

From Your Pastors

John Owen on Communion with God

God's revelation of Himself as Triune is very profitable for the spiritual experience of believers. God is a personal God who has revealed Himself so that His children might walk with Him in obedience, love, fear, and happiness. Communion with God is the mutual exchange of spiritual benefits between God and His people based on the bond between them in Christ. There can be no communion with God except we be in union with Christ by His Spirit.

The enjoyment of sweet communion is God's communication or giving of Himself to us, and our communion of ourselves back to Him in love, obedience and delight in our union with Christ. In our communion, we may delight in each Person of the Godhead. The Bible teaches about this communion in John 14:23; Jesus says: *"If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love Him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."* In the benediction at the end of 2 Corinthians, we are taught about the grace of Jesus, the love of the Father, and the fellowship we have God by the Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14). Jesus teaches His people in Revelation 3:20: *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."*

How specifically can you have communion with God the Father as a believer, both in receiving from Him and returning to Him? The Father is revealed in Holy Scripture as the Authority, Fountain, Initiator, and Sender of Christ for your salvation. Focus yourself particularly on His love to you—His free, undeserved, and eternal love for you as it is clearly manifested in Christ (1 Jo. 4:8-9; 2 Cor. 13:14; John 16:26-27). The Father's love is the fountain of eternal, free, and unchangeable love. We respond to His love by faith, looking to our Mediator whom the Father has provided for us to see His love in its fullness. We as believers rest in this love, and trust Him and learn to delight, fear and obey Him. Perfect love from God the Father, revealed in Christ and received by us will cast away all of our fears and perfect us in His love (1 Jo. 4:18-19).

How specifically can you have communion with God the Son as a believer? You as a believer commune with the Son *"in grace"* (*"Of His fullness..."* -John 1:16). Focus on Christ's ***"Personal Grace"*** to you: Personal grace is enjoying conjugal relations with Jesus spiritually like a husband and wife. Christ gives Himself to His Bride, and the saints receive, embrace, and submit in love to Him. Jesus *"stirs"* the affections of mutual delight in and desire to make us joyful in Him! The Lord enjoys or delights in His people. This is love like between two lovers. Christ woos and wins His bride in an ever-deepening relationship. Focus on Christ's ***"Purchased Grace"*** for you: This is Christ's work of redemption for you as it is revealed in the Gospel. This is all that righteousness and grace which Christ has purchased for sinners. We have acceptance with God in our justification; we have sanctification from God, in becoming like Him; and we have privileges with and before God as sons in our adoption and the many wonderful benefits he grants to we His heirs. We respond to His love by grieving over our sins, repenting, looking to His righteousness alone, receiving and believing His promises, and being obedient to Him as a joyful, grateful, and submissive spouse/Bride.

How do we relate our communion with God the Spirit to the communion with the Father and the Son? The Holy Spirit teaches believers about the love and grace of God toward us. He pours out the love of the Father and the Son in our hearts (Rom. 5:5). The Spirit gives a foretaste now of the enjoyment and blessedness of God (Eph. 1:14), refreshing, comforting, blessing believers with love, joy and courage (John 15:11; Rom. 8:35-39). The Spirit brings us into fellowship with the Father and the Son (1 John 1:3). He acquaints us, communicates unto us the love of the Father, and the grace of the Son in order to console believers. We respond to the Spirit by seeking to never grieve the Spirit, but pursuing universal holiness to please God, seeking to be careful and watchful to improve all of the Spirit's gracious operations towards us, and always subjecting ourselves obediently to God's Word and the Gospel ministry as He teaches us. Let us seek the Spirit; ask for Him to fill us with Jesus daily; let us be filled with the Spirit! Let us enjoy our communion with God. One day we shall see Him face to face! (1 Jo. 3:1-3).

In Christ's Love,

Pastors Biggs and Halley

*"As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. With great delight I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste, He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Sustain me with raisins; refresh me with apples, **for I am sick with love.**"*
- Song of Songs, 2:3-5

THIS LORD'S DAY

Sermon Title: “The Lord of the Temple”
– Pastor Charles R. Biggs

Theme of Sermon: Jesus is Lord of the Temple, revealing His awesome authority as Priest-King, sitting down to gaze upon and judge righteously between artificiality and authenticity of living before Almighty God.

Scripture Lesson: Matthew 23:1-7, 23-28; John 5:37-47
Scripture Text: Mark 12:35-44

Questions for Family Discussion/ Thoughtful Mediation:

* **Read Mark 11:35-44.** Read also Psalm 110. How might you better understand Psalm 110 in light of Mark’s Gospel? How might Ephesians 1:20, Hebrews 1:3-4, 8:1, and 10:12 help to interpret this wonderful passage?

* Why is Jesus asking this question? What is Jesus “revealing” through the “riddle-like” question?

Psalm 110:

The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." 2 The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! 3 Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours. 4 The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." 5 The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. 6 He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth. 7 He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head.

*“Jesus, lover of my soul,/let me to thy bosom fly,
while the nearer waters roll,/while the tempest still is high;
hide me, O my Savior, hide,/till the storm of life is past;
safe into the haven guide,/O receive my soul at last!*

– Charles Wesley

*“Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.
My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion
forever.”*

– ^{ESV} Psalm 73:25-26