

FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST

"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." I Corinthians 1:9.

Everything in the Christian life depends upon the faithfulness of God. In worldly affairs men rest their dearest interests on other supports. Some trust to their own wisdom, and some to their wealth. Many build on their friends and connections. But in the grander and more solemn interests of eternity God is our all.

Dr. Henry W. Frost, one of the outstanding Christian leaders and missionary statesmen of our day, out of his mature judgment after seventy years of Christian experience, wrote: "The whole problem of life and service has at last reduced itself in my mind to one word -- fellowship." Such is the judgment of one of God's honored and useful servants after decades of experience in the things of God. Such conclusion should be seriously weighed. Fellowship with God is the very breath of Christian experience. It is the one thing that must be maintained if the Christian life is to be healthy, and function normally and efficiently. Apart from this fellowship life faces arrested development and spiritual failure. There may be motion and activity even to the point of the spectacular, but apart from fellowship with God the believer's life will be mechanical and ineffective. Fellowship with Christ is the main driving gear of life.

Our text brings home to our hearts the glorious fact that when God called us by His Spirit He called us to a realization of a life of fellowship with His Son. God's Word states that the nature of our calling is heavenly; that the hope of our calling is likeness of Christ; and here that the purpose of our calling is fellowship with Christ. This is the highest peak of our earthly experience, and it is the privilege of every child of God -- something that belongs to no one else in the world. This fellowship means life at its best.

I. The Meaning of Fellowship.

The New Testament word which is translated "fellowship" is a very significant one. It is the word "koinonia" from "koinos," which means common. The word means to have things in common -- common interests, activity and participation. It involves sharing and partnership. It means a union with Christ in the sense of a copartnership, or common sharing in all that He has, and in all that He may acquire. It involves at least three things -- reciprocal knowledge, reciprocal love, and reciprocal endeavor. Real fellowship means knowing each other better, loving each other more, and doing things for each other. We must not lose sight of this reciprocal idea. Fellowship is not a one-way affair. My friend reveals his mind to me and I reveal my mind to him; he gives his love to me and I give my love to him. If you are in fellowship with Christ, it means you are giving yourself to Christ; it is the outgoing of your personality to Him. Fellowship carries the idea of sharing, of the outgoing of one's life and love. There can be no sharing of life with Christ on the part of those who remain outside of the family of God.

Then, too, one may be a child of God and be temporarily out of His fellowship. In I John 1:6 we read, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." Many who are not instructed in the Word of God confuse sonship with fellowship. One may be a child of God and at the same time out of fellowship, just as in our earthly families children may temporarily lose fellowship with their parents through disobedience; but they are none the less members of the family. Dr. A. J. Gordon said, "Sonship is unchangeable: communion varies. Sonship is an absolute: communion is a thing of degrees. The most exalted saint is no more the child of God than the weakest and most imperfect believer. The difference between the twos is a difference of fellowship and not a difference of birthright.

In sonship we have life, in fellowship we have more abundant life: in the one we get our place as accepted in the Beloved, in the other we get our power as anointed with the Holy Ghost: on the one depends our salvation, and on the other depends our sanctification."

Fellowship with Christ involves a complete self-surrender of the whole soul to Christ. That brings us into a partnership with Christ. We are partners in the possession of spiritual life, we are brethren in the Divine family, and we are co-workers with Him in a glorious enterprise.

II. The Means of Fellowship.

What are the means by which fellowship with Christ is maintained and promoted?

1. Prayer is one of the basic elements in this fellowship.
Prayer is the converse of the soul with God. Without prayer, fellowship with God is weakened. Fellowship with our friends on earth is maintained and enriched through frequent contact with them -- we talk to them and they talk to us. Likewise prayer promotes fellowship with God. Do you enjoy this fellowship with Him?
2. Scriptures play an important role in developing this fellowship.
Since fellowship is not a one-way affair, it is not only important that I talk to God, but it is vitally important that God talk to me. A one-way telephone would be very uninteresting; we like to hear someone talking at the other end of the line. God still speaks through His Word into the ears of faith. Prayer and the Word of God completes the circuit in this life of fellowship.
3. Fellowship with the saints is a helpful factor.
We do not arrive at the highest and clearest apprehension of God alone. What one may lack another may supply. All of us together in fellowship with Christ will make possible a richer fellowship than can be reached by an individual alone.

III. The Might of Fellowship.

By that is meant its power in life. Fellowship with Christ is a mighty dynamo. It generates power and sends it out into all the avenues of life.

1. It is the secret of a radiant personality.
It produces a fine spiritual glow. If we have lost the radiance of the Christian religion it is because we are out of fellowship with Christ. Contemplation is the secret of transformation. Looking into the face of the Lord is the secret of a radiant life.
2. It is a basic element in ascertaining the will of God.
Fellowship with Christ is a necessary prerequisite of divine guidance. Being in touch with the Lord, He can direct us what to do.
3. It is the secret of effective service.
At one of the busiest corners in a great city, two men were working on a telephone pole -- one at the top and the other at the bottom. The man at the bottom seemed to know just what the man at the top wanted. First he would send up one tool, then another. There was no noise nor shouting, but, quietly, in the midst of the din of traffic, they worked in the finest harmony. Finally the bystander noticed that the man at the bottom had some earphones clamped over his head. They were in constant communion with each other, and that was the secret of their marvelous cooperation.

The same principle operates in the spiritual realm. Fellowship with God means union, harmony, and effective working together.

4. It is the secret of the overcoming life.

You may have read of Hardly Page, the aviator, who during his eastern tour descended at Kobar in Arabia. A large rat, doubtless attracted by the smell of food, had crept into the plane. When Page took off and got into mid-air, he discovered its presence by the sound of gnawing behind him. He thought of the damage those pitiless teeth might do, and of the disaster that might follow. What should he do? Suddenly the thought flashed into his mind that a rat is not made for high altitudes but for the ground. He determined to soar. He lifted the nose of the plane until he found breathing difficult, and then the gnawing ceased. When hours later his plane made a landing, he found the rat dead behind the engine.

The high altitudes of fellowship are fatal to the rats of sin that are lurking about, seeking entrance into our lives. Sin cannot live in the white light of His presence. Living in fellowship with Christ is the secret of overcoming temptation.

5. It is the secret of the untroubled heart.

Dr. Ralph Cushman has given us some beautiful thoughts in verse on this subject:

I met God in the morning,
When my day was at its best;
And His presence came like sunrise,
Like a glory in my breast.

All day long the Presence lingered;
All day long He stayed with me,
And we sailed in perfect calmness
O'er a very troubled sea.

Other ships were blown and battered;
Other ships were sore distressed;
But the winds that seemed to drive them
Brought to us a peace and rest.

Then I thought of other mornings,
With a keen remorse of mind,
When I, too, had loosed the moorings,
With the Presence left behind.

So I think I know the secret
Learned from many a troubled way:
You must seek Him in the morning
If you want Him through the day.

6. It is the secret of heaven on earth.

It atmospheres our lives with a supernatural influence. Fellowship with Christ is the glory of heavenly existence, and it is the sublime possibility for every child of God in this world of sin. Walking in the darkness robs the believer of His fellowship -- not of his sonship. But we are told that provision has been made for the members of God's household.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Thus fellowship may be regained and maintained. If this moment finds you out of fellowship with your indispensable Saviour, You may meet Him at His promise and find forgiveness and cleansing. Then fellowship will be restored, and life will begin to glow and to grow again.

Is your soul in touch with Jesus?
Do you know His grace divine?
Are you in the Lord abiding
As the branch dwells in the vine?

Is your soul in touch with Jesus?
Is His love your sure retreat?
Have you made a glad surrender?
Is your faith in Him complete?

Is your soul in touch with Jesus?
Is He truly all in all?
Are you joyful in His presence
And responsive to His call?

Is your soul in touch with Jesus?
Has your will been crucified?
In His will are you rejoicing?
Is He trusted Friend and Guide?

Keep your soul in touch with Jesus,
Keep Him with you everywhere;
Keep you soul in touch with Jesus
By the power of love and prayer.

"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord."