Lord Jesus calls the Holy Spirit “*another Helper*.”
3. The Lord Jesus declared that the Father would give the Holy Spirit *so that He would abide with His disciples forever*.
4. The Lord Jesus described the Holy Spirit as *the Spirit of truth*.
5. The Lord Jesus declared that *the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit*.
6. The Lord Jesus declared that *His disciples knew the Holy Spirit, but they would soon know Him much more than they did then*.

Let us now continue to consider our Lord’s words before us. But before we move on from verses 16 and 17, it is important for us to understand our Lord’s declaration regarding the Holy Spirit. Jesus told His disciples of the Holy Spirit, “***He dwells with you and will be in you.***”

I. Our Lord’s promise that the Holy Spirit would be *in* them. (14:17)

Jesus said to His disciples with respect to the Holy Spirit: “but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”

A. Jesus declared that the Holy Spirit was presently dwelling *with* His disciples.

Some would say that the Holy Spirit had been dwelling with the disciples because Jesus Himself had the Holy Spirit in fullness in Him while He was with them. And this is certainly true. But through biblical history the Holy Spirit has always been at work among His people. The Holy Spirit is the source of life,

² Arthur Pink, **The Law and the Saint**.

both physical and spiritual life. Where God's Spirit is, there is life. Where He is not present, there is death. And so, the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit has always been operative in history bring forth and then sustaining spiritual life in the Lord's people, those who had saving faith. In order for people to be saved, they must be born again. This was true of people during the times of the Old Testament. It is certainly true in the days of the New Testament. It is equally true today. Unless a man is born again by the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

We read in the Old Testament God had often dwelt with His people by the Holy Spirit. There were times when the Holy Spirit would come upon certain ones in special times for extraordinary needs. We read of the Holy Spirit coming upon one of the judges of ancient Israel:

But when the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who saved them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. ***The Spirit of the LORD was upon him***, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the LORD gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand. And his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim. (Jdg. 3:9 ESV)

On another occasion God encouraged His servant, Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest, that He would be with His people through the presence of His Holy Spirit:

Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts, ⁵according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. ***My Spirit remains in your midst***. Fear not. (Hag. 2:4f)

But although the Holy Spirit was with them, even dwelling among them, He was not yet *in* each them, empowering every one of them to live before God in a holy manner. With regard to their ability to live holy lives of consecration and obedience, the people of the Old Testament world were quite powerless. But the Lord indicated that very soon their condition would change.

B. Jesus declared that the Holy Spirit would soon be dwelling *in* His disciples.

God had promised in the Old Testament Scriptures that in the age of the Messiah, i.e. when the kingdom of God would be established, God would impart His Holy Spirit to His people to enable them to live holy lives. This is one of the great blessings that we enjoy in this new covenant age. Every Christian not only has the Spirit dwelling *with* him, but the Holy Spirit is actually *in* the (true) believer to enable him to live in accordance with the laws of God. We read of this promise in **Ezekiel 36**.

¹⁶Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying: ¹⁷“Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds; to Me their way was like the uncleanness of a woman in her customary impurity. ¹⁸Therefore I poured out My fury on them for the blood they had shed on the land, and for their idols with which they had defiled it. ¹⁹So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries; I judged them according to their ways and their deeds. ²⁰When they came to the nations, wherever they went, they profaned My holy name—when they said of them, ‘These are the people of the LORD, and yet they have gone out of His land.’ ²¹But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went.

²²“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. ²³And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD,” says the Lord GOD, “when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. ²⁴For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. ²⁵Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶I will give you a new heart

and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷***I will put My Spirit within you*** and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. (Ezek. 36:16-27).

When our Lord Jesus declared to His disciples regarding the Holy Spirit, “He dwells with you and ***will be in you***”, He was declaring the realization of the promise of the indwelling Holy Spirit who would enable them to live in holiness before God. Whereas through much of the Old Testament the Spirit of God dwelled among His people first in the tabernacle and then the temple, in this new covenant age the Holy Spirit takes up His dwelling ***in*** every true Christian. The physical body of the Christian is now the temple of God in which the Holy Spirit dwells and manifests His presence

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit ***who is in you***, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Cor. 6:19f)

And also the local church is the temple of the Holy Spirit through which He manifests His presence and power in the world.

Do you not know that you (i.e. the church) are God's temple and that ***God's Spirit dwells in you?*** ¹⁷ If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. (1 Cor. 3:16f)

And the Lord declared to His disciples that the Father would give them the Holy Spirit “that He may abide with you forever” (v. 14).

Those that have an experimental acquaintance with the Spirit have a comfortable assurance of His continuance: He *dwelleth with you, and shall be in you*, for the blessed Spirit doth not use to (ordinarily) shift His lodging. Those that know Him know how to value Him, invite Him and bid Him welcome; and therefore He shall be in them, as the light in the air, as the sap in the tree, as the soul in the body. Their communion with Him shall be intimate, and their union with Him inseparable. (Matthew Henry)

II. Our Lord's promise that He will come to them (14:18)

Our Lord's next words affirm and confirm the matter. Jesus then said to His disciples, and He says to us, His disciples today, “***I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you***” (14:18). “His departure from them was that which grieved them; but it was not so bad as they apprehended, for it was neither total nor final” (Matthew Henry). Could there ever be one who feels himself as alone as an orphan, particularly who had known his parents but then lost them? The Lord has a special concern and takes special interest in orphans, and widows, those who are alone and lonely, needy and helpless.

The LORD watches over the sojourners;
He upholds the widow and the fatherless,
But the way of the wicked He brings to ruin. (Psa. 146:9)

Our Lord Jesus is always watching over His own. He never leaves His disciples alone as orphans are alone. He is always there to comfort, protect, provide, and assure. We sing the old hymn, ***Jesus, Never Fails***.

Earthly friends may prove untrue,
Doubts and fears assails,
One still loves and cares for you,

One who will not fail.

Though the sky be dark and drear,
Fierce and strong the gail,
Just remember He is near,
And He will not fail.

In life's dark and bitter hour,
Love will still prevail.
Trust His everlasting power.
Jesus will never fail.

Refrain:

Jesus never fails. Jesus never fails.
Heaven and earth may pass away,
But Jesus never fails.

Jesus has promised His disciples (particularly His disciple-makers): “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). Wrote one:

They were not to be like sheep without a shepherd, helpless believers in a hostile world, without a defender, forsaken orphans incapable of providing for themselves, left to the mercy of strangers. “I will come to you”: how precious is this! Before we go to His place to be with Him (John 14:2, 3), He comes to be with us! But what is meant by “I will come to you”? We believe that these words are to be understood in their widest latitude. He came to them corporeally, immediately after His resurrection. He came to them in spirit after His ascension. He will come to them in glory at His second advent. The present application of this promise to believers finds its fulfillment in the gift of the Holy Spirit indwelling us individually, present in the midst of the assembly collectively. And yet we must not limit the coming of Christ to His children to the presence of the Holy Spirit. The mystery of the Holy Trinity is altogether beyond the grasp of our finite minds. Yet the New Testament makes it clear that in the unity of the Godhead, the advent of the Holy Spirit was also Christ coming, invisibly, to be really present with His own.³

III. Our Lord's promise of blessed communion with Him and His Father (14:19-24)

We now arrive to some verses which are quite amazing in their importance and very broad in what they suggest and entail. Here is **John 14:19-24**.

¹⁹“A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. ²⁰At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. ²¹He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”

²²Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?”

²³Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. ²⁴He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.

³ Ibid.

The time of our Lord's earthly sojourn was soon coming to an end. Before long He would no longer be physically present. The world will see Him no more. But He declared to them that they would "see Him." They and many others would yet see Him physically. As one wrote,

They saw Him then, while He was speaking to them. They saw Him, again and again, after He had risen from the dead. They saw Him, as He went up to Heaven, till a cloud received Him out of their sight. They saw Him, by faith, after He had taken His seat at the right hand of God, for it is written, "We *see* Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor" (Heb. 2:9). They see Him now, for they are *present with the Lord*. They shall see Him at His second coming: "When He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see him as He is" (1 John 3:2). They shall see Him for ever and ever throughout the Perfect Day: for it is written, "And they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads" (Rev. 22:4). "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19). (Arthur Pink)

But His disciples would see Jesus, of course, through the eyes of faith.⁴ He would be as true and real and present with them as if He were physically present with them and their physical eyes could perceive Him. His disciples would be as Moses who "saw" God though God was "invisible". We read of the spiritual sight of Moses in Hebrews 11:

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,²⁵ choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,²⁶ esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

²⁷By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for *he endured as seeing Him who is invisible*. ²⁸By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them. (Heb. 11:24-28)

And with spiritual sight we behold Jesus as His disciples. He is as real and true as that one sitting beside you. We see Jesus, who is there, who is here!

We then have our Lord's promise: "***Because I live, you will live also.***" This week we will lay in the earth one of our sisters in Christ. But we do so in hope. She will rise again, if for no other reason than our Lord's words of promise here, "Because I live, you will live also." How can this be? Why will this be? It is because of the truth of **verse 20**: "***At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.***" We know this truth, therefore we know that our Lord's words are true to us.

The Lord Jesus declared that He was *in the Father*. He said that His disciples are *in Him* and *He in them*. We are in Jesus, Jesus is in God the Father, we can but live before God.

Note, the life of Christians is bound up in the life of Christ; as sure and as long as He lives, those that by faith are united to Him shall live also; they shall live spiritually, a divine life in communion with God. This life is hid with Christ; if the head and root live, the members and branches live also. They shall live eternally; their bodies shall rise in the virtue of Christ's resurrection; it will be well with them in the world to come. It cannot but be well with all that are His (Isa. 26:19). (Matthew Henry)

But then our Lord declared in **verses 21 and 22**: "***He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.***" The Lord Jesus promised that He would make Himself spiritually known to the one who lives in obedience to Him according to His commandments, that is, according to the law of God as mediated to us by Jesus Christ. John would write similarly in his epistle: "Whoever keeps His commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given

⁴ However, even in His resurrection appearances He showed Himself visibly only to His disciples, not to the unbelieving world.

us” (1 John 3:24). We know that the Holy Spirit abides (dwells) in us because we order our lives according to the law of God in Christ.

This manifestation of Christ is made only to the one who really loves Him, and the proof of love to Him is not by emotional displays but by submission to His will. There is a vast difference between sentiment and practical reality. The Lord will give no direct and special revelation of Himself to those who are in the path of disobedience. “He that hath My commandments,” means, hath them at heart. “And keepeth them,” that is the real test. We hear, but do we heed? We know, but are we doing His will? “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18)! “And he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father.” There are three different senses in which Christians may be considered as objects of the loving favor of the Father and of the Son: as persons elected in sovereign grace to eternal life; as persons actually united to Christ by believing; and as persons transformed by the sanctifying work of the Spirit. It is in this last sense that Christ here speaks. Just as the Father is said to love the Son because of His obedience (John 10:17, 18), so is He said to love the believer for the same reason. It is the love of complacency, as distinguished from the love of compassion. The Father was well pleased with His incarnate Son, and He is well pleased with us when we honor and glorify His Son by obeying His commandments. (Arthur Pink)

But then we read our Lord’s promise that both He and His Father would make their home with the one who loves Him and keeps His Word. **Verses 23 and 24** read:

²³Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. ²⁴He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me.

Jesus promised His disciples that the one who loves Him, as shown in his obedience to Him, will be loved by the Father. God has a special love for those who are walking in faithful obedience to His Word, who are ordering their lives according to His commandments. And that one has a wonderful capability of experiencing the knowledge and enjoyment of God’s presence. There is available to you and me the special and unique possibility and opportunity for more clear and full manifestations of God the Father and His Son to us. The prerequisite to placing yourself in a position to receive this blessing is through your loving conformity to His Word. To order your thinking and living in a manner consistent with His nature and ways make the way of close communion with God possible.

The question before us is this: How and in what ways does God the Father and His Son “come” to us in order to make His home our home? How is communion with God enjoyed? Well, we can see what it is to have communion with God and how we may enjoy this communion with God, when we consider our relationship with each person of the Holy Trinity. And so let us consider,

IV. How we may experience and enjoy communion with God the Father, with God the Son, and with God the Holy Spirit.⁵

The Holy Scriptures speak of the communion that the believer may have with God. Sometimes this fellowship is with respect to the believer and God the Father. John wrote, “Our fellowship is with the Father...” (1 John 1:3). But sometimes only communion with the Son is addressed: “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9). And sometimes our fellowship is with the Holy Spirit: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Cor. 13:14 ESV)

⁵ In the next three pages of notes we introduce this subject which John Owen set forth in his entire second volume of His works, which is “On Communion with God.” See John Owen, **The Works of John Owen**, vol. 2 (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), p. 107. It is a classic.

How is fellowship with each Person of the Holy Trinity to be understood? Wherein is it chiefly found? With regard to fellowship with the Trinity, we enter into close communion with each Person of the Trinity in the manner and extent that one of the Persons reveals to us the nature and ways of another Person of the Trinity. **John Owen** (1616-1683) expressed it this way:

1 John 1:7, the apostle tells us, "For there are three that bear record in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost." In heaven they are, and they bear witness to us. And what is it that they bear witness unto? Unto the Sonship of Christ, and the salvation of believers in His blood. Of the carrying on of that, both by blood and water, justification and sanctification, is he there treating. Now, how do they bear witness hereunto? Even as three, as three distinct witnesses. When God witnesses concerning our salvation, surely it is incumbent on us to receive His testimony. And as He beareth witness, so we are to receive it. Now this is done distinctly. The Father bears witness, the Son bears witness, and the Holy Ghost bears witness; for they are three distinct witnesses. So then, are we to receive their several (individual) testimonies: and in doing so we have communion with them severally (individually); for in *this giving and receiving* of testimony consists in no small part of our fellowship with God.

How then is this communion or fellowship seen in the disciple's relationship with each Person of the Holy Trinity?

A. Our fellowship with the Father

In the Scriptures it is generally the case that faith, love, and obedience are the common ways of rendering worship unto God the Father. We are to render *faith* and *love* to the Father in His revelation to us of His Son. 1 John 5:9 reads, "...this is the witness of God (the Father) which He has testified of His Son." In hearing His witness of Jesus Christ, we are holding communion with the Father. Our proper response is one of belief and trust. We believe what the Father has said respecting His Son. Since we believe the witness of God the Father regarding His Son, we believe on the Father because of His true and faithful word. To the measure that we do so, we are experiencing communion (fellowship) with the Father.

But further, we are to render unto God the Father *love* for having given His Son for our salvation. 1 John 2:15, "If any man love the world, the love of (for) the Father is not in Him." When we love the Father for His faithful witness to His Son we do render *honor* unto the Father. Paul wrote, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:14f). The point is this: our principal grounds for fellowship with the Father is found in His sending and then revealing Christ to us.

There are some actions and activities that are specifically ascribed to God the Father. We may have fellowship with our Father as we recognize and are grateful for them. For example, generally *creation* is ascribed to God the Father. When we ponder upon the greatness of the creation, generally we are having fellowship with the Father.

The Holy Scriptures speak of a special *love* of the God the Father for His own. Our Lord Jesus declared, that His love for us is free, undeserved, and undiminished. Jesus said, "In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; *for the Father Himself loves you*, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God" (John 16:26). John wrote, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1). When we reflect and we are moved by the Father's love for us, we are holding communion with Him. Here the love of God the Father is shown in His adoption of us as His children. He is our Father by adoption, because He loved us with an everlasting love. He predestinated us unto the adoption of sons, for He had set His love upon us and would have us in a privileged and blessed relationship with Him. We are His children and He is our Father.

God the Father is noted principally for our *election* unto salvation. Paul wrote, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, *even as He chose us in Him* before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him" (Eph. 1:3f). When we consider our election and predestination, it should lead us

to express grateful praise and heartfelt gratefulness for His love, mercy, and grace toward us in His sternal decree.

Generally God's *sovereignty* and His eternal *decree* is attributed to God the Father. Paul wrote, "For us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist" (1 Cor. 8:6). Similarly God's infinite wisdom that is displayed in history is attributed to God the Father. Paul; wrote,

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! ³⁴"For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?" ³⁵"Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?" ³⁶For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. (Rom. 11:33-36).

As we reflect upon God or Father and these unique qualities specially attributed to Him, as we meditate on these things and express our wonder and gratefulness to God the Father for who He is, what He has done and what He has promised to do, we are enjoying communion or fellowship with God our Father.

B. Our fellowship with the Son

We read in 1 Corinthians 1:9 these words, "God is faithful, by whom *you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*" There is fellowship that we may enjoy especially with God the Father, and here we see that God the Father has called us into special fellowship with His Son, our Lord Jesus. There is fellowship that we may enjoy especially and specifically with Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

We might wonder how it is that we, who are sinful, could have fellowship with the Son of God who is sinless. What do we have in common with Him?

He is "light and in Him is no darkness at all;" we are darkness, and in us is no light at all. He is life, a living God: we are dead, dead sinners,--dead in trespasses and sin. He is "holiness," and glorious in it; we wholly defiled,--an abominable thing. He is "love," we full of hatred,--hating and being hated. Surely there is no foundation for agreement, or, upon that, of walking together: nothing can be more remote than this frame from such a condition.⁶

In what specifically may we have and enjoy fellowship with the Son of God? The fellowship that we have with the Son is in His work as our Mediator between God and ourselves as His people. The Lord Jesus bids His people to have close and special fellowship with Him. It was to a hardened and sinful church that He wrote, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me" (Rev. 3:20). The Lord Jesus desires to have fellowship with His people. Wherein is this fellowship seen?

First, we may enjoy fellowship with Jesus Christ as the One who makes every spiritual blessing available to us.

Christ is that tree of life, which hath brought forth all things that are needful until life eternal. In Him is righteousness which we hunger after;--in Him is that water of life, which whoso drinketh shall thirst no more. O how sweet are the fruits of Christ's mediation to the faith of His saints! He that can find no relief in mercy, pardon, grace, acceptance with God, holiness, sanctification, etc., is an utter stranger to these things that are prepared for believers. Also He hath shades of refreshment and shelter; --shelter from wrath without, and refreshment because of weariness within... Yea, who can express the joy of a soul's safe shadowed from wrath under the covert of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus! There is also refreshment in a shade from weariness. He is "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (Isa. 32:2). From the power of corruptions, trouble of temptations, distress of persecutions, there is in Him quiet, rest, and repose (Matt. 11:27f).⁷

⁶ John Owen, **The Works of John Owen**, vol. 2 (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), p. 107.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 44.

We may enjoy special fellowship with Jesus Christ when we consider the *grace* that we find for ourselves in Him. The Holy Scriptures speak in many places of the grace that is in Jesus Christ. Paul wrote, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit” (Phlm. 1:25). John wrote, “May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you all” (Rev. 22:21). Of Christ the palmist wrote prophetically, “You are fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured upon Your lips; therefore God has blessed You forever” (Psa. 45:2).

We may enjoy special fellowship with Jesus Christ when we consider His *righteousness* that He wrought on our behalf in His earthly dwelling among us. He lived in a sinful world, surrounded by sinful men and women. Yet there was found not infraction or defection in Him. His righteousness was wholly pure and complete. He was holy in all of His ways and in all His dealings. He was righteous even in the face of those who hated Him because of it. This righteousness was gained through His life for you and me so that we could be clothed with His righteousness through our faith in Him alone, preparing us to stand before His throne on the Day of Judgment.

We may enjoy fellowship with Jesus Christ as we endure in life *difficulties* and *hardships* that are the same or similar to what He endured on our behalf. The Scriptures speak of a fellowship of His sufferings. When we experience what He experienced, we enjoy a fellowship with Him. We are brought to see more clearly what kind of sufferings He endured for us in order to redeem us from our sins.

We may enjoy fellowship with our Savior as we are mindful of His sympathies and mercies that He had extended toward those who were undeserving of His favor. We enter into close fellowship with our Savior as we behold and reflect upon the *loveliness of His* person. There was no one so sweet and kind as Jesus. If you were to speak to the woman who was diseased for 12 years whose sad condition was remedied by touching His garment, what would she say regarding the loveliness of Christ? And the pronounced words He gave her to encourage and congratulate her for her faith in Him. And think of the poor widow woman of Nain, who was in a funeral procession carrying her own son to burial. She was consigned to a life of hardship and deprivation, but then Jesus stepped forward and raised her son. As we enter into the stories of our Savior’s dealings we begin to sympathize with those that He showed sympathy. We extend mercy to the ones that He extended mercy. We enter fellowship with our Savior agreeing and rejoicing in all of His dealings.

We may draw courage and steadfastness in observing our Lord’s dealings with those who were hostile toward Him who troubled Him and tormented Him with their hardness of heart and sharpness of words.

C. Our fellowship with the Holy Spirit

John Owen wrote of the basis of our communion with the Holy Spirit: “The foundation of all our communion with the holy Ghost consisting in His mission, or sending to be our comforter.”⁸ And so, we may experience fellowship with the Holy Spirit when we come to enjoy the *comfort* and the *help* that the Holy Spirit gives us in time of difficulty. The Holy Spirit works powerfully,

And therefore doth comfort from the words and promises of Christ sometimes break in through all opposition into the saddest and darkest condition imaginable; it comes and makes men sing in a dungeon, rejoice in flames, glory in tribulation; it will into prisons, racks, through temptations, and the greatest distresses imaginable. Whence is this? The Spirit works effectually, His power is in it; He will work, and none shall let (prevent) him. If He will bring to our remembrance the promises of Christ for our consolation, neither satan nor man, sin nor world, nor death, shall interrupt our comfort.⁹

We enjoy communion with the Holy Spirit when we receive and manifest the fruit of the Spirit which He imparts to His people.

⁸ Ibid, p. 222.

⁹ Ibid, p. 238.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22ff)

With regard to *love*, the Holy Spirit sheds His love for us into our hearts. “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rom. 5:5). With regard to *joy*, we may be as the church in Thessalonica, of whom Paul wrote, “And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, *with the joy of the Holy Spirit*” (1 Thess. 1:6). And with regard to *peace*, this to is granted to us by the Holy Spirit. “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and *peace* and joy *in the Holy Spirit*. (Rom. 14:17). We could show that each of the fruit of the Spirit are enjoyed by us through our fellowship or communion with the Holy Spirit. He is our Comforter, who consoles us, strengthens us, enlivens us, helps us, and enables us to endure in patience.

Conclusion

All of the blessings of communion with our Triune God that the Lord Jesus promised His disciples may be enjoyed by us as we order our lives in faithful obedience to our Lord’s commandments, believe on Him as the One who gave us another Helper to assist us in our time of need. May He enable each of us to enjoy more clearly and fully fellowship with each Person of the Blessed Holy Trinity.

“When Christ who is your life appears,
then you also will appear with him in glory. (Col. 3:4)
