

Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 164

UNION/COMMUNION WITH CHRIST

“Abide in me, and I in you.”

John 15:4

Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

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#164

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THE SOUL'S ESPOUSAL TO CHRIST

Edward Pearce (1633-1673)

THE espousal or marriage relation between Christ and believers opened, and the import thereof laid down in five things—

But what is this espousal or marriage relation between Christ and believers? The Apostle, speaking of it, calls it a great mystery. “This,” said he, “is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph 5:32). I speak of that spiritual marriage that is between Christ and His people, which is indeed a great mystery. It is a hidden, secret thing, a thing hid from human reason and not to be understood but by divine revelation and the light of the Holy Spirit. As far as we apprehend it, you may take this short account in general of it. It is that spiritual conjunction or relation that is between Christ and believers, between the person of Christ and the person of believers, arising from His inhabitation in them by His Spirit and their closing with Him by faith. Much might be said for the opening of this general conclusion, but I shall waive it and give you the true nature of the thing under consideration, more particularly as carrying these five things in it: (1) free and cordial donation, (2) near and intimate union, (3) sweet and lasting communion, (4) strong and ardent affection, (5) mutual rest and complacency forever.

1. This espousal, or marriage relation, between Christ and believers carries in it a free and cordial donation, a giving of themselves each to other. In marriages or espousals the parties give themselves to each other; the husband gives himself unto the wife and the wife, by way of return, gives herself unto the husband. They consent to take each other in that relation and, accordingly, to give up themselves each to the other. So, in this spiritual espousal or marriage relation between Christ and His people, there is a giving of themselves each to the other. Christ, on the one hand, gives Himself unto the soul. “I will be yours,” says He to the soul, “yours to love you, to save you, to make you happy in Me and with Me. I, with all My riches and treasures, will be fully and forever yours.”

“I will be for thee,” that is the language of His espousing love unto the soul, Hosea 3:3. And O how sweet is this language! What can Christ give to poor souls like Himself? In giving Himself, He gives the best gift that either heaven or earth affords! In giving Himself, He gives life, He gives peace, He gives grace, He gives righteousness, He gives the favor of God, He gives heaven, He gives all. O sweet gift!

On the other hand, the soul, by way of return, gives himself to Christ. “I will be Thine,” says the soul to Christ, “I will be for Thee and not for another.” Hence it

is said, "They gave themselves to the Lord." They freely and willingly yielded up themselves to Christ to be His, and His forever. "Sweet Jesus, such as I am and have I give to Thee. I am a poor, a sorry gift," says the soul, "infinitely unworthy of Thine acceptance. My best is too bad, my all is too little for Thee; but seeing it is Thy pleasure to call for and accept of such a gift at my hands, I do, with my whole soul, give up myself, my strength, my time, my talents, my all, forever to Thee." And though in truth this is a sorry gift, yet you little think how pleasing, how grateful, it is to Christ, and what a value He puts upon it. You have the whole of this owned and asserted by the spouse, "My beloved is mine, and I am his" (Song 2:16).

2. *This espousal or marriage relation between Christ and believers carries in it a near and intimate union.* In marriage, there is a very near union and conjunction between the parties; as they give up themselves each to other, so they become one, each with the other. "They are no more twain, but one flesh." So, in this espousal or marriage relation between Christ and believers, there is a very near union and conjunction between them. The two are made one, and thus the apostle sets forth the marriage between Christ and them, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph 5:31-32), that is, I speak of the marriage relation which is between Christ and the church, and which consists in union. Hence also believers are said to be joined to the Lord and to be one spirit with Him. So that espousing to Christ and being joined to Christ are all one.

The truth is, herein lies the very soul and substance of this spiritual marriage, in a spiritual union between Christ and the believer. Though Christ and the soul were two before, two who were strangers to each other, yet in this marriage or espousal they become one, and so much one that all the world can never make them two again, can never dissolve this union. By this usual, but of all others most pleasant, metaphor of a bridegroom and bride is expressed and set forth the spiritual union that is between Christ and the church, Christ and every holy soul. And this union is a full union, a union between the whole person of Christ and the whole person of the believer; the whole person of Christ is united unto the believer and the whole person of the believer is united unto Christ. Neither is our soul alone joined with the soul of Christ alone; nor is our flesh alone joined with the flesh of Christ alone; but the whole person of every believer is truly joined with the whole person of Christ.

On the one hand, the whole person of Christ is united to the believer. The believer's union with Christ is neither with the divine or human nature considered apart, but it is with the whole person consisting of both natures. And, indeed, else they could not be said to be united to Christ; for neither of the natures, considered

apart, is Christ. We cannot say that the divine nature is Christ, or that the human nature is Christ; but Christ is both the divine and human nature, God-man, in one Person. Christ is not a name of either nature, but of the Person consisting of both natures, together with His office. Besides, were we united only to one nature, and not to the whole person of Christ, what would our union avail us? Surely it would be vain and ineffectual; for Christ Himself tells us that “it is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing” (Joh 6:63); that is, the flesh or human nature of Christ considered alone and without the influence of the divine avails nothing to souls as to their spiritual or eternal good. Nor indeed can the human nature of Christ, without the divine, give grace or any spiritual good thing.

On the other hand, were we united to the divine nature alone, and not to the human, then our union would be as ineffectual; for however full the divine nature is of grace and life in itself, yet nothing can thence be derived and communicated to us but by and through the humanity. And, indeed, as the humanity profits nothing without the divinity, so, I may say, the divinity will profit us nothing without the humanity. Hence it is that Christ so often speaks of “eating His flesh and drinking His blood,” and withal asserts the necessity thereof in order to life and happiness by Him. What does eating His flesh and drinking His blood signify but a union with His humanity? And, therefore, He adds, “He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him” (Joh 6:56), which is an expression of union; and without this we have—we can have—no life, no grace from Him.

In a word, as the humanity has nothing to give or communicate to us, no life, no grace, no spiritual blessing without the divinity, so the divinity is incommunicable to us without the humanity. And, therefore, were our union with the one only, without the other, it must be ineffectual. I will close this with the saying of an eminent divine, “Although all life, all salvation, flows from the fulness of the Deity that is in Christ, yet, notwithstanding, it is not communicated to us but *in* the flesh, and *by* the flesh of Christ. For the Deity is as the fountain whence all good things flow, life and salvation; but the flesh, or humanity, is the channel by which all these good things, and all gifts and graces, are derived unto us. Therefore, unless a man apprehends this channel and is united to it he cannot possibly be made a partaker of these waters which flow from this fountain.”

On the other hand, the whole person of the believer is united to Christ; not his soul only without his body, nor yet his body only without his soul, but his whole person, consisting of both soul and body in conjunction. As Christ is the Savior, so He is the Head of the whole person of every believer; for He saves none but those whom He is Head unto. And as Christ is the Head of, so He must have union with, the whole person of every believer; for His being a Head implies union, and that union must extend as far as His headship does, even to the whole person.

In short, the believer's soul is united to Christ. Therefore, said the apostle, "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1Co 6:17); and the believer's body is united to Christ, and therefore the bodies of believers are said to be "members of Christ" (1Co 6:15). Thus this union is a full union; and, as it is a full, so it is a very near union. Next to those two great unions, the essential union, the union of the three Persons in one and the same divine essence, and the personal union, the union of the two natures, divine and human, in the Person of Christ, is the nearest union. Hence it is expressed sometimes by their being in each other. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him" (Joh 6:56). And what can be nearer than to be and dwell in each other? It is a nearer union than that between the husband and the wife, for that union may be broken, and is at last; but this never is—never can be—broken, as in its place will be shown.

3. *This espousal or marriage relation between Christ and believers carries in it full and lasting communion.* In a marriage relation there is a full and free communion between the parties, both in what they are and what they have. The husband admits the wife into a participation in all he is and has. On the other hand, he communicates with her in all she is and has; and, indeed, union is in order to communion. So it is here in the espousal or marriage relation between Christ and believers: there is a full and free communion between them in all they are and have. On the one hand, Christ communicates Himself unto the believer; He admits him into a fellowship and participation with Him in all His riches and fulness. Hence of His fulness have we all received, and that grace for grace (Joh 1:16). He is said to be full of grace, and what grace is that? Why, all graces, personal grace, purchased grace, grace of privilege, and grace of influence. And here it is said, that of His fulness have we all received; not some only, but all, great and small, have received, and that not in a low, poor, scanty measure only, but in great abundance. Therefore, it is added "and grace for grace," or grace upon grace, heaps of grace, grace in a plentiful manner, all grace needful for the soul—righteousness, remission of sins, sanctification, renovation of the spirit, and the like. Behold, whatever Christ is or has, which believers are capable of, is all theirs, and they all hold communion with Him therein. His beauty is theirs; and however black and deformed they are in themselves, yet they are fair and comely in Him. Hence said the spouse, "I am black, but comely," that is, black in myself but comely in Christ; black by nature but comely by the Redeemer's grace. I am comely through the comeliness which He puts upon me.

His righteousness is theirs, and, however guilty and unrighteous they are in themselves, yet in Him they are righteous and stand perfectly righteous in the sight of God. Hence His name is said to be "the Lord our Righteousness" (Jer 23:6), and they are said to be made "the righteousness of God in Him" (2Co 5:21).

His privileges and dignities are theirs; and however vile and base they are in themselves, yet in Him they are highly dignified and advanced.

Is He a Son? So are they through Him. To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, to as many as believed in His name (Joh 1:12).

Is He an Heir, an Heir of God? So are they; they are heirs, yea, co-heirs with Him of God (Rom 8:17).

Is He beloved by the Father, and that with a choice and singular love? So are they; they are beloved in Him; yea, they are beloved with the same love wherewith He is beloved by the Father (Joh 17:23).

Is He a King? So are they. He has made them—and makes them—all kings, and they do and shall reign with Him forever and ever (Rev 3:21).

Is He in heaven, in possession of happiness and glory? So are they; hence they are said to sit together with Him in heavenly places (Eph 2:6).

What shall I say? His glory is theirs. “The glory which thou gavest me,” said He to His Father, “I have given them” (Joh 17:22). Yea, all His divine fulness is theirs, and however empty and imperfect they are in themselves, yet they are perfect and “complete in him” (Col 2:10), and in His fulness. “In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col 2:9); bodily, that is, truly, perfectly, unchangeably; and not typically only, as in the temple of old. All the fulness and perfection of the Godhead dwells truly and perfectly in Him. And what then? Why, it follows, “and ye are complete in him.” You are poor and empty things in yourselves, but your Head and Husband has all the fulness of the Godhead in Him, and it is always in Him, for it dwells in Him. And it is all yours, and you communicate with Him in all, as far as you are capable of it, to complete you both in grace and glory. Thus Christ communicates Himself unto the believer and admits him into a participation with Him in all He is and has.

On the other hand, Christ partakes and holds communion with believers in all they are and have. And what is their all? Truly a poor all; in and of themselves they have nothing but sins and sorrows, guilt and affliction. Indeed, in marrying them, He gives them gifts, graces, comforts, and the like; and, having given them these, He holds communion with them in all. Their gifts and graces, their joys and comforts are His; but, I say, in and of themselves they have nothing but sorrows and sins, and He, in a sort, holds communion with them in both. Hence it is said, “In all their affliction he was afflicted” (Isa 63:9).

He looks upon their sorrows as His and their sufferings as His. “I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, naked, imprisoned.” And often, you know, in Scripture their sufferings and afflictions are called the sufferings and afflictions of Christ; and why the sufferings and afflictions of Christ? Not only because,

for the most part, they suffer for His sake, but also because He suffers and is afflicted in them and with them. He communicates with them in their afflictions, and, as in their sorrows, so also in some sort in their sins, too.

Hence He calls their sins His as well as their afflictions. "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me" (Psa 40:12). Luther and others understand this to be Christ speaking of our sins and calling them His; not, my beloved, that He admits of any the least stain or tincture of sinful defilement upon Himself, but He so looks upon our sins as His as to take them off from us, and looks upon Himself responsible to the Father's justice for them. So He was said to be "made sin for us." O what grace is here! I close this head with a great and sweet saying that I have read in one of the ancients, suitable to this purpose: "The like sweet names are not to be found, by which the sweet affections of Christ and the soul are expressed each to other, as those of the bridegroom and bride; for why, all things are common with them; nothing proper, having nothing separate and apart each from other; they have both one inheritance, one house, one table, one marriage bed, also one flesh. The sum is, they communicate with each other in all they are and have."

4. *This espousal or marriage relation between Christ and believers carries in it strong and ardent affections.* In the marriage relation, there is the dearest, strongest, and most intimate affection that is to be found among the children of men. It is a relation made up of love. Love is not only a concomitant¹ of marriage but it is even a part of it, and is essential to it. In marriage, hearts must be joined as well as hands, or they are not right. So here, in this spiritual espousal or marriage relation between Christ and believers, there is a very dear and very intimate affection each to other. Their hearts are indeed knit, and intimately cleave to one another.

"The saints," says one, "are called the spouse of Christ, because of that great and unparalleled love that is between them." And it is a sweet saying which I have read in one of the ancients to this purpose, "Christ calls Himself our Bridegroom that He might insinuate the greatness of His love to us, which decays not with time; and He calls us His spouse, not His wife, noting that our love to Him should be always new, always lively and vigorous."

The truth is, there is no love like that between Christ and His spouse. Christ loves and espouses, and the soul loves and is espoused; and both, being espoused, love forever. And so this relation is both founded in love and perfected in love; it is both made up and managed with love on all hands. Christ sets His love upon the soul and, in that love, espouses her to Himself; and having, in this love of His, espoused her to Himself, then He loves her as His spouse.

Often in Song of Solomon His spouse is called His love; as also He, on the other hand, is called her Beloved. And what does this note but that the whole relation

¹ **concomitant** – existing or occurring concurrently; accompanying; attendant.

consists mainly in love, and that they are more dearly and intimately beloved by each other? Christ having espoused the soul to Himself, now His love runs out in full streams towards her. He loves her above all the rest of the creatures, in some respects above the angels themselves, as standing in a nearer relation to Him than they do. On the other hand, the soul's love is drawn out to Christ and, loving Him, is espoused to Him; and, being espoused to Him, she loves Him yet more. Now Christ is in her most intimate affections, He has the throne in her heart; yea, the soul by degrees comes to be "sick of love" to Him, as you have it, Song of Solomon 2:5. "Stay me with flagons," says she. "Comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love." To whom? To Christ. "And truly this," as one of the ancients has observed, "is a sweet sickness, a blessed languor, a pleasant love." And this love between Christ and His spouse is a chaste love, a virgin love, a love that is pitched upon the person of each other. Christ loves the person of the believer and the believer loves the person of Christ. Of which more in its place.

5. *This espousal or marriage relation between Christ and believers carries in it a mutual rest and complacency forever.* In a marriage relation there is great delight and complacency the parties have, or should have, in each other, especially in the day of espousals. You know how Solomon spoke, "Rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love" (Pro 5:18-19). All this notes that joy, rest, and complacency that this relation carries in it, and the parties have in each other. We read, you know, of the joy of the bridegroom as the highest and purest that is found among the sons of men. So, in this spiritual espousal between Christ and believers, there is a mutual rest and complacency which they have in each other. They are, as it were, the rest, the joy, the satisfaction of each other, the solace of each other's souls.

On the one hand, Christ rests and rejoices in the believer, as one would do in the wife of his youth. Thus His spouse is to Him "as a loving hind and a pleasant roe," and He lives joyfully with her. Hence she is His delight, and that as being married to Him: "Thou shalt be called Hephzibah," says He to her, "for the Lord delighteth in thee"; you shall be the joy and delight of My soul. And again, "As a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Isa 62:4-5). The sum of all which amounts to this: that Christ, marrying His people to Himself, delights in them, and rejoices over them, and that with the highest and purest delight and complacency of all others, a delight and complacency suitable to the relation. The truth is, He speaks as if all His delight were in them, as if He had forgotten to delight in the angels, or in any of the works of His hands, but in them alone. "My goodness," says He to the Father, "extendeth not to thee; But to the saints...in whom is all my delight" (Psa 16:2-3).

Yea, He declares Himself ravished with them as His spouse, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart" (Song 4:9); and He speaks as one ravished indeed. "How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!" (Song 7:6). He acknowledges Himself captivated by her: "Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me" (Song 6:5). Yea, He has declared them to be His rest: "This is my rest forever," says He, "here will I dwell; for I have desired it" (Psa 132:14). It is spoken of Zion as a type of the church and spouse of Christ and His rest in her. And indeed they are His rest. His soul is at rest in them. In them is His highest joy. Hence that sweet word, Zephaniah 3:17, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love [upon thee], he will joy over thee with singing"; as much as to say, "His whole rest, solace, and delight shall be in you."

On the other hand, the believer rests and rejoices in Christ as in his Head and Husband. "I sat down under his shadow," says the spouse, "with great delight" (Song 2:3). She did, as one expresses it, sweetly rest and repose her soul in Him. Her soul was at rest and filled with delight, great delight; she had great springing of joy within her, and all this in Christ her bridegroom; in His person, in His presence, in His protection, in the fruits of His grace and love. And, therefore, it follows, "and his fruit was sweet to my taste"; as if she would say, "O with what joy, what solace, what delight and satisfaction of soul did I converse with Him, and feed upon Him!"

Thus, in these espousals there is mutual delight and satisfaction between Christ and believers; and O how sweet is this! This makes this espousal to relish so strongly of heaven, and to set the soul down even at the gate thereof. Thus I have shown you what this espousal or marriage relation between Christ and believers is.

From *The Best Match* by Edward Pearse,
Soli Deo Gloria Publications; used by permission.



"My meditation *of him* shall be sweet." Of Him—that is, of the Well-Beloved of the Father, of the Well-Beloved of the Church, of the Well-Beloved of my own soul—of Him Who loved me, in Whose blood I have washed my robes and made them white. It is meditation *of Him* that is sweet, not merely of doctrine about Him, but of Him, of Himself—"my meditation of Him." Not merely of His offices, and His work, and all that concerns Him, but of His own dear Self! There lies the sweetness; and the closer we come to His blessed Person, the more truly have we approached the very center of bliss!—*Sermon 2403*

The pastures of the Great Shepherd are wide, but the sweetest grasses grow close to His pierced feet.—*Sermon 1982*

There is no preparation for the work of God like being with God! Go up into the solitude with Christ; and then, when He calls you, you will be fit to go forth for Him and tell what you have seen with Him in the Holy Mount.—*Sermon 2218*

A man who lives near to God ought to be able to go from his counting-house² to his closet with a happy heart!—*Sermon 2297*

—*Charles Spurgeon, from Spurgeon Gems, available from Chapel Library.*

² **counting-house** – a room or office in which a business carries on operations such as accounting and correspondence.

THE BELIEVER: THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY GHOST

Gerhard Tersteegen (1697-1769)

*“Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you,
which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price:
therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”*
—1 Corinthians 6:19-20

SATAN, the subtle enemy of our souls, is always intent upon recommending his deceitful wares, and, on the contrary, upon making godliness suspected in the sight of men. On which account he represents true religion as a base, miserable, and utterly despicable matter. The children of God, indeed, appear outwardly the meanest of men, a spectacle to angels, an abomination to the world, and a despised people. But, O how would anyone who possessed real eyes of faith be astonished at their inward beauty, excellence, and glory, in which they shine in the sight of God and enlightened men!

The enemy of our souls, as well as the rude multitude, exclaim against religion as mere hypocrisy, and abuse, to this end, the Gospel itself. The pious are then looked upon as high-minded Pharisees who seek to appear better than others, whilst those who have no desire to amend themselves, and take no pleasure in godliness, willingly continue poor sinners and pretend that true godliness is self-righteousness. To which must be added also, that with their reason and their evil eye, they pay most minute attention to the faults of those who are devoted to godliness.

Hypocrisy is an abomination before God, and no mere appearance of sanctity can exist before Him. He that regards and considers godliness, not as a mere work of nature, but as a work of the Holy Spirit, is never guilty of hypocrisy and counterfeit holiness, but all is truth with him and reality in Christ Jesus. True godliness, as well as true and perfect virtue, is to be found nowhere else but with those who are found true Christians in Christ.

The subtle deceiver, the devil, represents godliness also as a melancholy, gloomy, and vexatious life, in which it is impossible to have a happy hour. The individual must always hang down his head, torment himself, and make his life very bitter. Now it is certainly true that those whose eyes God opens to perceive and feel the burden of their sins, by true repentance, grieve and mourn. This is a sorrow according to God, a repentance which no one repents of. But after this sorrow, and their subsequent sufferings, there follows a thorough and most inward

consolation. O he who could have seen into the heart of these mourners before their conversion would have been convinced that before they were reconciled unto God in Christ, they had never enjoyed a really happy hour. In short, true godliness is a holy, glorious, and complete state, which alone can cause us true delight.

We will endeavor to investigate this more closely, in the consideration of the words of our text, in which is presented to our consideration the glorious state of godliness of a true Christian, which leads us to consider the *high dignity* of a true Christian, the *great obligation* of a true Christian, the *well-founded and unshaken consolation* of a true Christian.

If I were asked wherein the greatest dignity of a Christian man consists, I would answer with the apostle Paul, "He is not his own, but bought with the blood of Christ:" he is God's, and no other's. If I were asked what is the most important and obligatory basis of that which is incumbent upon a Christian, I would again reply, "A Christian is not his own, but God's." If I were asked further, wherein consists the real and immutable consolation of a Christian man, I would repeat the above reply, and say, "It consists in this, that a Christian is not his own, but God's, being bought by Jesus Christ."

A man, a Christian man, is not his own but God's, according to the right of *creation*, according to the right of *redemption*, according to the right of *presentation*, according to the right of *possession*.

A. Man is not his own, but God's, according to the right of creation. God hath made body and soul, and not we ourselves. Not an atom is our own. We belong, by the right of creation, entirely to our Creator. It is, therefore, the most evident injustice, the most abominable outrage, nay, the most dreadful and criminal sin, when we resign ourselves, whether in body or soul, to anything else than to our God. It is likewise an injustice when we devote and offer ourselves up to another beside Him Who hath made us and Whose workmanship we are. To Him alone we owe our thanks for all that we have and are, Whom we ought therefore alone to serve, and Whom we are under supreme obligation alone to love, praise, honor, admire, and adore.

Indeed the whole world, with all that is therein, is God's, according to the right of creation, but man is so in a peculiar and exclusive manner. All subjects belong to their king, but the king's children belong to the king in a very exclusive and more intimate manner. All the cities in the whole kingdom belong to the king, but the royal residence, the royal palace, belongs to the king above all others, and in the most peculiar way and manner.

God has made us, children of men, according to His most wise counsel. He has formed us with His own hand; He has breathed life into us, has given us a spirit, a noble spirit, and has impressed upon this spirit His divine image. Therefore we are God's in a very superior and exclusive manner by creation. Do but read the

genealogy of our Savior in Luke three, the last verse of which says, “Enoch was the son of Seth, who was the son of Adam, who was the son of God.” Man belongs therefore to God by creation since he bears upon him the image of his Father, which consists in righteousness and true holiness.

At the creation of man, God gave him a spirit, a noble spirit, which was capable of knowing, beholding, loving, and glorifying its Creator. He gave him a spirit which, at its creation, was destined by God to be and continue to all eternity the dwelling of its God—the temple, the palace, and residence of its God, in which God would glorify Himself and impart His divine virtues to it, so far as the creature is capable of them. Such is the dignity we possess by creation!

O if we knew what capacities, qualities, and what a noble spirit we bear about in us—to what it was destined at its creation and whereunto it may again attain by redemption—we should never more act so basely! We should never love the creature, sin, and vanity, nor suffer them to enter into our inmost souls. We should never desire, with the prodigal son, to eat of the husks which the swine devour. We should regard ourselves as much too high and too noble.

Now, it is but too true that man has certainly lost his high dignity since the fall. Alas! I, and every other child of man, no longer bear the image of our heavenly Father! The original dignity is lost. The glory is vanished. We no longer evince this image. We are become dark. We are become abominable. We are become perverse and miserable by the fall. The heart, which ought to be the temple and habitation of God, and was destined for that purpose, has, alas, made room for sin and Satan, and would continue for ever in their possession if God in Christ had not again compassionated the sinner.

B. Listen, therefore, to this comfortable gospel, this kind message, these sweet words, “Ye are not your own.” Ye children of men, **ye are become God’s, and that, not alone by the right of creation, but also chiefly by the right of redemption** and the purchase of Jesus Christ, even as Paul says in the words, “Ye are not your own.” But why not? Because, “Ye are bought with a price.” And wherewith? Not with gold or silver, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot (1Pe 1:19).

Thus dignified, noble, and precious were our immortal souls in the estimation of God! Ah, if we only duly knew it, we should not act so inattentively, nay, in fact, so licentiously with our souls! Christ has purchased us from the free inclination of His love. And by this purchase, we are again become God’s, and are therefore no longer our own. Christ, by the shedding of His blood, has again reconciled us unto God, to Whom we had become obnoxious by sin. He has, I say, reconciled us unto God, by taking away the sin which separated us from God so that God now again takes pleasure in us. By the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ, God is again become ours, so that now the most wicked of mankind may again find God, as their God, in

the atonement of Jesus Christ, if they only truly repent, and approach in faith unto God through Christ.

God is not only ours by the redemption and purchase of Christ, but we are also become God's, as it respects both body and soul. Hence Christ was obliged to take a body and a soul, in order that by the shedding of His blood He might sanctify us again, both in body and soul, and place us in a situation to belong again to our God. Therefore, both our bodies and our souls belong to God in Christ.

Christ has, by this purchase, obtained a new right and a new claim to our body and our soul. He can demand them. He can lay claim to them. They are now become His. By the shedding of His precious blood, He has deprived the devil of his right over us. Satan has now lost all right to us, and, through the ransom paid by Christ, all sin has lost its right and claim to the children of men. Therefore no one ought reasonably to despair, as though he could not be delivered from the devil, the world, and sin. Hence, however much our foes may rage, they must nevertheless leave us entirely at liberty, if we only sincerely give ourselves up to the Savior. God said to Pharaoh, "Let my people go, that they may serve me" (Exo 9:1). But Pharaoh would not because he supposed he had another and more peculiar right to them. Yet, notwithstanding, no sooner was the paschal lamb slain than he was compelled to let them depart, whether he would or not...

C. But, as far as we are true Christians, we are not only God's according to the right of creation and redemption, but **we are also Christ's by the right of voluntary presentation** and the giving up of ourselves to Christ. Christ has bought us; ought we not therefore to be peculiarly His? O that we might apprehend and believe this, with a still more thorough conviction of the heart and not merely with the understanding! But if we are desirous of really partaking of the redemption of Jesus Christ, the thing purchased must be actually delivered up and given over to Him. If Christ has purchased body and soul, if He has obtained the right of property over them, it remains, therefore, that we give them up to Him, and place them in His hands. We must be unwilling any longer to continue our own. We must entirely yield ourselves up to Christ with body and soul, with heart and will.

Now the commencement of this is made in true conversion. But conversion, my dearest friends, does not consist in a mere outward propriety of conduct, in refraining from gross sins, in practicing this and that virtue, in occasionally making some good resolutions, and offering the Lord God many fine and sweet words. In these and such like things, I say, conversion does not consist but rather in this, that through the grace of Jesus Christ, we become poor, weary, and heavy-laden sinners.

Christ, as we have heard, in virtue of His purchase, has obtained a right over us. He seeks to legitimate this right in every one of us by all the convictions, emotions, and knockings He causes us to feel. He is desirous that His purchase should

be delivered over to Him. This, my dearest friends, is His object with us. *Therefore, a person who is desirous of sincerely giving and devoting Himself to Christ must previously have thoroughly perceived, felt, and experienced his sinful, damnable, and entirely helpless state. He must feel most assuredly convinced that out of Christ he must be lost, both in time and eternity.*

He must, then, entirely surrender himself to Christ at discretion, like a poor culprit and malefactor who is well aware that he has merited death, but who still consoles himself with the hope of mercy from his judge, and continually cries, "Is there no more mercy for me, a poor sinner?" Or, like the publican in the Gospel, who, beating upon his breast exclaimed, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" But these were not mere words, which only came from the lips. They were words which proceeded from a lively acquaintance with his misery, from the most inward feeling of his pitiable condition, and from the deepest grief of his heart.

We must give ourselves up to Christ like a patient resigns himself to his physician, with these words, "I resign myself to your directions. If you know of any means to heal me, prescribe them; and whether they be bitter or sweet, I will take them. I will be obedient to you, if you are but able to help me and restore me to health." Thus it is we must surrender ourselves to Christ, as the only Savior and Physician of our souls, that by His grace and the operations of His Spirit He may make entirely new and different people of us, and redeem us from sin and all our misery.

We must present and yield up ourselves to Christ Who has bought us, even as a bride gives and resigns herself to her bridegroom. As soon as the bride gives her consent to the bridegroom, she immediately presents him also her whole heart and her whole will. She is ready to follow him wherever he chooses to go and do what pleases him. She desires nothing else than to depend upon his command, his will, and his good pleasure.

See, it is thus we must also present and resign ourselves to Christ, our dearest Redeemer, by our actual consent and by a real surrender and transfer of our hearts, our wills, our bodies, and our souls. We must come to Him as we are, and not wait till we have become pious, or rather have made ourselves pious. But we must come to Christ in our true characters, as miserable, as wretched, as sinful, and without strength as we feel ourselves. We must resign ourselves to Him, give Him our consent, and, by the co-operation of His Spirit, be and continue ever resigned to Him both in sorrow and in joy.

O happy hour, when the individual, by a thorough and real conversion of his heart, thus renounces all right over himself, closes his eyes against himself and all his wretchedness, necessity, and weakness, and devotes, resigns, and surrenders himself to Christ as His Savior! Blessed hour, over which the angels of heaven re-

joice! It is an hour which, if I may so speak, stands inscribed in the chancery¹ of heaven and will continue written as an everlasting memorial in these words, “On such and such a day, and such and such an hour, this or that poor sinner surrendered himself to Christ, and is resolved henceforward to belong to Him.” For such characters He will also provide; such He will also justify, sanctify, and bless.

D. We must, however, not only yield up ourselves but also become, in deed and in truth, God’s property, so that **Jesus Christ, by His precious and Holy Spirit, may really take possession of us**, according to the right He has most sacredly obtained over us, and henceforth be able to fix His abode with us. “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?”

As soon as an individual...yields and devotes himself sincerely and to the best of his knowledge to Christ—from that hour, from that moment—the Holy Spirit takes possession of such a heart to work upon it by His gracious operation. He prepares it for a holy temple of God, and carries this on continually during the whole course of our lives. By increasing and daily progress in sanctification and the renewing of the heart, He takes ever closer and more complete possession of the hearts of believers, whilst delivering them more and more, by His gracious operation, from all evil, and making them partakers of the divine nature.

Therefore, my beloved friends, let us be continually mindful of the high purposes of God in our creation and redemption. God created man chiefly that He might manifest and glorify Himself in his inmost part, in his heart and spirit, both in time and eternity. That this was the high purpose of God is testified both in the Old Testament, and particularly in the New. Thus, for instance, it is said in John 14:23, “He that loveth me will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”

In 2 Corinthians 6:16, we have also the following precious promise of God, “I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” It is also in many other places, especially in the New Testament where the greatest promises of God are proposed to us, and His high intentions, which He had with respect to us, both in creation and redemption, are clearly made known to us.

The supreme dignity of a Christian, therefore, consists in this, that God, by His Holy Spirit, will Himself dwell in our hearts. Of this, the late John Arndt has written very effectively, in his third book of *True Christianity*, where he considers and represents the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers as a most valuable treasure which so very few recognize, seek, and find.

¹ **chancery** – court clerk’s office, responsible for writing official documents.

“God,” says this pious divine, “would rather dwell in a man’s heart, and glorify Himself there, than in Heaven and all the earth.” Now, observe! This is that of which it is said, “Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, which is in you?” The Holy Spirit continually meets those who have resigned themselves to Christ, by His gracious operation, to purify themselves from all pollution of flesh and spirit and to complete their sanctification, in order that they may become partakers of this great promise, as you may read in the connection with 2 Corinthians 7:1. The Holy Spirit, in all His inward instructions, suggestions, and incitements to the denial of ourselves and all other things, has no other object than *to purify our hearts more and more from all the dross of sin, and from all the corruption, misery, and woe which still attaches to us, that God may continually abide in our hearts as in His temple, and may reveal and glorify Himself unceasingly in them.*

We will by no means venture, on this occasion, upon a copious explanation of the great—nay, the very greatest—of wonders, how God, by His Holy Spirit, enters into the hearts of believers, and there takes up His abiding residence. We will only exhort each and every one unremittingly to proceed in the denial of themselves and of all created things, in order that the Holy Spirit may the more unobstructedly continue with them and dwell in them.

In order that the heart may become the habitation of the Holy Spirit, it is necessary that this impure and corrupt receptacle be first cleansed, and, by a thorough eradication of all creature love, be prepared for His fit habitation. The individual must, with the most inward desire and heartfelt prayer, retire into the center of his heart, and there, by prayer, wait for His coming, and when He comes make room for Him, that He may do and work in him according to His good will and pleasure. We must resign ourselves entirely to His operation, filially follow His guidance and direction, without any opposition, in order that He may remain with us, and that we may experience and enjoy His presence immutably and continually.

O my dear friends, let us therefore love God! Let us make room for God and His Spirit within us. Let us frequently celebrate a holy sabbath in our hearts unto Him! O we must not always frustrate the Holy Spirit in our prayers, but most humbly say with the holy apostle, “We know not what to pray for as we ought.” And if we then sink down in the consciousness and acknowledgment of our helplessness, the Holy Spirit will come to our aid and make intercession for us with sighs that are unutterable, according to the will of God. God and His Holy Spirit then gradually acquire a more entire possession of our hearts, and we become more and more His temple and dwelling place.

But what is it that the Holy Spirit operates in the hearts of believers? Truly, He is not there as a dead and lifeless image. Let no one suppose so. Oh no! He continually works one gracious work after another. First, He reveals Jesus Christ in our

hearts, according to the word of the Savior, "When the Holy Spirit is come, he shall glorify me" (Joh 16:14). But what is meant by the expression, "He shall glorify me"? I reply, He will give us to know and experience Jesus in our hearts, as a most inwardly present Savior, whilst making His love, His grace, and His treasures appear to us so great and glorious that we are as much astonished as rejoiced at the unsearchable riches of grace in Christ Jesus.

When the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ in our hearts, the latter becomes daily more lovely, beautiful, estimable, and pleasant to us. We then experience how it is that the knowledge of Christ is not a knowledge of the understanding. It is not a thing that one person can teach another, but a work of the Holy Spirit. We experience what Saint Paul means when he says, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Phi 3:8). Then it is that the Holy Spirit is operative and present in our hearts, when Christ is so estimable, dear, and precious to us. For His sake we regard sin, the world, and all transitory things, however beautiful they may appear, as loss and dung, in order that we may win Christ.

When the Holy Ghost inhabits and animates the heart, He becomes the origin and source of every real virtue in the soul. Hence it is that the virtues of Christians are described in Galatians 5 as fruits of the Holy Spirit. For it is there said, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance." And in Ephesians 5:9, he says, "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth." A Christian man attains these virtues when the Holy Spirit comes to reside in his heart. Such virtues then proceed more and more out of his heart as fruits of the Spirit.

If we poor mortals were to martyr and torment ourselves even to death, we should still be unable to practice a single real and genuine virtue without the assistance and powerful cooperation of the Holy Spirit. For if the Holy Spirit Himself does not impart virtue to us, it is only the semblance of virtue, a shadow without substance. But the Christian's virtue is not a mere shadow, nor a mere moral thing, founded on the principles of outward decorum. It is a work proceeding out of the center of a renewed and sanctified heart, and consequently from a divine source, a work arising solely and wholly from a participation of the divine nature, by virtue of which the virtues become quite natural to us. The harshest character then becomes friendly and kind; and the most wrathful, meek; the haughtiest, humble; and the most voluptuous, chaste. Hence the true dignity of a Christian consists in this, that he draws and deduces his godliness and his virtues originally from the source of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit not only glorifies Christ in the heart, but He also glorifies the soul, more and more, in and through Christ, by daily making the heart which He inhabits

more beautiful, amiable, cordial, ingenuous, and radiant as well in the sight of the world as in God's sight. Hence Paul says, "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2Co 3:18). The Holy Spirit re-establishes more and more the lost image of God, imparts to the soul anew its lost glory, and forms it again into a child in the entire likeness of God. The image of God and of Christ is impressed upon it by the Holy Spirit.

O the high degree of glory to which a man, a Christian man, may attain here during the time of grace! Let us not be afraid of soaring too high in self-love in this respect, or of carrying the matter further than the Holy Scriptures allow. Oh no! The Holy Scriptures confirm all this in the most clear and impressive language. These are promises, nothing but God's gracious promises. Although the man in whom the Holy Spirit dwells receives from this source grace upon grace, yet still he does not presume upon it in the least, partly because the glory with which true believers are arrayed generally continues hidden from them here, since their life is hid with Christ in God, and partly because their hearts are always deeply penetrated by the words, "which ye have of God."

True Christians ascribe nothing to themselves of all they have that is good, but wholly and solely to God, the Giver of every good and perfect gift. They always consider themselves, in the deepest abasement of their hearts, as poor and wretched, and such as are entirely destitute of the praise they ought to have before God. They know they are that which they are from the grace and mercy of God, in order that to Him alone may be given the glory which is due to Him both in time and eternity.

Observe, therefore, whether true Christians do not possess, even here in this life and during the time of grace, a high and very exclusive dignity. We are obliged to show all due honor and obedience to magistrates and persons of rank, because they are the ministers of divine justice. But in other respects, the glory of the great ones of this world is a mere fancy compared with that of the true children of God. Emperors and kings entitle themselves, it is true, "by the grace of God," but it is a far other dignity to be able to say with truth that the individual has become, by divine grace, a child of God and a temple of the Holy Spirit. Now, to this dignity we may all attain, if we only will, through the mercy of God which is offered to sinners in Christ Jesus.

From Sermons and Hymns of Gerhard Tersteegen, Vol. 2.

Gerhard Tersteegen (1697-1769): German Reformed religious writer, born at Moers. After being educated at the gymnasium of his native town, Tersteegen was for some years apprenticed to a merchant. He soon came under the influence of Wilhelm Hoffman, a pietistic revivalist, and devoted himself to writing and public speaking, withdrawing in 1728 from all secular pursuits and giving himself entirely to religious work. His writings include a collec-

tion of hymns, *Das geistliche Blumengartlein* (The Spiritual Flower-garden), 1729; new edition, Stuttgart, 1868; a volume of *Gebete* (prayers); and another of *Briefe* (letters); besides translations of the writings of the French mystics. He died in Mülheim, North Rhine-Westphalia.



CHRIST'S MANIFESTATION OF HIMSELF UNTO THEM THAT LOVE HIM

Thomas Vincent (1634-1678)

"And he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."—John 14:21

WE read in Luke 4:22, "And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." Never did such gracious and sweet words drop from the lips of any man that ever lived, as those from the lips of Christ when He was here upon the earth; and of all Christ's words, those which He spoke to His disciples in His last sermon, before His last suffering, in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of John, are superlatively sweet, and none more sweet in this sermon than the words of my text read unto you, "And he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." In the former part of the verse, we have the character of one that truly loves Christ, "*He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.*" In the latter part of the verse, which is my text, we have the privilege of one that truly loves Christ; and that is in three promises which Christ makes unto him: (1) "*he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father,*" (2) "*and I will love him,*" (3) "*and will manifest myself to him.*"

It is the last of these promises which I shall speak unto, by way of appendix unto my treatise of the love which true Christians have, and ought to have, to Christ, and that is the promise of Christ's manifesting Himself unto such as love Him. And the doctrine is this:

Doctrine. *Christ will manifest Himself unto such as love Him.*

In handling this point, I shall show: (1) what it is for Christ to manifest Himself; (2) that Christ will manifest Himself to them that love Him; (3) how Christ manifests Himself unto such; (4) when Christ manifests Himself unto such; (5) where Christ manifests Himself unto such as love Him.

1. What it is for Christ to manifest Himself. Christ manifests Himself when *He makes a clearer revelation unto His disciples of the excellency of His person*; when He further unveils Himself and lets forth some beams and rays with greater luster and brightness to reveal more of the radiance and transcendence of His soul-ravishing beauty unto them, of which they had but a dimmer light and darker apprehensions before. And this is done when Christ more fully imparts the Spirit of wisdom and

revelation unto them. Upon this account, the Apostle prayed on behalf of the believing Ephesians that the Lord would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to enlighten their understandings in the knowledge of Him, Ephesians 1:16-18. They had the Spirit and some knowledge of Christ before, but he prays that God would give them a fuller measure of the Spirit to make a clearer discovery of Christ, that the eyes of their understandings might be more and more enlightened unto a more spiritual discerning of the surpassing beauty and excellency in Christ's person, in the knowledge of Whom the most enlightened Christians are capable of further growth unto the end of their life. Hence that exhortation of the Apostle Peter, 2 Peter 3:18, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."

Christ manifests Himself when *He makes a deep impression and gives a sweet sense to His disciples of His presence*. Christ is never really absent from such as love Him, but He may seem to be so sometimes. They may apprehend Him to be afar off. He may, and often does, withdraw the sense of His presence, Song of Solomon 5:6, "I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone." Christ manifests Himself when He draws near to His people, and makes them feel when He is near; giving them a sweet sense of His presence through the powerful breathings of His Spirit upon them, whereby their hearts are quickened, enlarged, and drawn forth towards Himself, and their graces excited unto powerful exercise.

And, chiefly, Christ manifests Himself when *He makes revelation of His love unto them that love Him*; when He gives them to see not only the beauty of His face, but also the smiles of His face; when He gives them to behold the amiableness of His countenance; when He sheds abroad the sense of His love into their hearts, giving them a full persuasion of His special love unto them, and also a sweet sense thereof.

Thus Christ sometimes looks and speaks kindly unto His people; and this sweet language is not spoken to the ear of the body, but inwardly by His Spirit to their souls when He says to the soul, "I am your salvation and your Savior; I have loved you with an everlasting love, and My love is unchangeable. The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My lovingkindness shall never depart and be removed from you. I have given Myself for you, and I have given Myself to you, and I will never repent of this gift. I have chosen you for Myself, called and joined you unto Myself, and I will never repent of this choice, nor suffer you to be disjointed from Me forever. I have you upon My heart and keep you in My hand, and no powers of earth or hell shall be able to pluck you from there. I have given you My grace, and I will show you My glory; and, ere long, I will appear in the world and receive you to Myself that, where I am, there you may be also. Dry up, then, your tears, clear up your countenance, banish your fears, droop no longer, despond no more, but be of good cheer. Your sins are forgiven you; your name is written in

My book, which none can blot out. You have a true love for Me, and My Father Himself loves you, and I love you with a most endeared love and, therefore, do not question or doubt My love any more.”

Thus Christ manifests Himself and His love, sometimes, unto drooping desponding souls.

2. That Christ will manifest Himself unto them that love Him appears in that His love engages Him and His Word engages Him hereunto. His love engages Him. The love of Christ is like fire that cannot conceal itself long; and there is no fire so strong, or has such a vehement flame, as the love of Christ to His people. Joseph had a great love to his brethren, notwithstanding all their unkindness; and, although he concealed himself for awhile and spoke roughly unto them, yet after they were sensible of their fault and were filled with perplexing fears, he could conceal himself no longer from them, as we read in Genesis 45:1, “Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all that stood by him; he wept aloud, and said unto his brethren, I am Joseph.” And verse 2, “Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near me, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.” So Christ may conceal Himself for awhile from His people, whatever love He has to them and whatever they have to Him. Some unkindness they have shown may be the cause of this hiding; but, when they are sensible of their fault, full of grief and perplexity for their offences, His love will not permit Him to hide Himself much longer. His love will engage Him to manifest and reveal Himself, and say, “I am Jesus, your Savior. Come near Me, My brethren; come near Me, that you may have a clearer view of Me, that you may know Me, and know that I love you.”

The Word of Christ also engages Him to manifest Himself unto them that love Him. It is Christ's promise here in the text, “He that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him.” Christ's words are sure; true and faithful is Christ's name. The ordinances of the heavens may sooner fail than Christ fail of His Word and promise.

3. How Christ manifests Himself unto them that love Him. Christ here, in this world, manifests Himself *but in part and darkly*. The soul is not now capable of the fullest and clearest manifestation of Christ. This is a happiness reserved for the other world, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1Jo 3:2). “Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me” (Joh 17:24). It is hereafter that Christ's disciples shall be perfectly like Christ, and shall have a perfect manifestation of Christ, that they shall see Him as He is. It is hereafter that they shall behold His glory. The luster and brightness of Christ's glory is so great that, should He now let forth the beams thereof upon them, it would dazzle and amaze them; it would strike them blind. Yea, it would strike them

dead. There is need, because of their weakness, that Christ should keep a veil on His face when He makes discovery of Himself. They cannot now bear the full manifestation of Christ, therefore Christ reveals Himself but in part. As the Queen of Sheba said, concerning Solomon's wisdom and prosperity, "It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and thy wisdom: howbeit, I believed not the words, until I came and mine eyes had seen it: and behold the half was not told me; thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame thereof" (1Ki 10:6-7).

It is not the one half which Christ's disciples now hear, or can in this world discern, of their Master's excellencies. It has not now entered into their hearts to conceive what beauties, and glories, and most admirable perfections there are hidden in their Beloved. Not only Christ's love, but also Christ's loveliness passes their knowledge. There are such dimensions of most wonderful glory in Christ's person as infinitely transcend the capacity of the most elevated minds fully to comprehend. Christ manifests Himself truly to them that love Him, yet is it but partly, and that but a little part. It is but darkly by the beams of a more obscure light, "For we know in part, and we prophecy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know, even also as I am known" (1Co 13:9-12).

We ministers prophecy but in part. We can tell you but a little of what there really is in Christ, and both we and you know but in part. Our conceptions of Christ's excellencies and our expressions now are childish; hereafter, there will be a perfect manifestation of Christ, and then all imperfections of knowledge will be removed. Now you may see Christ, but it is through a glass darkly; hereafter, face to face. Indeed, it is said, "We all, with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed" (2Co 3:18). There is a comparative open discovery of Christ now in gospel times over what there was under the law; the veil of types and figures which covered and, in a great measure, hid Christ from the view is now removed. Our face is now open from that veil, but Christ's face is not fully open. There is a glass still between our eye and Christ's face (the glass of ordinances which, though it helps us to see Him, yet it keeps us from the clearest discovery of Him). We see but through a glass darkly; our eyes now need this glass to help our weakness, and that we may see what we do see. There is a time coming when we shall be above the need and use of the ordinance glasses, I mean, when we shall see Christ face to face, and know Him in heaven as we are known by Him.

Christ now manifests Himself *gradually unto them that love Him*. Christ does not show at once and altogether what He means to reveal of Himself and His love, but He does it by degrees; a little at one time and a little at another time, a little in this

ordinance and little in that. Now He lets down some comfortable beams of the light of His countenance into the soul; by and by, clouds arise and obscure this light and darkness is upon the spirit. Sometimes, Christ opens the curtain, looks upon the soul, and gives gracious smiles; by and by, the curtain is drawn and His face is hid. Now He appears and then He disappears; He manifests Himself at one time, withdraws Himself at another time; and so leads His people on from one revelation of Himself unto another, until He brings them at last unto the full discovery of Himself in glory.

Christ manifests Himself *most sweetly unto them that love Him especially after long absence*. When the soul has been seeking and cannot find Him, wandering in the wilderness under amazing fears, perplexing doubts, doleful despondencies, sinking and heart-overwhelming grief, after a black night of deep desertion—O how sweet is the dayspring from on high! O how comfortable are the bright beams of the morning light, when He shines upon their dark, despised, and sorrowful spirits; giving them to know assuredly that they are the dearly beloved of His soul, that He has not forgotten them, that He will not forsake them, that He has a more tender love unto them than the mother to her sucking child! O the ravishments of spirit! O the transports of soul which arise from hence! O the songs which are then in their mouths! This is our Beloved, we have waited for Him! This is our dear Redeemer, we have trusted in Him! Tongue cannot express the delight, the joy, and gladness of heart, which arises from the manifestation of Christ's presence and love; the joy of harvest, the joy of the bridegroom on the wedding day, the joy of victory and taking great spoils, spoils from an enemy, the joy of a poor man in finding great treasures, and the greatest delight which ever was found in the sweetest sensual enjoyment is not worthy to be compared with the joys and exaltings of heart in the manifestation of Christ unto the soul.

4. When does Christ manifest Himself unto them that love Him?

Sometimes Christ *quickly manifests Himself after a little seeking*. Some young converts have early and soon revelations of Christ and His love; they are cast down for a little while, and Christ soon comes unto them and lifts them up again. Weeping endures but for a night, and joy comes early in the morning. They have the spirit of bondage, who awakens them to fear; by and by the Spirit of adoption graciously visits them, and makes discovery of their relation to the Father, the love of their Savior, and sheds abroad the sense of His love into their hearts.

Sometimes Christ *is long before He manifests Himself*. It is long before some seek Christ, and it is long before such find Him. Christ waits long to be gracious unto them, and Christ often makes them wait long before He manifests to them His lovingkindness; yea, sometimes, early seekers are no early finders. Christ makes some wait a long time to try their faith and patience, their love and obedience, so

that He may prepare them for more than ordinary comforts and sweetness which He intends to give in the revealing of Himself unto them.

Sometimes Christ *suddenly manifests Himself unto them that love Him*, “Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib” (Song 6:12). Before ever they are aware, they see the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof; and the Lord Jesus comes unto them in the chariots of salvation, with such glory and luster as transports and amazes them.

Some Christians that truly love Christ have sought Him in this ordinance and have not found Him, and they have sought Christ in that ordinance and have not found Him. They have been looking, waiting, and hoping that at this time Christ would reveal Himself, or at that time He would reveal Himself, and still He has hid Himself; still they have come off with disappointment. This has been their grief, this they have complained of before God, and they have been under fears lest they should never see Him, never meet with Him at all. Hereupon their spirits have been ready to fail and sink within them and, in discouragement, they have been ready to say or think that all their labor would be in vain; and yet they have resolved to seek Him to their death. And, though He should kill them, to put their trust in Him; and, behold, all of a sudden, when they have had the least expectation, and their hope has been ready to give up the ghost, they have met with Christ and found Him Whom their soul loves. All of a sudden, the veil of the temple has been rent and they have seen their Beloved in the Holy of Holies. All of a sudden the clouds have fled, their darkness has passed away, and the light has shone. The north wind of trouble has ceased, and the sweet southern gales have blown upon them. I mean, they have been under such shinings and breathings of the Spirit that they have seen and felt the presence of Christ, and such a sweet sense of His love as has filled them with soul-ravishing joy.

Christ manifests Himself *seasonably unto them that love Him*. Though He does not always manifest Himself when they most desire, yet He manifests Himself when they have most need; and then they have most need when they are most low, when they are most low in their spirits, most poor and mean in their own esteem as well as most low in their condition through affliction and trouble. Humility and patience under affliction makes way for the experience of Christ’s manifestation. Christ, many times, reserves His cordials for the fainting fits, and the sweetest consolations in the discoveries of His love for the time of the greatest adversity; especially when the trouble is for His sake, He is graciously present. John had his visions when he was banished for the sake of Christ unto the isle Patmos. And when all men forsook Paul at his answer to Nero, then the Lord came to him, stood by him, and strengthened him.

5. Where does Christ manifest Himself unto them that love Him? This is in the way of His ordinances; there He walks, there He appears unto His people. Some-

times Christ manifests Himself in the way of private ordinances, when they seek Him in their families or in their closets, when they speak of Him in conference, or when they think of Him in their meditation and contemplation.

Sometimes Christ manifests Himself unto them that love Him in the way of public ordinances, in public prayer or fasting, in hearing the Word, or when they are feasting at His table. Especially in this last-mentioned ordinance, Christ frequently manifests Himself unto His disciples most sweetly. At the Lord's table, the Lord appears; in breaking bread, He reveals Himself, as to the disciples that went to Emmaus. In His banqueting house, He gives them to feast on His love. There are many who can say by experience that, if ever they meet with Christ in their lives, and in any ordinance, they have met with Him at the sacrament. There He has unveiled His face, there He has revealed His love, there He has breathed upon them by His Spirit, there they have found and felt the Lord to be near.

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ON HIS BREAST

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

“Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus’ breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.”
—John 13:23-26

PICTURE the Lord and His apostles at the holy Supper. A world of interest centers here. Two figures strangely different met in this scene—met, shortly afterwards, to part, and never to meet again. To look upon them, they seemed equally disciples of Jesus, and from the position which one of them occupied, as leaning on the Lord’s bosom, and the other as the treasurer of the Master’s little store, they seemed to be equally trusted and honoured followers of the great Lord. You might not have known, by mere sight, which was the better man of the two—John or Judas. Most probably you would have preferred the gentle manners of John; but I should suppose—for our Lord never chose a man to an office unless he had some qualification—you would also have admired the calm prudence of Judas, and his quiet business tact. No doubt you would have thought that he made an excellent treasurer, and you would have been glad that your Master, with so little to spare, had lighted upon so vigilant a guard and so prudent a manager. They sat at the same table, engaged in the same exercises, and looked much the same kind of men. None of us would have guessed that one of them was John the divine, and the other was Judas the devil. One of them was the seer of the Apocalypse, the other was the son of perdition.

No doubt there are strange mixtures of character in this very house tonight. There will come to this table the disciple whom Jesus loves. Him we will welcome, saying, “Come in, thou blessed of the Lord.” Alas! there may come here a son of perdition. Him we cannot chase away, for we cannot read his heart. For a time both may act and even feel alike; they may even wear well for years. Apparently they may be equally sincere; and yet the day will come when to the right, in his love and his integrity, the faithful disciple will wend his way up to his Master’s bosom for ever; and to the left, the hypocrite will go to his dreadful end, and to that hell which must receive such traitors as he. There is something very solemn about this meeting of such strangely different characters in one common act, and in the society of the same divine Lord. John is here; is Judas here? Let the ques-

tion be started and passed round, "Lord, is it I?" He is the least likely to be the traitor who is nearest to his Lord's heart. He who occupies such a place as John did is not the betrayer. Oh that we might be fired with a loving ambition to be the disciple whom Jesus loved, leaning on Jesus' bosom! for then, though we ask the question, "Lord, is it I?" it will not linger long upon our hearts; for His love, shed abroad within them, shall answer every question of self-examination, and we shall cry, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Let that stand as an introduction. Glance at yourself and your brethren at the table, and say, "How far shall *we* be like our Lord and the twelve?" Will Peter, and James, and John, and Judas all live over again in the assembly of tonight for the breaking of bread?

And now our remarks will be very simple.

I. The first is this: some disciples are specially loved of their Lord. We believe in the doctrine of election, but the principle of election goes to be carried farther than some suppose. There is an election in the midst of the election, and another within that. The wider circle contains the inner, and a still more select circlet forms the innermost ring of all. The Lord had a people around Him who were His disciples. Within them He had twelve. Within the twelve He had three. Within the three He had one disciple whom He loved. And I suppose that what took place around His blessed Person on earth takes place on a larger scale around His adorable Person which is the center of His church both militant and triumphant. Probably our Lord's attachment to John was partly a human one; and so far as it was human, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now after the flesh know we Him no more. Any merely human affection which our Lord Jesus bore for John may have passed away. There may, also, have been such affection in Jesus toward John as there would be in any eminent Christian towards another Christly believer—in anyone whom the Lord made to be a leader of His church, towards such and such a member of that church in whom He could see most of the lovely characteristics of Christ. I cannot but think that it was so. But it strikes me that our Lord Jesus loved John in some measure more than the rest, in the entirety of his character, as Jesus Christ, the Son of God as well as the Son of man. We know that He loved all His disciples; for when my brother read the chapter just now, how like music did those words sound, "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end"! He loved not some of His own; but all of them. He loved all His own then, and He loves all His own now. There is infinite love in the heart of Jesus towards all His people; and if there be any degrees in that love, yet the lowest degree is inconceivably great. The very least member of the divine family may say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." He loves us beyond all human expression, because beyond all human conception. The great heart of the eternal Father, the great heart of the eternal Son, the great heart of

the ever blessed Spirit, the great heart of the Trinity in unity, beats with love, with love to all the elect, to all the redeemed, to all the called, to all the sanctified people of God. We are quite sure of this. Yet that love has this difference about it, that it is more enjoyed by some on earth than by others.

It is clear, as a matter of fact, that the divine love is manifested to some more clearly than to others. My beloved brethren, you must know this to be the case; for there are those among us who walk with God, who enjoy the light of Jehovah's countenance at all times, who, if depressed, have the art of rolling their burden upon the Lord, and soon are delivered from it. You know them, they are the brethren who feel like singing all the while, for Jesus is their friend, and they rejoice in Him. There was one in the Old Testament who was called "a man greatly beloved," and there are Daniels on earth even now. Christ has among women still His Maries, whom He loves. He loved Martha, too; but still there was a special place for Mary. Jesus has still His Johns, whom He peculiarly loves. He loves Peter and Nicodemus, and Nathanael, and all of them; but still there are some who know His love more than others, live in it more than others, drink into it more than others, reflect it more than others, and become more conformed to it, and saturated with it, and perfumed with it, than others are. There are first as well as last. All may be of Israel, but all the tribes are not Judah, and in Judah all the men are not Davids. Who shall deny that there are degrees in grace? Have we not among us babes, and young men, and fathers? Have we not first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear? It is so; and though I will not argue for degrees in glory, and, indeed, deprecate the spirit in which the doctrine of degrees in glory is often set forth; yet we are sure, for we see it with our eyes, that there are degrees of grace, and especially degrees in the enjoyment of the love of Jesus. Amongst those who do really love their Lord, and are really loved by Him, one star differeth from another in the glory of that love.

Why was John made "that disciple whom Jesus loved"? Certainly it was not because he was naturally higher in rank than the others, for he was a fisherman, like the most of them; and James was certainly equal in birth, for he was his brother. Our blessed Lord did not love John because of any excess of talent; for albeit that John's Apocalypse and his Gospel are, in some respects, the highest parts of revealed Scripture, being both the simplest and the most mysterious portions of Holy Writ; yet we should not say that John betrayed evidence of so great a mind in itself, naturally, or by education, as Paul had. He had as much talent as his Lord gave him, but there was nothing about him so special that he should for that cause have been loved; and to dismiss the thought with a word, Jesus never loves men on account of talent, and we should be unwise if we ourselves did so. These things are external to the man. Our Lord loved John, specially, for a better reason than that.

Why did our blessed Lord love John better than others? I can only reply that He exercises a sovereignty of choice, and it is not for us to ask the why and wherefore of the movements of the sacred heart. Surely, nothing should be left so free as the love of the Son of God. Let Him love whom He wills; He has an unquestionable right to do so.

But if we venture reverently to look into the familiar love of Jesus, we shall not fail to see that there was about John, through grace, a most loving spirit. Men love those that are like them, and Jesus, as man, loved John because the processes of grace had developed in John the image of Jesus. John, like his Lord, had much love. He may have lacked some qualities in which Peter, and James, and others excelled, but he towered above them all in love. He was full of tenderness, and therefore his Master at once selected him to be His choicest companion and His dearest friend. You know the way, then, to the heart of Christ. Let your own heart be full of love, and you will know His love. He loves you, you know, altogether apart from anything that is in you, of His own rich and sovereign grace; but for the special manifestation of that love, for your personal enjoyment of it, to fit you for such enjoyment, you must have much love to Him. You greatly need, not a great head, but a great heart. You must have, not more knowledge, but more affection; not a higher rank in society, but a higher rank in the power to love Jesus and to love your fellow-men. Less of self, and more of Jesus, and then you shall enjoy more of His love.

This being the case, that John had this loving spirit, and our Lord Jesus Christ loved him more than others, it led on to the fact that John was the recipient of confidences from Christ which others had not. I will show you that farther on; but certainly it seems to me that John was made by Jesus His executor, and He left him in His will all His earthly possessions. You will say to me, "And pray what possessions had the Master?" Well, He had one possession of which He was very fond, and He could not die until He had disposed by His last will and testament of that one earthly possession. It was His mother. He loved her, and must care for her; and there passed a little word, a kind of sign, between Him and John at the last moment. Do not think that John would have understood what Jesus meant when He said: "Woman, behold thy son," and, "Son, behold thy mother!" if there had not been a quiet talk about that matter some time before. But Jesus, I doubt not, had told John that the only earthly care He had, as man, was that while He was away slumbering in the grave He would have His mother cared for still, and so He left her in John's charge. If you love Jesus Christ very much, He will leave something in your charge, depend upon that; and the more you love Him, the more will He trust you with some loving commission which He would not trust with anybody else.

I have known Him leave a dear child of His, some dear old saint, for a favoured believer to look after, whom he never would have had to look after if Jesus had not said: "I love this dear old saint, and I shall commit him—I shall commit her—to the custody of such a one, because he loves me, and he will take care of this poor one for my sake." Some of you have nobody to care for. Little know you of Christ's trustfulness towards you: He has not trusted you with anything. Do you not grieve to think that you lack this token of His special love? *As sure as ever there is any intimate love between Jesus and any soul, He trusts that soul with something to be done, to be endured, to be guarded, to be mourned over, or in some way to become a sacred trust.* Thus love has occupation, proof, and expression, and this she ever longs for. I know my Master loves me, and I rejoice in His love; and sometimes, when I think of all this great church, and the College, and the Orphanage, and the many cares the whole service brings into my heart, I have said, "Have I begotten all this multitude, that I should carry all of them in my bosom, and bear their griefs, and be troubled with their troubles?" and the answer has always seemed to come to me, "Thou lovest me, and I trust thee to look after these souls, to help them, and care for them, for my sake." It is so with you that have classes to look after, or families to care for: attend to them, for Jesus' sake. If it be only one little one, hear Jesus say, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." You have a charge, each one; and if you have none, I should be afraid you may be Judas, for I cannot think you are John. Had there been the love between you and the Lord which existed between John and Jesus, Jesus would have whispered into your ear about somebody of whom He would say, "Care for him; care for him for My sake"; and you would have answered, "Lord, that I will: the more Thou givest to me to do for Thee, the more happy will I be, because I love Thee, and because this trust proves that Thou dost love me."

There is the first head: we perceive Jesus loves some of His disciples more than others.

II. Now, secondly, we note that the beloved ones count this to be their greatest honour. This is evidently in the text; for John, who wrote these words, called himself "one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved," and I think three times besides he speaks of himself as "that disciple whom Jesus loved." He took his name from his Lord's love, which he evidently counted to be his greatest honour. This was John's most notable title. As a servant of the Queen, having distinguished himself in the service of Her Majesty, becomes the lord of such and such a town, and he takes the name of the place as a name of honour, so John drops his own birth-given name, as it were, and takes this title instead of it—"that disciple whom Jesus loves." He wears it as a Knight of the Garter, or of the Golden Fleece, wears the mark of his sovereign's esteem. He took it for his honour; and yet, beloved, there was not a grain of boasting in it, nor even an approach to glorying in the flesh. A

sense of love makes us happy, but not haughty. How can I proudly boast that Jesus loves me? If you are loved of Him, you will feel that you so little merit it—indeed, that you so altogether demerit it—that you will be amazed to think that He loves you, and it will never enter into your head that His love is your due. You will take the title of love, but you will give the honour back to Jesus, and often you will say,

*“And when I shall die, ‘Receive me,’ I’ll cry,
For Jesus has loved me, I cannot tell why.”*

You will not be able to tell why the Lord loves you so specially. This will be the wonder of eternity. But there will be no pride in the experience of being dear to the Lord, nor anything to excite self-laudation. You will feel that it would be a wicked thing to deny His matchless love, but yet you will not carnally triumph over others because of it. There would be pride in the affectation of a modesty which would doubt the love of Jesus, but there is no pride in the reception of that love, since you yourself are so evidently, so conspicuously undeserving, that no one will dream that Jesus could have loved you because there was anything good in you.

Now, had John been proud he would have altered the title thus. He would have said, “That disciple who loved Jesus.” This would have been true, though not modest. There was, as far as his heart was capable of it, a reciprocity of love between John and Jesus. If Jesus loved him, he loved Jesus; but John never called himself “That disciple who loved Jesus.” No, for he felt as if his own love was altogether unworthy of mention in the presence of the love of Jesus.

Then notice also, as if to show us that there was no pride in taking the title, that he does not say, “John was the disciple whom Jesus loved.” We gather from other facts that it was John. All the traditions and beliefs of the early church went to testify that it was John. We have not, any of us, any doubt about the fact that it was John. It has, as it were, leaked out; but John nowhere says that he was the man. All that he has said is, “That disciple whom Jesus loved”; and thus he makes the love more conspicuous than the person who received it. We know that it must have been John, for many reasons; but still he does not say so. He hides John behind the love of Jesus, which proves that John gloried in the love of Christ, but did not boast of it egotistically. Bengel tells us, that John’s name means “the love of Jehovah.” If you look at Cruden’s translation, in the list of the meanings of names in the Concordance, he puts it “the grace of God,” the grace of Jehovah. Bengel reads it “the love of the Lord”: so John just altered the name a little, and paraphrased it when he wrote, “whom Jesus loved.” It would go into shorter compass if he put it in the Hebrew, and would need but little alteration. Sometimes when men succeed to estates, it is a condition that they shall change their names: in this case the name was very little altered from “the loved one of God” into the “loved one of Je-

sus Christ”; and there is no alteration—Is there?—in the real meaning of it. When he said, “That disciple whom Jesus loved,” it was John “writ large.” That is all. It was John a little altered under the New Testament dispensation, the old name sweetened and perfumed by bringing it near to the sweeter name of Jesus Christ his Lord. So precious has its nearness to Jesus made it, that perhaps next to the name of Jesus no name is sweeter than that of John. As Ivan, or Evan, it has a most evangelical, gospel sound. It is common in many forms throughout Christendom, and many of the noblest disciples have worn it, from John Chrysostom to John Calvin, and from John Bunyan to John Wesley, and John Newton. In any case the honour of being loved by Jesus is greater than the name John; and happy are they who can claim it!

There are some, then, whom Jesus loves more than others, and these men always count that love to be their highest honour.

III. A step farther, a third remark, that this special love brings such men special privileges. It brought to John the first privilege of *being very near to Jesus, his Lord*. At that supper he was nearest to the place which Jesus occupied. You know they lay along at the supper somewhat in this fashion—leaning upon the left arm, so as to have the right with which to help themselves to each dish. Now, John lay here, and Jesus Christ lay just there; so that, when John turned a little backward there was the bosom of Jesus for him to put his head upon; and I suppose that when John asked the question, “Lord, who is it?” he turned his head over, and said into His very ear, “Lord, who is it?” Nobody heard what he said. It was just whispered into the ear of his Lord when his head was in that sacred bosom; and the answer was not heard by anybody except John. But his position of being nearest was brought about by his being best loved. He was nearest in fellowship because dearest in love. *Now, beloved, if you are best loved by Christ, you live nearest to Him*. I am sure of it. If you love Him best, and He loves you best, you will be more in prayer than others; you will spend more time alone with Jesus than other Christians do. You will abound in petition and praise. You will read His Word with greater diligence; you will drink it in with greater delight. You will live for Him, too, with greater consecration. Your whole time will be spent in His company. When you are at your work in the house, or the field, or the shop, you will still be with Him. If you are better loved than others, your daily song will be—

*“The day is dark, the night is long,
Unblest with thoughts of Thee;
And dull to me the sweetest song,
Unless its theme Thou be.”*

“He feedeth among the lilies,” and keeps near the pure in heart. Our Well-beloved’s delights are with those who delight in Him. You will be close to Jesus if you are dear to Him. The two things go together. If you are living far away

in the cold regions of broken fellowship, then I am sure you have but very little conscious enjoyment of the love of Jesus Christ your Lord. The dearest must be the nearest. That is the first privilege.

The second was the privilege of using *and receiving tokens of endearment*. He leaned his head on Jesus' bosom, looking up into His face; and Jesus looked down on him. There was mutual endearment, for Jesus loved him, and he loved Jesus; and that night, when the blessed Master was in trouble, He wanted His friend with Him, and felt a need for John, though he could not help Him much. Jesus felt a need of John's society and sympathy, and it made Christ's bosom all the easier to have John's beloved head in it. As for John, it must have been a heaven below to be thus in the bosom of his Lord. He mentions it three times, you see; twice in this passage, and once in the last chapter of his gospel, where there was no necessity for mentioning it. He had such a recollection of his head having once been laid on his Lord's breast, that he must put it in when he is speaking about Peter and himself. He says, "The disciple which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?" He must needs repeat the charming fact, for it was such a delight to him. O beloved, we cannot now touch the bosom of Jesus after the flesh, for He is gone up on high; but there are still most sweet endearments of spirit between the Lord Jesus and His loving disciples. I must not tell abroad the secrets of love, for these things are for those that know them, and not for all comers. Choice passages between true hearts are not to be published in the street, lest they become the theme of ridicule. Pearls are not to be cast before swine. But believe me, at this moment we have, or at least we can have, such intimate enjoyment of the love of Jesus, that even if He were here, and we could lean our heads upon His bosom, the endearment could not be more certain, more sweet, or more ravishing to our delighted souls. In very truth we have fellowship with Jesus, and that fellowship is no dream or fancy. We speak no fiction, neither do we retail at secondhand what others have experienced, but we speak of things which we have personally enjoyed; and we know that there is an intimate communion which is one of the private privileges of those whom Jesus loves much, for it has been our privilege. I hope very many of you know this choice blessing of living in the immediate enjoyment of your Saviour's love. May you never lose it!

Then is there a third boon, not only of nearness and endearment, but of *confidence towards the Lord*; for it was a bold thing surely, for John to lean his head on Christ's bosom. Our Lord did not say, "Nay, John; nay. I am thy Master, and thy Lord. Dost thou do this to Me as if I were thine equal?" No. The meaning of that blessed text, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," runs in other directions besides that which we generally think of. If you come to Jesus in the most intense manner, He will not repulse you. If your head shall come into His bosom, He will not cast your head out. If you can get your very heart into His heart and

come closer to Him than even John dared to do—if you carry that coming beyond all previous comings, yet Jesus neither will nor can resent the nearest approaches of any one of His believing people. We lose a great deal of Christ's loving fellowship because we are so formal and distant towards Him. We seem to think that He came among men to show them their distance from God, and not to be as a brother to them, to reveal God to them. Jesus seeks to reach our hearts, He stoops to our littleness, let us pluck up courage to draw near to Him. Well does our hymn put it—

*“Let us be simple with Him, then,
Not backward, stiff, or cold;
As though our Bethlehem could be
What Sinai was of old.”*

Lean on Him. Lean on the bosom of the Christ of God, Who loveth us, and hath given Himself for us. Make a confidant as well as a confidence of your Lord. Put all the weight of your care, all the weight of your whole self and all that concerns you upon Him, and then recline with delight upon His bosom. There was a gracious confidence given to John, which he rightly used towards his Lord.

Surely there was a *great liberty* given to him. Some would have said he took a liberty in thus leaning where no head of king or emperor might aspire to rise. He was the most honoured of all human beings; but surely he took great liberties. No, he did not, for the Lord Himself gave him access with boldness. Great love has privileges which make her boldest advances no intrusion. Love has the key of all the rooms of the Father's house. Love has the range of Paradise. Love may read the very heart of God. Love may come where she wills, and go unchallenged.

John said to our Saviour, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus looked down at him and said, as if He did not want the others to know at all, “He it is to whom I shall give a sop.” He had just to watch a little while. I do not know but it is not improbable, that Judas was next at the table—John here, then Jesus, and then Judas. Very likely Judas was pretty close to the Lord; for if a man has your purse you want him near you, so as to tell him what you wish to have done with the money. So, when Jesus just turned over and gave a sop to Judas, John knew the meaning of the act. Judas had had his conscience disturbed, I should think, by the utterance of the Saviour, when he said, “He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me,” and by the question of each of the others, “Lord, is it I?” Judas himself asked that question for a time; but he grew calm again, and became reassured, and thought he should not be found out, until the Lord dipped a piece of meat, according to the Oriental custom, in the sauce of the dish, and passed it to him. Even then Judas possibly thought, “This is an act of great friendship. He evidently has the utmost confidence in me, and has not found me out.” Little did he know that the sop was the token of the discovered traitor. Then Judas said, “Lord,

is it I?" thinking he should get a pleasant answer, but Jesus answered that it was even he, and added, "What thou doest, do quickly." There that matter ended. But John was thus the recipient of friendly confidence on the part of Christ: he told to Jesus his heart, and Jesus told him His heart. He had liberty to go to Christ.

Ah, brethren! do you never feel in prayer as if you were tied up and could not pray? The best of saints will be bound about some things. People come and ask you to pray for this, and pray for that; but you cannot so pray unless you have liberty from the throne. If God gives the prayer of faith, you can pray it; but you cannot pray that prayer at your own will. He that can most often pray the prayer of faith, he that can see farthest into Christ's mysteries, he that can read the riddles of this divine Samson, is the man whose heart loves Jesus best, and whose head lies most in the bosom of his Lord. Be you sure of this, that if you love much, you shall know the secret of the Lord, for it is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.

Now a step farther, and a very little more, and we have done. This creates *special knowledge*. I merely give it as a head to help your memories, for I have already dwelt upon it as a matter of fact. The special privileges of love lead on to a special knowledge of Christ. I do not think that any other evangelist notices Christ's emotion at the supper in the matter of His spirit as John has done. He writes, "When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit," and so on. John was so close to the Lord, with his head on his breast, that he could tell, by the heaving of His bosom, that He was troubled. The mind of God is not so revealed to any man now that he can set up to foretell the future like a prophet; but, mark you, the choice ones amongst the saints have intimations of the mind of God about many things. Those who live at court can often foresee the king's movements when others cannot. It is my firm conviction that favoured believers have tokens, warnings, and hints from above. Did not the Lord say, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" Even the choicest spirits may not understand the Lord's meaning all at once; but if any man can read anything of the future, it is he that puts his head where all eyes grow clear, and all hearts become pure, even upon the breast of Jesus. Oh, to know Christ! The day will come when the saints of God who are great classics, mathematicians, or astronomers—and there have been godly men skilled in all the sciences—the day, I say, shall come when these will count all they know of science to be of little worth compared with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord. Brethren, we value knowledge, culture, science; but when we put them at their highest market price, what are they as compared with the knowledge of Jesus? This is my one ambition—that I may know Him, and may comprehend with all saints what are the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. If you love your Lord, you shall know of His doctrine. If you live near Him, you shall understand

His feelings. If His secret be with you, you shall know what prophets and kings desired to know, and what angels desire to look into. The Lord bless you, and bring each one of you who are His people into this happy condition.

I have done, when I notice two things. The first is this—that *the favoured position which John occupied did not screen him from the necessity of asking the question, “Lord, is it I?”* There really was no suspicion of him, nor any reason for such suspicion; but his heart was in a right state, and, therefore, he felt it necessary to say, “Lord, is it I?” as well as any of the rest. And I make this remark because the very persons who do not say, “Lord, is it I?” are those who ought to say it. If you are enjoying more of God’s love to-night than ever you did in your life, yet do not profess to have climbed above the need of self-examination. When the question comes, “Art thou really one of His?” do not chase it away, as if it were an impertinence. Entertain the enquiry till you can satisfy it with a sufficient answer. Some professors can afford to sneer at holy anxiety. May I never be of their number! I have heard them ridicule the question—

*“Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His, or am I not?”*

Now, I do not hesitate to say that every man who loves the Lord has had to ask that question; and has had to ask it all the more because the truth and fervency of his love have made him jealous of himself. He has such an overwhelming sense of what his love ought to be, and he has such a consciousness of shortcoming, that he is quite sure to say, “Do I love the Lord?” It is not your bold talker that is your true lover after all. There is a confidence which is fatal.

*“He who never doubted of his state,
He may—perhaps he may—too late.”*

If thou sayest, “I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing,” whilst thou art naked, and poor, and miserable, it will be a sad deception, and the awakening out of it will be sadder still.

But if thou sayest, “Oh that I loved my Redeemer more! Oh that I served Him better! But I do love Him. My heart is His, and He does love me,” then thou hast answered the question of, “Lord, is it I?” and thou mayest go thy way contented.

The other remark, with which I finish, is this: *that John’s nearness to Christ did not authorize him to make answer to his fellow disciples, nor to judge any one of them.* Time was when John might have sat in judgment over them. Did he not desire to sit upon a throne judging the twelve tribes of Israel with his brother James? But now that he has his head in his Lord’s bosom, he is not anxious to judge, but far otherwise. His brethren keep asking, “Lord, is it I?” Peter makes signs to him. Fishermen have ways of their own of talking to one another. Peter seems to say, without the use of words, “Pray ask the Master.” John does not presume to make a guess as to the traitor’s name, but he softly says, “Lord, who is it?” He asked that

question of his Lord; but he did not himself pitch upon Judas. No, he might, perhaps, have laid his suspicions upon someone else who would have been innocent. It was wise to refer the matter to the Lord.

Some say that they live very near to Jesus. It is an evil sign when men speak of their own attainments. These are the people who, in the next breath, begin to condemn others. But this is not after the manner of the beloved John. Some professors affirm that they are going to have a particularly fine place in the glory, all by themselves. I do not quite understand their theory, but I am sure I do not grudge any of my Master's servants any special honour they may desire. As far as I understand them, there is to be a separate place in the kingdom for them, and we poor, ordinary Christians are to be saved; but we must take a lower room. So let it be. We will rejoice in the promotion of our brethren.

As for myself, if it should ever come to pass that I should have the privilege of living in some first avenue in heaven among the aristocracy of the skies, I think I should prefer another quarter. I have kept company on earth with such a poor lot of brethren, and I have learned to love them so well, that I would rather abide with them in their inferior heaven than rise with the cream of the cream into the upper places. I like to be with God's people of the poorer class, and of the more struggling and afflicted sort. I like to be with God's people who wrestle hard with sins, and doubts, and fears. If I get spoken to by my very superior brethren, I find that I have very little pleasant fellowship with them, for I know nothing about their wonderful experience of freedom from conflict, and complete deliverance from every evil tendency. I have never won an inch of the way to heaven without fighting for it. I have never lived a day but I have had to sorrow over my imperfections. I sometimes get near to God, but at that time I weep most about my faults and failings. Although I have thus spoken after the manner of men, I do not believe in these superior beings, nor in their superior heaven: but even if I did, I would sooner follow with the flock than run ahead with the greyhounds. These brethren judge us, and condemn us. They say that we do not understand "the mystery of the kingdom," or something or other. We know Jesus Christ, however—both theirs and ours. We will not deny their piety and grace, but bless God that they have so much of them. We hope, however, to get to heaven the same as they, and into the glory the same as they; and we will be glad if so the Lord will enable us. Do you find the spirit of self-exaltation, and of condemning others, coming over you at times? Conquer it at once by the Holy Spirit's power. Let us cease to judge where we are forbidden to do so. Let us contend earnestly for the truth; but as to the hearts of men, let us leave these to Jesus.

I close by saying—you remember what Jesus said to Peter. Peter was always a little too fast, and he therefore ventured to peer into things which did not concern him, and so he said to Jesus, as he looked at John, "Lord, and what shall this man

do?” He did not think badly of brother John: I should have been ashamed of Peter if he had done so. But still he said, “What shall this man do?” Our blessed Lord replied to him, “What is that to thee? Follow thou me.” So, when you feel inclined, because you are growing in grace and becoming somebody, to say, “Lord, and what shall this poor member do? And what shall this imperfect brother be? What shall that poor, blundering new convert do?”—remember the words of Jesus: “What is that to thee? Follow thou me.” Mind your Master, and mind yourself, and let your brethren stand or fall to their own Lord, as you must. Now, come and lay your head in your Lord’s bosom, and never mind Peter. May God bless you, for Christ’s sake!

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Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Influential Baptist minister in England. History’s most widely read preacher (apart from those found in Scripture). Today, there is available more material written by Spurgeon than by any other Christian author, living or dead. Born at Kelvedon, Essex.



UNION AND COMMUNION

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

WE now will discuss which, in some respects, is the most blessed aspect of our theme: for what does our mystical, legal, vital, saving, and practical union with Christ amount to, unless it issues in experimental, intimate, precious oneness of heart with Him? This is really the simplest branch of our many-sided subject, yet not a few find it the most difficult: not because of its intellectual intricacy, but because they find it so hard to believe, and harder still to carry out into practice. It seems too good to be true, too blissful for realization in this life, too far above the reach of poor worms of the dust wriggling in the mire. Was it not thus when, as an awakened and convicted sinner, you first heard that Christ was an all-sufficient Saviour? “Ah, but not for *me!*” Later, what difficulties presented themselves to your mind: your vileness, your utter unworthiness, your unbelief! What penances, reformations, labors, you supposed were necessary to qualify you for His salvation! But when the Spirit communicated faith, you were amazed at the simplicity of what before had baffled you.

It is much the same in the history of many Christians concerning experimental union and communion with Christ—a conscious, intimate, joyous fellowship with Him Who is Altogether Lovely. When they hear or read of this, they conclude that such a blissful experience is not for them. Sin is too powerful, too active within, to ever hope for close fellowship with the Holy One in this life. Others may be more favored, their corruptions may be more divinely subdued; but as for me, I can only expect to go halting and mourning the rest of my earthly pilgrimage. At best, I can only hope that God will not utterly cast me off, that He will mercifully preserve me from open transgressions which would bring dishonor upon His cause, that He will graciously bear with my innumerable failures, and at last take me to Heaven for Christ’s sake; but that He should grant me any more than an occasional smile, a sip of His love by the way, is too much for me to expect.

“Ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1Co 1:9). To whom were those words first addressed? To those who in their unregenerate days had been preserved from flagrant sins? No indeed, some of them had been guilty of the grossest crimes (see 1Co 6:9-11), but they were “washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” Were they, then, now living unblemished lives, walking in flawless obedience to God’s commands? No, far from it; read through the epistle, and observe the many offences which the Corinthian saints had committed. Nevertheless, to them the apostle was moved to say “Ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son.” And if they were, rest assured, Christian readers, that we are, too. Though so utterly unworthy in

ourselves, still having the flesh unchanged within us, sin ever harrassing and tripping us up, yet “called unto the fellowship of his Son!”

Alas, that so few understand of what that “fellowship” should consist. Alas that any Christian should conclude that indwelling sin, with its daily activities, outburstings, and defilements, make “fellowship” with Christ an impossibility. Alas, that so many suppose that this “fellowship” consists only of an ecstatic experience on the mountain-tops, enjoyed solely by those who gain a constant victory over indwelling corruptions and outward temptations. Were that the actual case, the writer would not be penning these lines; rather would he completely despair of attaining unto such “fellowship” with Christ in this life. Ah, my reader, it is those who are still vile sinners in themselves, who find no good thing dwelling in their flesh, who are called unto fellowship with God’s Son! Surely that is indeed “good news.” Blessed be His name, the Lord is a very present help in trouble, for those who are troubled by their futile efforts to heal the plague of their own hearts; troubled over unanswered prayers for grace to subdue their iniquities. Yes, divine love has made *full provision* for such to enjoy experimental fellowship with Christ in this life.

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I [not “was,” but] am chief” (1Ti 1:15), and it is equally true, blessedly true, that He has fellowship with *sinners*. If it were not so, there would be none in this world with whom He could have fellowship, for “there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Ecc 7:20). True, the ineffably holy Christ will not have any fellowship with us in our sins, and no renewed heart would desire Him to do so. Nevertheless, it is equally true that He does have “fellowship” with sinners: saved sinners, yes; but sinners all the same. Did He not have the most intimate fellowship with the apostles? and were they not men of like passions with us?—very far from sinless perfection were they.

But let us now attempt to define the nature or character of experimental union and communion with Christ. “There is a friend which sticketh closer than a brother” (Pro 18:24) makes known His side of this union; “there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved” (Joh 13:23) exhibits our side of this communion. The first of these remarkable and inexpressibly blessed Scriptures presents to us an aspect of Truth which some find it difficult to lay hold of and enjoy. In certain circles the exalted dignity of Christ’s person has received such emphasis, that a proportionate presentation has not been given of the intimate relations which He sustains to His people: a balance has not been preserved between that in Christ which awes and that which melts the heart. It is possible to become so occupied with the Lordship of Christ, as to almost (if not quite) lose sight of His Friendship: to be so engaged in rendering to Him the honors which

are due Him as God, as to overlook the tender sympathy and compassion which He has for His people as Man.

Experimental union with Christ is made possible by and is to issue from our practical union with Him, that is, our “walking together” in agreement with His revealed will. Experimental communion with Christ is exercised in happy subjection to Him as our Lord, and in intimate intercourse with Him as our Friend. Christ Himself is that “friend which sticketh closer than a brother.” This term “friend” tells of the closeness of that relationship which divine grace has established between the Redeemer and the redeemed. It reveals the warm throbbings of His heart unto His own. It gives them full warrant for the fullest confidence and the most unreserved dealings with Him; as it assures of His loving sympathy and deep interest in all that concerns them. There is no aloofness on His part, and there should be no reserve on our part. There should be a readier unburdening of ourselves to Him than to our dearest earthly friend or nearest relative.

There are three things requisite in order to our having close communion with one of our fellows. First, that person must be real and present to us: fellowship is not possible with one we know not, or who is far removed from us. Second, we must have a free access to that person, with confidence and boldness toward him: fellowship is not possible where formalities bar our approach and where fear or awe dominates the soul. Third, there must be mutual affection and esteem. Fellowship is not possible where love exists not or where it has cooled off. Now apply all of this to our present subject. If the soul is to enjoy real experimental union and communion with Christ, He must be a living reality to the heart; faith must bring Him near and give freedom of approach to Him, and the affections must be kept warm and active toward Him; otherwise our religion will quickly degenerate into a mechanical routine, devoid of reality and joy.

In the next place, let it be as definitely insisted upon that, our communion with God and His Christ must be in the light. “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another” (1Jo 1:5-7). We cannot now give an exposition of this important passage, but must confine ourselves to that which bears directly upon what we are now treating of, namely, the character of experimental communion with Christ. What is it to “walk in darkness”? And what is it to “walk in the light”? The question is one: though viewed from both the negative and positive sides.

The first and most obvious answer must be that, to “walk in darkness” is to conduct ourselves unholily, to follow a course of sin: the works of darkness are the works of the flesh. But we must press the matter more closely home to our con-

sciences. In order to do this, let us consider the leading characteristic of light. The most prominent property of light is its transparency and translucency: it is patent, open, always and everywhere so, as far as its free influence extends. The entrance of light spreads reality all around. Clouds and shadows are unreal: they breed and foster unreality. Light, then, is the naked truth: it makes manifest, it exposes things. Thus the chief conception which this metaphor of “light” conveys is, that of openness, clearness, transparency, reality. And that is what God is; that is what Christ—“the light of the world”—is; that is what the Word of Truth is—“a light shining in a dark place.”

“The light shineth in darkness” (Joh 1:5). He Who is the Light came to seek and to save those who “sat in darkness” (Mat 4:16). “For ye were sometime darkness” (Eph 5:8). What a word is that! Not only that in our unregenerate days we dwelt in darkness, but we were in ourselves “darkness.” By the fall we lost that element of clearness, brightness, openness, in which we were created at first. Sin entered, and with sin, shame. The clear and open sunshine of the presence and countenance of Him Who is light became intolerable; the covering of fig leaves and the hiding place of the trees of the garden was preferred. Henceforth, to fallen and unregenerate man, light became offensive: darkness is upon the face of the deep of his heart. Henceforth, darkness is his element: he loves darkness rather than light (Joh 3:19). Therefore, deception, insincerity, hypocrisy, concealment, characterize him in his attitude toward God.

But at regeneration a miracle of grace takes place: divine light shines in the heart (2Co 4:6), and the consequence is “but now are ye light in the Lord” (Eph 5:8). The result of this is revolutionizing. Not only is the soul now enabled to see things, and to see itself, in God’s light, but he renounces the works of darkness, the “hidden things of dishonesty.” He throws off his cloak of pretense; he comes out into the open and truthfully confesses to God what he is. He no longer attempts to cover his sins, or pose as a good and righteous person; but honestly owns himself to be a polluted leper, and incorrigible rebel, an inveterate transgressor, a hell-deserving sinner! “An honest and good heart” (Luk 8:15) is now his: previously he thought highly of himself and wished others to flatter him; now, he loves the truth, and abhors deception and hypocrisy. And, as pointed out in the last article, the believer must continue as he began.

It is into the fellowship of Him Who is “light” the believer has entered, and if real communion is to be preserved there must be openness and genuineness on his part. Christ will not tolerate any deception: any attempt at concealment or disguise is certain to displease Him. It is both our madness and our loss to try and hide anything from Him. But He is no hard taskmaster; instead, He is full of love and tender mercy. It is written, “A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench” (Isa 42:3). His ears are ever open unto the cries of

His erring people, and their tears of repentance are precious in His sight (Psa 56:8). Perfect openness and transparent honesty in our dealings with Him, is what He requires; deceit and insincerity He will not tolerate. We cannot walk in the darkness of pretense and have fellowship with Him Who is the Light!

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another” (1Jo 1:7). Note it is not now “as he is light” (as in v. 5), but “as he is in the light.” The thought here is that, the same clear and transparent atmosphere surrounds them both: we walk in the light in which God is: it is the light of His own pure truth, His own nature, of absolute reality. The light in which God dwells is His own light: the light which He is Himself. In that light He sits enthroned: in that light He sees and knows, surveys and judges all things. And the light in which we are to walk is identically the same light as that in which God is. The same pure medium of vision is given to us: “In thy light shall we see light” (Psa 36:9). In other words, we must measure everything by God’s pure truth and judge ourselves in the light of His holiness.

The same clear-shining, transparent atmosphere of holiness, truth, and love is to surround us, penetrating our inner man and purging our mind’s eye, our soul’s eye, our heart’s eye, that it may see sin as God sees it—as “this abominable thing that I hate” (Jer 44:4); that we may see holiness as God sees it—as the inestimable thing which He loves; that all things, all events, all men, all our motives, thoughts, words, deeds, may appear exactly to us as what they appear to Him. It is into a fellowship of light we are invited to walk. If there is to be a real fellowship, it must be a fellowship of light, where there is no compromise, no pretense, no insincerity: where the things of darkness and dishonesty are renounced. But can I, who am so full of sin and corruption, go forth into that light, which is so pure and piercing? Not apart from the cleansing blood of Christ! Thank God for the perfect and ever-availing provision of divine grace, providing for the removal of every obstacle which my depravity might interpose against walking in the light.

Experimental communion with Christ is the blessed goal towards which all the other unions lead: that the Lord’s people may have personal, conscious, intimate, joyous union with Him Who loved them and gave Himself for them—an experience beginning in this life, continuing (more perfectly) throughout the endless ages of eternity. The grand end of our vital, saving, and practical union with Christ is to bring us into experimental oneness with Him: that we may drink into His spirit, have His mind, share His joy. Of all the experiences of God’s saints on earth this approximates nearest to the heavenly bliss. Experimental union consists of knowing, loving, enjoying Christ: it is having plain, practical, personal dealings with Him. A deeper and fuller knowledge of Christ will increase our confidence and joy in Him. The more we are enabled to realize Christ’s relation to us and His changeless love for us, the easier and freer will be our approaches to Him.

Experimental union is based upon faith's realization of Christ's relation to us and of our relation to Him, enabling the soul to say, "my beloved is mine, and I am his" (Song 2:16). It is faith, and nothing but faith, which makes God in Christ real, yea, present, to the soul: "seeing him who is invisible" (Heb 11:27). It is faith, and faith alone, which brings Christ down unto us: "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Eph 3:17). It is faith which gives freedom of approach to Him: "we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him" (Eph 3:12)—the faith of which He is both the Author and the Object. It is only by faith we can enjoy the fact that we were loved by Him from all eternity, and that He now bears us on His heart in the immediate presence of God. "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20) contains the sum total of all spiritual life and spirituality.

Yet the cementing bond of this union is love. Faith unites savingly; love, experimentally. Love is as truly a uniting grace as is faith, though it does not unite in the same way. "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1Jo 4:16). Where two persons really love each other, their mutual affection makes them to be one: they are wrapped up in each other. So there is a mutual, hearty, reciprocal love, between Christ and believers; He loves them, and they Him; and by virtue of that mutual love there is an intimate, experimental union between them. The husband and wife are one not merely by the marriage covenant—the legal tie and external relationship—but also and chiefly because of the love and affection there is between them. So it is betwixt Christ and His saints: love, stronger than death, knits them together.

Experimental communion with Christ, then, consists in basking in the sunshine of His conscious presence: sitting at His feet and receiving from Him as Mary did (Luk 10:39), leaning upon His bosom as John did (Joh 13:23). The more we are engaged in contemplating and resting in His wondrous and changeless love for us, the more will our poor hearts be warmed and our affections drawn out unto Him. Our daily aim should be a more full and free acquaintance with the Lover of our souls; and this, not so much in a doctrinal way, as in a personal and experimental way, in actual communion with Him. It is in real intercourse with our friends, and in their converse with us, that we get most and best acquainted with them. It is even so with the Lord Jesus Christ, our best Friend. Open your heart freely to Him, and ask Him to graciously open His heart freely to you. Humbly remind Him of His words, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (Joh 15:15).

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A.W. Pink (1886-1952): Pastor, itinerate Bible teacher, voluminous author of *Studies in the Scriptures* and many books including his well-known *The Sovereignty of God*. Born in Great Britain, immigrated to the U.S., and later returned to his homeland in 1934.



We do not live near enough to God, do we? I know that some of you wait upon Him day and night and you abide under the shadow of the Almighty, but I fear that there are some workers who forget to do this. We should work with the hands of Martha, but yet keep near the Master with the heart of Mary! We need a combination of activity and meditation. When we get that, when we inwardly retire for consultation with our Lord and then come out actively to labor for our Lord—then shall we be good stewards in the little part of the great house with which He has entrusted us.—*Sermon 2440*

Some of us know what it is, even in those wanderings of our mind in sleep, not to quit the holy ground of communion with our Lord. It is not always so, but it is sometimes so, and even then, when the mind has lost power to control its thoughts, even the thoughts seem to dance, like Miriam, to the praise of God! Oh, happy men, whose religion is their protection even in their sleep!—*Sermon 2406*

He may worship God who shouts until the earth rings, and God may accept him. But he may worship God as truly who sits in silence before the Most High and says not even a word. It is the *spiritual* worship which is most acceptable to God, not the external in any shape or form. It is the *heart* that has fellowship with the Lord, and it needs little in the way of expressing itself—neither has God tied it down to this way or that. It may find its own methods of utterance so long as it is truly “moved by the Holy Spirit.”—*Sermon 2239*

—*Charles Spurgeon, from Spurgeon Gems,
available from Chapel Library.*