

Fellowship with God

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[0 : 00] This morning I would again call your thoughts to bear upon the theme of divine fellowship as we have it unfolded by the Holy Spirit through the Apostle John in this first epistle.

In our last time together we saw that this divine fellowship is threefold. For it is fellowship with the Father, with his Son Jesus Christ, and fellowship also one with another.

We began to look at fellowship with God the Father. We saw that this fellowship with God the Father is in a way indirect.

In that we come to the Father through Jesus Christ the Son. For he is the mediator, the one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

He said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me. So you will see, therefore, that at the outset, our fellowship with God the Father can be obtained and maintained only through the mediation of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

[1 : 43] And it is through him we saw that we have access to God the Father. Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, whom thou causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy court.

Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.

Twice in his epistles of the Ephesians, Paul emphasizes this, that it is through Christ that we have access with confidence into the presence of God.

Then when you turn to that magnificent epistle, the epistle to the Hebrews, this great truth of access to God and approach to God is unfolded to us.

There is the throne of grace. Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

[2 : 58] Having, therefore, brethren, these promises, let us draw near in full assurance of faith. So this is the great blessing that is held out the three believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

They have access to God. The book of the Revelation talks of a door being opened in heaven. And a door has been opened for believers in heaven.

It is the door of access by which believers draw near unto God. And Jesus said that he was that door. I am the door by me.

If any man enter in, he shall be saved and shall go in and out and find the pasture. So that is the first great blessing and benefit that comes to the believer in his fellowship with God.

He has access to God the Father. If you read the 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, you have this truth of God making himself available to his people unfolded.

[4 : 23] The 8th of Romans. But we pass on to consider not only the access that we have to God the Father, but also the assurance of his favor to us.

When we avail ourselves of this divine access and approach to God, God extends to us his divine favor.

He lifts upon us the light of his countenance. Here is how the word of God puts it. In the Psalm of Solomon, chapter 2, He brought me to the banklifting house, and his banner over me was love.

That is what God does. He brings us into his banklifting house. He sets us at his table. He serves us himself.

In the fellowship of divine love and of favor, he extends it to us. Have you ever read the book of Esther? For I recommend you to read that book.

[5 : 43] I call your attention to it, because this is one of the great truths that is unfolded in the book of Esther, is the truth of divinous faith.

Esther was a Jewish maiden who came in the remarkable providence of God to be the queen of King Ahasuerus.

Now the law of the Medes and Persians was this, that no one dare enter into the king's chamber without permission, without the king holding forth the scepter of his acceptance. For if any person had the audacity to do that, they immediately were put under the pain and penalty of death. And Mordecai, the uncle of Esther, took Esther aside and said to her, Don't you realize that you have been brought to this position for such a time as this? Because Haman had persuaded, cunningly persuaded King Ahasuerus to issue a decree that the Jews should be dealt nearly with severely, that they should be exiled, banished, put to death. [7 : 21] Little did Ahasuerus realize that his very queen was a Jewess. She hadn't disclosed her nationality. to him. So she was to go at the command of Mordecai, to go to the king, to get his decree changed.

And he said to her, Think not with thyself, that thou shalt escape in the king's heart more than all the Jews. And so Esther came to pass on the third day that she put on her royal apparel and stood in the inner court of the king's house over against the king's house.

The king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house over against the gate of the house. And it was so when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court that she obtained favor in his sight. and he extended to her his royal stepcase of acceptance. My dear friends, this is but a faint glimmer of an illustration of the divine favor of God to his people whom he has betrothed to him despite the fact they are the posterity of the first Adam.

Sinners and rebels. God deals with them in mercy and in grace, in salvation. He brings them into his banqueting house.

[9 : 17] His banner over them is love. And as I have your heirs give his favor and his scepter of acceptance to Esther.

So does almighty God do that for his believing people. He gives to them access to his presence. He gives to them the assurance of his divine favor.

Paul puts it this way. He hath made us accepted in the beloved. Another rendering of which is this. He has made us to believe in Christ.

He has made us to be lovely and admirable in his eyes. God admires his believing people in Christ Jesus.

Giving to them the assurance of his faith. Oh, but more than that, God leads them into an awareness of his love.

[10 : 23] It is a marvelous thing to have access to God. It is most wonderful to be assured of his favor. But oh, to dwell in the awareness of the love of God.

This is truly wonderful. To have it borne in upon one's soul, God loves me. That is the great thing. Here's how Jesus put it to his disciples. He answered and said, unto him, if a man love me, he will keep my words and my father will love him.

And we will come unto him and make our abode with him. In chapter 16 of John, he said to his disciples, these things have I spoken unto you in Proverbs.

But the time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in Proverbs, that I shall assure you plainly of the Father. After that day you shall ask in my name, and I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you.

[11 : 35] Oh, my dear friends, this morning, if you are trusting in Jesus Christ and you know him as your personal Savior, this is the great affirmation of the Savior concerning you.

The Father himself loveth you. Carry this away with you. And then the faith up to the world with all its enticements and all its passions and all its inducements to try to make you leave the side of the Savior.

How can you do it? With this affirmation ringing in your heart, the Father himself loveth you. And then in his high priestly prayer, the 17th chapter of John, Jesus speaks of the unity into which he has brought his believing people, the unity with himself, I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect and one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them.

That is truly great, to have the knowledge that thou hast loved them. But all this is extended far beyond that. And the Lord Jesus is sure the dimension of this divine love to God people.

Hast loved them as thou hast loved me. This is overwhelming, it is staggering to the soul to read affirmations like this from the lips of the Lord Jesus.

[13 : 13] To think that God loves those who trust in Jesus. He loved them as he loved his son. love.

They are basking in the same love as Christ basks in. The love of God the Father. And the Lord repeats this.

He said to God his Father, I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

For the love of God, the awareness of his love, which he makes over to his believing people. If I can do no more this morning than bring you into this awareness, or if I fail to bring you into this awareness of the love of God, if I can induce you to go and seek to have this personal awareness of the love of God for yourselves, I shall have achieved a greater deal.

Go through the first epistle of John, and see how John takes up this concept of the awareness of God's love to his people, and unfolds it in depth in his first epistle.

[14:37] Mark those sections of his epistle where he deals with the love of God to the people of God. Time forbids me to do this, but it will be a wholesome spiritual exercise for you to go through the first epistle of John and read of the love of God, the love of God to Christ his son, which is equally showered upon those who trust in Jesus.

The first thing that we have to say concerning this fellowship with God the Father is this, that it is the privilege of the Christian to hold fellowship with God the Father by abiding in the truth.

The apostle John puts it this way, he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked.

To walk in the truth as Jesus walked in the truth. And to receive from God the divine teaching by his Holy Spirit.

The anointing which he has received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you, but as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, ye shall abide in him.

[16:13] This is the secret of triumph in the Christian life. To do as the Lord Jesus said in that allegory in John 15, abide in me, and I in you.

Then ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you. Abiding in the truth of God, being taught of God.

God coming to one's aside, giving personal tuition in the things of God, that is holding fellowship with God the Father.

The fifth way in which we hold a fellowship with God the Father is by obeying the truth concerning the abandoning of the world and its vanity.

God is in the gospel. The Lord Jesus shows his disciples how the world is hostile to believers, to Christians.

[17:20] There is that enmity, that hostility of the world against the people of God. God. The sad thing is, that many of God's professing people are not aware of this.

And if they are faintly aware of it, they don't like it. Because to tell the truth, a good many of God's people like to have some worldliness attaching to them.

Now this is wrong. The teaching of the word of God is love and not the world and neither of the things that are in the world. For all that is in the world is not of the Father, but is of the world.

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, it is not of the Father. So that the Christian who allows himself to be enticed and allured by the world, to indulge these of things, is putting himself outside having fellowship with God and the Father.

Here John clearly states love and not the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

[18:55] Do you remember some years ago when we were going to Bunyan's Pilgrim's Program? Do you remember when Bunyan came to Vanity Fair?

This is it! Vanity Fair! This world is a Vanity Fair! Unfolded by the Book of Ecclesiastes.

The Christian had better learn the lesson well, that the world passeth away in the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

The world must be abandoned with all its vanity, with all its pleasures, if we are to enjoy and hold, fellowship with God the Father.

The sixth way in which we can do this is to absorb God's communications to the soul. Do you remember God said on one occasion, shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I am about to do?

[20:14] Shall I hide it from him? Ah, no. the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.

And to the believing soul, in fellowship with God the Father, God communicates his heart and his mind to that soul.

He elevates that soul to that high plane where communion with God is not only possible but actually takes place.

Communion with God where God tells out his heart and his mind through his words by his Holy Spirit into the soul of the believer.

that's what it is to hold communion with God, to have fellowship with him, to take up that attitude of soul that the psalmist take up and to say, I will hear what God the Lord will say for he will speak peace to his people and to his saints but let them not turn again to a folly.

[21 : 32] The Lord Jesus expressed this to his disciples in these terms. He said to them, The Comforter which is the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.

Again, the Lord taught his disciples, I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

How be it when he the spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth, for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will show you things to come.

For that soul exercised by such communications as this out of the word of God, going along with fellowship with God the father, to be taught of God, to absorb his communications, this is the function of the Holy Spirit, to take of those things and to unfold them, to reveal them, to teach them to the humble believing soul, that we may be taught of God and absorb what he has to say to us. Then in the seventh place, to have a fellowship with God the father, we must constantly be adjusted to his divine principles.

[23 : 14] That is something that we ought to have borne in upon our hearts, that we cannot hold a fellowship with God the father if we are not living according to his divine principles.

What are the principles that motivate us? What is that which determines the kind of people we are? If we are to be out and out for the savior, if we are going to live for the glory of God, if we are daily to hold fellowship with God the father, there must be that adjusting to his divine principles.

And what are these? And if we can find out what they are, where do we go to find them? I'll tell you one certain place where you will find God's principles.

They are found in the book of the prophet Isaiah. And what are they? they are the principles of righteousness, of holiness, and of truth, and consistency of character.

[24 : 43] Those are the distinctives that we find in the book of the prophet Isaiah. As emanating from the person of God himself, righteousness, holiness, truth, consistency of character.

The soul that would enter into fellowship with God the father must have his heart and life adjusted to those principles.

And it concerning holding fellowship with God the father, there must be the adoring of his the person in divine worship, adoring God in worship.

A.W. Tozer some years ago wrote a little pamphlet called The Lost Jewel of Christian Worship. The Lost Jewel of Christian Worship. That is one of the flaws in Christendom today.

[26 : 00] The church at large has lost view of the concept, the true concept of divine worship.

Divine worship which is largely made up of adoration. For what do we know of adoration? Adoration of God. Do we spend time in adoring God for the perfection of his being as we can view him in his words?

What is adoration? Adoration is a posture not only of the body but of the soul. It has to do with the prostration of being prostrated before God, of lying in the dust before him, of being violent to God. And it is only one element of the true worship of God. Adoration. We see examples of it in Peter falling down before the Lord Jesus, acknowledging his sinnerhood, calling to the Savior, depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

[27 : 41] We see it in the sixth chapter of Isaiah, when Isaiah had that marvelous vision of God in his holiness, and the heavenly creatures surrounding his majestic throne.

Isaiah said, Woe is me, I am undone, I am vile, I am a man of unclean lips. God in his unutterable holiness.

And Isaiah worshiped, he adored God. Like the blind man whom Jesus healed, who fell down at his feet, the word of God tells us he worshiped him.

God will go to the recital of the law of God commandments in the 20th chapter of the book of Exodus.

There you will learn what it is to adore God, God who alone is God, the one and only true God.

[28 : 55] We have got to learn the meaning of worship and adoration. To sum up this aspect of divine fellowship, traveling no further, may I end by saying that the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ holds a fellowship with God in God's purpose.

purpose. The believer is glad he is happy to fall in with the purpose of God. For God is the sovereign God.

He does all things according to his own sovereign divine Godhead counsel. Whatsoever pleases the Lord to do, that he does, he is sovereign.

God. This brings me to the second thing. The believer has a fellowship with God and not only in God's purpose, but in God's pleasure.

Whatever God pleases, that will please the believer. The Christian is never to allow his will and God's will to be at cross purposes.

[30 : 19] Rather, he is to do what Paul enjoined the Philippians to do, to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do according to his good pleasure.

That inner monitor that is called the conscience will speak to the Christian as that which looms up in his life that is displeasing to God.

Once that is revealed, the believer is to shun it and he is to seek to do God's pleasure alone. In that, he holds fellowship with God.

He holds fellowship with God thirdly in prayer. Prayer is the addressing of the soul to God, speaking to God.

the pure delight of a single hour, that before thy throne I spend when I kneel in prayer, and with thee, my God, I commune as a friend with a friend.

[31 : 34] The believer fellowships with God the father in prayer. He fellowships with God the father in his works, in his word, in his worship, and in God the father's ways.

He said through the prophet, my thoughts are not your thoughts, saith the Lord, neither are your ways my ways. But he made it plain that as high as the heaven is above the earth, so high and higher are his thoughts and ways to our thoughts and our ways.

So we are to go to God, and in the prayer of the promised we are to speak to him, teach me thy way, O Lord. I will walk in thy precepts.

we have fellowship with God in his works, all the handiwork of God. What a joyous thing it is to take a journey out into the country, surrounded by nature, to see the handiwork of God, the beauty, the attention to design and detail.

It was Mungo Park, who in his travels and in his lostness and loneliness, received inspiration when he saw a tiny blade of grass, and he saw the wonder of it, and he saw that this was God's handiwork, and he worshipped God.

[33 : 18] He had fellowship with God in his work, his handiwork in creating a blade of grass. I used to visit in a home many years ago, where the children in that home used to point to a mahogany sideboard that had been constructed by their father.

Their father was a carpenter, a master joiner, and this was the work of his son, and they had great joy and pleasure and pride in saying, my father made this.

He did it. Though in the way of personal testimony, haven't we a great deal to tell about God our father, in fellowship with him, to point to God's creation, and to tell others, my father has made it all. But far beyond that, to talk of that new saving experience of Christ Jesus in the heart, this is God's work, the work of salvation, the work of regeneration, that if any man be in Christ, he has made a new creation, all the things are passed away, behold, all the things are become new.

Why are you in Christ? For if you are in Christ, then this experience is the test. Have the older things passed away? Have all the things become new?

[35 : 13] that is something of fellowship with God the Father. May we all by his Holy Spirit be led deeply into it.

Let us pray. O God, our Father, it is so easy to speak of these things and to hear them, but in the doing of them we need thy help.

We need the need of thy Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives. We cry unto thee to do this for us. We are weak and helpless.

We ask of thee, O Lord, that thou lead us into these truths. May it be our happy experience to enter all the more profoundly into fellowship with God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and with one another.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.