

~Other Speakers M-R: Thomas Reade:

1. COMMUNION WITH GOD

"When I awake, I am still with you." Psalm 139:18

Communion with God is the privilege of every true believer. He alone can approach the mercy-seat in the spirit of adoption, and enjoy a foretaste of heaven while journeying towards it. John felt all this happiness when he wrote: "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." Union to God, and communion with him through the Son of his love, is the source of every spiritual blessing. This exalted privilege can only be enjoyed by the holy followers of Jesus; for the Apostle adds, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin." Yes, from all our sins, "though they be as scarlet," "though they be red like crimson," crying aloud for vengeance on our souls. But, "if we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth;" for, "He that says he abides in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

How inseparably connected, in the word of God, is the privilege and the character of the true believer. Let none, then, dare to claim the privilege who are destitute of holiness so emphatically denominated light. "God is light," "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning." All his people are "the children of light and the children of the day." They have "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." Oh! that the words of Christ may be living words in the hearts of all his people: "I am the Light of the world; he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." "I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes on me should not abide in darkness." "While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light."

All the people of God are "light in the Lord;" -but while in the body, they are renewed only in part, for thus writes John; "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Sin does not reign, though it rebels in the hearts of the redeemed; for "Whoever is born of God does not commit sin; for his seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." But, "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins;" for "the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world," "that we might live through him."

All, who are united to Christ by faith- all, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them- all, who rely simply and without reserve on the blood and righteousness of the Redeemer, through the Spirit, have fellowship with the Father and the Son. To them, God is a God that hears prayer; he grants the requests of their lips. As they pour out their hearts before him, so he pours his blessings into their souls. He fills them with light, he strengthens them with might, by his Spirit in the inner man- he speaks peace through the blood of Jesus- and accepts them, clothed in his righteousness; the divine image is formed in their souls, and they are made fit for the kingdom of glory.

Such is the character and experience of all who are privileged to hold communion with the Father of spirits. What honor can exceed that of being admitted into the presence-chamber of the King of kings- of holding converse with Him, whom angels worship, and before whom devils tremble! Is this the exalted privilege of the sons of men? Oh! my soul, bless, forever bless that precious Savior, who procured all this, by his blood, for you.

Oh! my adorable Jesus! enable me to make a full surrender of myself to you. Did you leave the bosom of your Father, to bleed and die for me, and shall I refuse to leave this vain empty world at your sweet call? Alas! I should refuse and spurn you too, did not your love constrain me to obedience. Oh! blessed Redeemer, I would now hold holy Communion with you. Oh! make me sincere. Give me a saving knowledge of myself. Show me my true character. Allow me not to build on a false hope, lest I cherish a false peace. Send your Holy Spirit into my heart, to enlighten my understanding, and mold my will to yours; that my affections may ever soar towards You.

Your word of truth declares, that, "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." Let me not deceive myself, Oh Savior of sinners, in a matter of such infinite importance as the salvation of my soul. Let me not fancy myself to be something, when I am nothing; or to suppose, that, because I am among the outwardly called, I shall therefore be found among the chosen; for you have yourself declared, "that many are called but few chosen." Oh! give me the searching light of your Spirit, that I may drag from its concealment, every lurking sin, and

crucify every rebel lust!

Oh! my heavenly Father, wash me in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness; make me your child by adoption and grace; enable me to cast away the filthy rags of my own righteousness, and to put on, by faith, the righteousness of your dear Son. Clothe me with humility. Keep me in a meek and lowly frame. Give me a patient and contented spirit- contented with such outward blessings as you are pleased to bestow- and patient under such afflictions as you know to be needful for me. Make me thankful for all your mercies. Let my heart overflow with unceasing praises for the unspeakable gift of the Lord Jesus. Here I am, Oh my God, in your presence. Look upon me in Christ for his sake, and through the merit of his blood, pardon all my offences. Seal me with your Spirit, and make me a partaker of your love. Deliver me daily more and more from the power of indwelling sin; from the fiery assaults of Satan; from the love and friendship of the world; yes, from everything that can alienate my heart from you, or unfit me for your heavenly kingdom.

Give me, blessed Lord, an increasing relish for spiritual exercises; for religious retirement; for the precious privilege of Communion with You. May the gospel of your grace be as a well of salvation to my soul, from where I may daily draw the water of life. May the Savior be continually more precious in my sight, and more endeared to my heart. Transform me anew into his holy image, and seal me yours, forever yours, a sinner saved by grace.

Without Christ, I can do nothing. All my fresh springs are in him. Great blessings are promised to faith, but faith is his gift. I cannot believe through any natural effort of my own. I may hear sermons, partake of the Lord's Supper, read my Bible, and pray much, but no means, however excellent, can of themselves work faith in my heart. You alone, Almighty Savior, are the author and finisher of faith. Your blessing must descend from on high; your Holy Spirit must be imparted before those means can be rendered effectual, which your wisdom has ordained for the conversion of sinners, and the sanctification of your people. Save me from resting in forms and ceremonies, which, without your grace, are but as "clouds without water."

Oh! heavenly Father, whose love and grace are infinite, give me this precious faith, that I may hourly look to Christ as my great Atonement; flee to him as to a City of refuge; receive him as my Prophet, Priest, and King; rely upon him for the forgiveness of my sins, for righteousness to justify me in your sight, for strength to enable me to perform duty, to follow after holiness, to encounter spiritual enemies, and to come off more than conqueror, until faith is lost in vision, and the cross be exchanged for the crown.

If David could say, under the comparatively dark dispensation under which he lived: "O God, you are my God; early will I seek you, my soul thirsts for you," O! that, enjoying the bright beams of gospel day, I may feel, blessed Jesus, earnest desires after your presence, ardent longings after communion with you. There is no happiness separate from you. With you is life. Unite me to yourself. I have daily to mourn over a cold heart. When I would do good, evil is present with me. Every day affords fresh proof that I am a fallen creature. The leprosy lies deep within; my whole nature is corrupt. Nothing but grace can rescue me from perdition. I need the three-fold blessings of redemption: pardon, peace, and purity. How cheering is the assurance of your Apostle, that we have redemption through your blood, even the forgiveness of sins. To this fountain I would continually resort, that through faith, I may wash and be clean. Then shall I enjoy your presence here, and dwell with you in glory everlasting.

There is a simplicity in the gospel method of salvation which none can rightly discover but those who are taught of God. "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The nominal professor of Christianity cannot enter into the rich, yet simple revelations of redeeming grace. The humble soul, emptied of self, and filled with the light of truth, can alone apprehend and feel the exquisitely delightful manifestations of that love which it free, full, sovereign, and eternal.

Man is always desirous to help save himself; to work out a righteousness of his own, that he may have something whereof to boast. But the gospel declares his total inability for this work, and points him, as a helpless, lost, guilty sinner, to the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world; saying in accents of mercy- "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved." "Only believe" was the word of our Savior to the weeping father in the gospel. He was enabled to believe, and received an immediate blessing, in the restoration of his child. Lord, I believe; help my unbelief. Turn away my eyes from all creature dependencies, from all self-confidence. Be all my hope and all my plea before the mercy-seat.

While thousands around me are rejecting your authority, neglecting your salvation, or darkening your counsel by words without knowledge, may I have grace, blessed Jesus, to wash in no other fountain but your precious blood; to walk by no other light, than the truth of your holy word; to journey heavenward in no other way, than

by faith in you; to feed my soul on nothing but yourself, the living bread from heaven; to desire no other joy, than that which springs from union to You and communion with You. Then shall I partake of the cup of salvation, and praise you with the countless host of the redeemed in your kingdom of glory.

Come, O my soul, retire a while,
Withdraw your thoughts from things below;
Beneath the Savior's blissful smile,
A heaven on earth, you then shall know.
Communion with your God, how sweet!
To feel his presence- how divine!
Oh! make me for this blessing meet;
My Savior, make me ever thine.
While thousands seek their joy on earth,
Where thorns, in rich profusion, grow;
I long for joys of heavenly birth,
Which Jesus only can bestow.
Amid the tangled cares of life,
Amid the sorrows which abound,
Amid the errors, sins, and strife,
Which thickly cover nature's ground;
I would withdraw to silent shades,
And seek retirement with my God,
Where earth, with all its folly, fades,
Where I can leave affliction's load.
How precious this Communion, Lord;
With You is light, and peace, and joy;
I trust the promise of your word,
Which earth and hell can ne'er destroy.