

## **Fellowship with the Son of God**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Afternoon, November 13, 1859

"God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 Cor. 1:9

We live in a world of change. The very declining season of the year; the shortening days, the long dark nights, the withered leaves rustling under our feet, the altered aspect of our fields and gardens, all admonish us that we are passing through a change—that the warm, glowing days of summer are gone, and that the cold, cheerless winter is coming on. And if we turn from looking at the face of nature and the misty November sky to view the aspect of the political heavens, what dark clouds do we see overcasting the horizon and spreading themselves over the present scene! What an eventful year this has been which is now fast drawing to a close! How a few ominous words spoken on the first day of the year by a mighty potentate were like the cloud dimly seen by the prophet's servant, "the size of a man's hand;" and how that cloud kept spreading more and more over the heavens until at last it burst into a storm which deluged the plains of Italy with blood. And although we have now a respite, and the troubled waves seem for the time quieted into a calm, yet men's hearts are everywhere failing them for fear. Wars and rumours of wars are shaking the nations; a warlike spirit is spreading itself through our own land, though more for self-defence than aggression; and there is a general feeling that soon our own country may have to enter into a fearful and desperate conflict for her very existence. I am not an alarmist, but I am not one of those who either naturally or spiritually cry "Peace, peace, where there is no peace." I fear not so much the enemy abroad as that we may

have lost our only true defence at home; that we have neglected and forsaken the Lord, our only real refuge; and that he may be so provoked by our national sins as to bring upon us national punishment. But I am no politician, though no unwatchful observer of events, for I desire to see in them all the sovereignty of God and the hastening on of that blessed period when wars shall cease to the end of the world, and the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Meanwhile may the Lord stay our hearts upon himself, and give us to believe and feel that though all things change, there is One that changeth not; that Jesus Christ abideth the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; that by faith in him and by the operations of the blessed Spirit upon the heart, revealing and forming him there, we receive a kingdom which cannot be moved: that though the earth be removed and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, God is still our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1, 2); that amidst the shock of armies and the fall of thrones his throne stands secure; that the very stars may sooner drop from the sky than the saints of God fall out of his heart or hands. It will be well if we can amidst every changing scene thus stay our hearts upon the Lord, for as the Apostle declares in our text, "God is faithful;" it will be our mercy if we can hang upon his covenant love and superabounding grace, and act upon his own gracious invitation, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment until the indignation be overpast." (Isai. 26:20.)

The church at Corinth was in some respects a very highly favoured church, and yet a very disorderly one. We can scarcely in our day conceive how a church of Christ could have been guilty of such disorders as sullied the fair face of that of Corinth; that one, for instance, of the members could

have been living in incestuous intercourse with his father's wife; that others could come to the Lord's Supper drunk and disorderly; that at their church assemblies one should bring forward his psalm, another his doctrine, and a third his interpretation, so as to make the house of prayer a very Babel. And yet in spite of these disorders, to us so glaring, the Apostle tells them that they "came behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." He thanked God always for "the grace of God which was given them by Jesus Christ," and that "in everything they were enriched by him in all utterance and in all knowledge." And then to establish the minds of those among them who, grieved and troubled by these internal disorders, might have been much shaken by doubt and fear whether God could be in their midst, and to lead them from looking at changeable man to fix their eyes upon an unchangeable Jehovah, he speaks in the words of our text—"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Three prominent features seem stamped upon these words:—

I.—*First, effectual calling: "by whom ye were called."*

II.—*Secondly, the fruit of effectual calling, fellowship: "unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."*

III.—*Thirdly, the faithfulness of God, who having called them unto this fellowship, would surely fulfil all the good pleasures of his goodness, and the work of faith with power. "God is faithful."*

I.—To be called of God lies at the foundation of all vital godliness. It is the first entrance into the life of faith; the first step in the strait and narrow way; the first fruit and mark of predestinating grace, and indispensable to justification and

salvation. As the Apostle speaks, "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

But if we look at the testimony of God in the Scriptures, we shall find that there are two kinds of calling. There is what I may denominate a general call, and there is a special call; and these two must be carefully distinguished. The Lord, for instance, himself says—"Many are called, but few chosen." He there draws a distinction between the many called and the few chosen; clearly showing that there is a calling not connected with choice; and that many may be called, yet not be amongst the number of those elect who shall obtain eternal life. Let us look then at these two kinds of calling, for you may possess the one without enjoying the other. Of this truth we are ourselves personal witnesses, for when we look back upon the way in which the Lord led us in his providential dealings in times past, we can see that we were then partakers of a general calling without being possessors of a special and effectual one.

1. The Lord, then, calls *by his providence*. The best way to prove this is to look back on your own path. Have you not had very many marked providential interpositions in your favour? Were you never raised up from a bed of sickness, which all around thought was the bed of death? Have you not been preserved in a striking manner from what are called accidents, or in the very midst of raging diseases when others fell around you, on the right hand and on the left? Has not the Lord in various ways stretched forth his right hand to feed, to clothe, to provide almost miraculously for your temporal wants; to raise up friends when needed; and appeared in such numerous other ways that you must have been blind indeed not to see that there was a God who watched over your path? These were God's calls in

providence to see his hand, and fear and love his great and glorious name. But we were blind at the time and could not see them. Still they were not less real; not to see them was our sin, and but for God's grace would have been our condemnation.

2. God calls us, again, *sometimes by afflictions*. "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city. Hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it." (Micah 6:9.) The rod has a voice, even though the ears are deaf to hear it. You have had afflictions, and they all had a warning voice. Every illness was a warning for death; every family bereavement spoke to you from the mouth of the grave; every loss in providence called you not to love the world and make money your god; the very griefs and sorrows that you witnessed in others were as so many intimations that the judgments of God were abroad in the earth, and that the inhabitants of the world were by them called to learn righteousness.

3. But these are providential calls. God calls with a louder voice *in the ministry of the gospel*. Your lot has been cast under a gospel ministry. Again and again have you heard the word of truth sounding in your ears. And every time that you have heard repentance preached, faith insisted upon, the way of salvation traced out, and the new birth declared as indispensable to salvation, you have had a call, and that a loud one, if you had but ears to hear it.

4. But there is another, a closer and more personal way still in which the Lord outwardly calls, as distinct from his special, inward call by grace; and that is by the *workings of natural conscience and the convictions produced by the ministry of the word*. Conscience is God's vicegerent in the bosom, which, though sadly maimed and mutilated by the fall, still discharges its office till resisted and seared; and every time

that conscience speaks and the soul trembles at the voice, God may be said to call men to repentance.

Now in these four ways God calls to the sons of men. In greater or less degree, more or less plainly, we have all had these calls. It may be we have neglected, slighted, been deaf to, and disregarded them; still they were not less calls from the Majesty of heaven. But none of these calls, though sufficient to leave us without excuse, are effectual until God puts forth a certain power in the heart. Whatever others may think and say, nothing turned my heart to the Lord but his own grace. I had the loudest calls such as I have named, few men louder, but not one or all united ever gave me a grain of true faith or real repentance, brought me out of the world, or turned my feet into the way of truth and righteousness. There is then a special call; and this call alone is effectual to the salvation of the soul. The Lord would not entrust salvation to an ordinary call. He would lodge the message with his own hand in the bosom. It should not be sufficient for the vessel of mercy to hear the word of truth: he would carry that word of truth with his own power into the heart. And it is this special call which distinguishes the family of God; for they are "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." "Lay hold on eternal life whereunto thou art also called." (1 Tim. 6:12 )

Now it may be that you, or some of you, are anxious to know whether you have received this special call of God. You cannot deny that you have had the general call that I have named, but you want to know whether God has done anything for you by his Spirit and grace. Now I will give you some evidences of a special call. I shall not set the standard high, that I may shut out none whom the Lord has taken in, but shall bring forward certain marks and evidences which always attend a real work of grace in the heart, that you may

compare the experience of your soul with them, and thus gather up some encouraging testimony that you have been favoured with the special, effectual call which distinguishes the living family of God.

1. The first evidence, as it is the first fruit, of a special, effectual call is the *implantation of godly fear* in the breast: it is therefore called "the beginning of wisdom." If God has done anything for you by his Spirit and grace, he has communicated this godly fear to your soul; and it is now, even now, in you "a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death." It is indeed a part, and a very main part, of that well of water of which the Lord spoke to the Samaritan woman, when he said—"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The first mark then of godly fear is that it is a fountain of life and a springing fountain too. Another mark of it is, "By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil." (Prov. 16:6.) Have you departed from evil? Look at these two marks. Have you seen the evil of sin and departed from it? Do you find a fountain of life springing up in your breast whereby as you see the snares of death spread before your feet you depart from them? There is no evidence that a man does possess the fear of God unless he sees and departs from the snares of death. A third mark of this fear of God is that it is one of the first things that a child of God can recognise as a new feeling in his own breast, a hidden possession that he would not give up for a thousand worlds. It is a fountain ever flowing, and he must therefore be conscious more or less whether it waters his breast. As it springs up he must feel something of its rising and flowing; and as it works in a holy reverence towards God, a conviction of sin and a departure from evil, he that is possessed of it has so far an internal evidence that it is "his treasure." But you will say, "I hope I have the fear of God in my heart; but I am often much tried

whether it be the right fear." No wonder, because much servile fear is mixed with it—that fear of which the Holy Spirit says "it hath torment," and which nothing but perfect love can cast out. (1 John 4:18.) This is servile fear, and as in the breast of the child of God it is much mixed with filial fear, doubts arise whether the fear he has in his bosom is pure, filial fear, or whether it be only the fear which hath torment, which is not spiritual nor saving. But as the promise is that "the elder shall serve the younger," and there is a growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, filial fear will increase and servile fear will decrease, till perfect love comes and casts it completely out.

2. Another evidence of being called by this special call is *repentance of sin*. Jesus is "exalted to be a Prince and Saviour to give repentance and remission of sins." The two go together. Whenever he gives repentance, he gives remission; wherever he grants remission, he bestows repentance. Paul's preaching was this: "Repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 20:21.) And the answer addressed by the mouth of Peter to those who being pricked (or pierced) in their heart inquired what they should do, was—"Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." It will not do to let repentance go. Every child of God is brought to repent of his sins, and by repentance to forsake them. But you say "Have I repented? Considering the nature and magnitude of my sins, were I a repenting sinner, surely I should be mourning and sorrowing over them all the day long." What, then, creates that doubt in your mind? Because you are often hard, dark, dead, cold. Here, then, again, we must distinguish between that godly sorrow for sin which is felt in the spiritual mind, and that hardness and darkness of our carnal mind which is still enmity against God, nor is there faith or love, repentance or any one good thing in it. But there have been times and



seasons when, under a peculiar influence, your heart was softened and melted before God; when sin was truly repented of; when you felt that it was indeed an evil and a bitter thing to sin against so good, so holy, and so great and glorious a God; when the rock melted, the hard heart gave way, the eyes flowed down with tears, and the swelling breast was almost ready to burst with penitential grief for your sins and over the sufferings and sorrows of the Son and Lamb of God, and you could only loathe yourself in dust and ashes before his holy, heart-searching eye.

3. Another mark of being favoured with the special call is having *received the spirit of grace and of supplications*. To be favoured with a Spirit of prayer, and by this to obtain access to the throne of grace; to be enabled to wrestle with God as Jacob wrestled with the angel, and by prayer and supplication to draw down blessings from the throne of the Most High,—this is one of God's own evidences of his special favour; for he says, "I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and of supplications." And see the effect—"They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." (Zech. 12:10.) Mark the connection of the two evidences—the Spirit of prayer and true repentance. Wherever there is a Spirit of grace and supplications given, there will be repentance attending it; and this will be gospel repentance, evangelical sorrow, springing out of a view by faith of the crucified Son of God. What a blessed chain unites every Christian grace! How the fruits of the Spirit grow in clusters on the living bough! How evidence is fastened to evidence by a cord that cannot be broken! How safe, then, how sure is the path that Christians tread! Seek for clearer evidences that you are walking in it.

4. Another mark is a *living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*. We have not this at first when under the law, in bondage under its condemnation and curse. The Lord Jesus Christ is not yet made experimentally known, and therefore there can be no true faith in him. And though we may hear about him and try to believe in him, still we have no such discovery of his Person and work as brings any relief, any pardon, or peace. But sooner or later the blessed Spirit is pleased to discover Christ to the soul, which he has effectually brought down under the guilt of sin, cut off from all legal hope and laid in the dust before God. This gracious discovery and manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ raises up a living faith to look unto him, believe in his name, hang upon him as a nail fastened in a sure place, and receive him into the heart as of God made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Many of the family of God are shut up under the law, not indeed destitute of faith, for they believe in the justice and holiness of God to their own condemnation, nor without desires after the Lord Jesus Christ, but without that faith which gives them an assured sense of interest in his atoning blood and finished work. Have you not felt, or do you not now feel, that, with all your prayers and desires, you cannot believe in the Son of God, faith being the express gift of God, unless he be pleased to bestow that precious grace upon you? But those who have been favoured with a manifestation of the Lord Jesus can, under the sweet enjoyment or the blessed recollection, look up to heaven with a believing eye possessing an inward testimony that they do believe in his blessed name, and that he has been made precious to their soul.

5. Another mark of the special call of God is a *discovery of the evils of our heart*. Whilst shut up in unbelief and self-righteousness, we take no notice of heart sins; but when, by the shining in of light from the Lord's own countenance, each

inward recess is laid open to view, every imagination of the thought of our heart is discovered unto us to be evil, and that continually. This is always attended by self-abhorrence and self-loathing; for when we see light in God's most blessed light, and view his glorious perfections in contrast with our hidden deformity, it is with us as it was with the prophet Daniel: our comeliness is turned into corruption (Dan. 10:8); and as it was with Isaiah when he said, "Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." (Isai. 6:5) So it was with the patriarch Job, when he said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:5, 6.) Whenever he draws near in the majesty of his presence, he lays judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet. (Isai. 28:17.) He thus wounds the head of sin out of the house of the wicked by discovering the foundation unto the neck (Hab. 3:13): stripping off its face all its changeable suits of apparel, the mantles and the wimples and the cringing pins, the hoods and the veils, so that instead of a sweet smell there is a stink, instead of a girdle a rent, instead of a well-set hair baldness; instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth: and burning instead of beauty. (Isai. 3:22-24.)

6. *Love to the brethren* is another and eminent mark of God's special call. John puts it in the foremost rank—"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." (1 John 3:14.) You must love the brethren if you love the Lord, the elder Brother; for "every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." And John declares that it is barefaced falsehood to speak of loving him whom we have not seen, and yet not love those whom we have seen. Many a child of God cannot speak of great

manifestations, or of a deep experience either of law or gospel, who yet has stamped upon him that indubitable mark that he loves the Lord's people; many a one is very timid of speaking anything of what God has done for his soul, and shrinks above all things from any presumptuous claim or confidence, who evidently loves the image of Jesus Christ wherever it appears in any of his saints, be their outward condition what it may. Therefore, treasure up that mark if you can find it in your heart: it is one of God's own giving; it may cast a light upon your path often so dark and dreary; it may be an evidence when others seem to fall out of your grasp and leave you to be well nigh overwhelmed in doubt and fear.

7. *A good hope through grace* is another mark of special calling, whereby you safely breast the stormy sea, having cast anchor within the veil; and this is good holding ground, for it is nothing less than the sacred humanity of the Son of God as now in the presence of God for us. Have you never found, when faith and love were sunk out of sight and almost every evidence gone, there was a secret something in you which made you still hope in the Lord? How David thus encouraged his soul:—"Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him." Waves and billows of trial and temptation were beating over his soul; it was cast down from its stability and confidence, and became disquieted and troubled in his bosom. But hope comes to his aid; he gathers it into his arms, and, speaking to his bosom companion as her warm and compassionate friend, he bids her look out of herself and hope in God, for he is sure that he shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. Have you not sometimes felt you could do the same—that though hope sank low, it was not altogether gone; though buried out of sight, still the anchor held firm within the veil; and though

the waves and billows of doubt and fear tossed up and down the ship of your soul, yet there was that in the vessel which held fast on to the blessed Lord?

8. *Spirituality of mind*, of which we read that it is "life and peace" (Rom. 8:6), is another blessed mark of being favoured with the special call. None but those who are partakers of a heavenly birth feel heavenly realities to be their choice element, holy things their sweetest meditation, and the solemn worship of God their supreme delight. Look at this mark as a touchstone of divine life; for to be spiritually minded a man must be spiritual, and to be spiritual he must have received the Spirit and been made a partaker of that "kingdom of God which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. 14:17.) Have you never found in reading the Scriptures a sweet peace distil over your soul, as the glorious promises came forth one after another as the stars in the evening sky, each one brighter and clearer, and you felt a blessed persuasion of your interest in them? When at the throne of grace, favoured with liberty of spirit and access to your heavenly Friend, have you never felt the peace of God to drop into your heart, and like oil upon the waves, to allay every rising of rebellion within? Have you never found, in conversing with the saints of God, a sweet flowing of heart to heart and soul to soul, and felt that such conversation left behind a blessed fragrance upon your spirit? Have you never in the house of prayer had your heart and affections drawn up to the things of God: and as you sat and heard Christ, his person and work, his grace and glory set forth, faith was drawn out to believe, hope to cast forth its anchor, and love and affection to flow, so that you experienced a spirituality of mind, a heavenly calm, and a holy peace, that touched every spring of your soul, and watered it as the river that went out of Eden to water the garden?

I have now given you certain marks and evidences of being a partaker of a special call, all of which I have, I trust, more or less at various times, felt in my own bosom, and therefore do not speak of them at a peradventure. Look at these things; weigh them in the balance of the sanctuary, and see how far a light has been cast in Scripture and experience on the inward movements of your soul, and what you have tasted, felt, and handled as a proof of divine teaching in your bosom. If you can find from these inward testimonies that you have been favoured with this special call, we will now pass on to our next point, which is—

II.—To show *what the saints of God are called unto*. "God is faithful, by whom ye were called *unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord*." When God calls his people by his grace, it is to make them partakers of the highest bliss and the greatest glory that he could confer upon the sons of men. And this not only in eternity but in time; not only beyond, but this side of the grave. He appeals, therefore, to them by his prophet. "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?" (Jer. 2:31.) When the Lord calls his people out of earthly pleasures, is it for no other purpose than to lead them into paths of affliction and sorrow? Does he make them leave the flesh-pots of Egypt to starve them in a waste, howling wilderness? This was the complaint of the ancient murmurers, that Moses had brought them up out of Egypt to kill them with thirst. (Exod. 17:3.) Does he take them from earthly delights to abandon them to misery and despair? O, no! He calls them even in this time state to the greatest privilege and highest favour that his everlasting love could confer upon them, which is no less than "the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord," that they may have union and communion with the Son of God by grace here, and be partakers of his glory hereafter.

God's dear Son is and always has been the object of his eternal delight. To glorify him has been from all eternity his fixed, his settled purpose; and in pursuance of this settled purpose, he gave him a people whom he formed for himself, that they might show forth his praise. Thus, therefore, the Redeemer addressed his heavenly Father—"And all mine are thine and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them." (John 17:10.) His only begotten Son is God's heir, for he has "made him his first-born, higher than the kings of the earth" (Psl. 89:27); "appointed him heir of all things" (Heb. 1:2); "crowned him with glory and honour, set him over the work of his hands, and put all things under his feet." (Heb. 2: 7, 8.) But his people is his inheritance, as was typified by Israel of old, "for the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." And not only has he made his people his inheritance, but given them to him as his Bride; and as such blessed her with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places in him. Thus we read in the parable that "a certain king made a marriage for his son." (Matt. 22:2.) The certain king is God; his Son is the Lord Jesus Christ; the Bride is the Church; and the marriage is the union and communion of the Bride and Bridegroom. But before the marriage, proclamation was made, "All things are ready." So when God calls his people "unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord," all things are ready. To enjoy them by faith is to have "fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:3.) But let us see what is the *foundation* of this fellowship before we enter into its *nature*.

I. When God first made man and placed him in the garden of Eden, God and man were at agreement. God could then come and walk in the garden in the cool of the day, and converse with him face to face as a man converseth with his friend. The fall broke that agreement through: sin separated

between God and the work of his hand. Man became a rebel, an enemy, an alien, and God's anger was manifested against him, so that he cursed the very ground for his sake. In that state there could be no fellowship: for fellowship implies union, agreement, walking together as friends. In order, then, to restore and put upon a higher basis an agreement once enjoyed, it pleased God that his only begotten Son the Lord Jesus Christ should take our nature into union with his own divine Person. As the Apostle speaks—"Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." This is the foundation of all fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our lord, that by his incarnation the Son of God participates in the same nature with us, and has union and communion with the sons of men through his sacred humanity, being sin excepted, one with theirs. Man as man can have no fellowship with God as God. There is no union between an infinite Being such as God and a finite being such as man, any more than there can be between man and a beast. Before the fall there was agreement, but not union; converse but not communion. To bring about then union as a foundation of communion, the Son of God *took our nature* into union with his own divine Person; became man such as we are; and thus established a basis of union and communion by a participation in a common nature. O what glory does this cast upon the sacred humanity of our most blessed Lord, that thereby he became "a daysman," or umpire, as the word means, "to lay his hand upon us both"—as God sharing the nature of God, as man sharing the nature of man, and thus a mediator between God and man. But redemption and reconciliation were needed that the claims of offended justice might not suffer, and that it might be proclaimed in the courts of heaven and to the ends of the earth, "I have found a ransom." In that very nature, then, which had sinned, the incarnate Son of God suffered, bled,



and died. That holy body and soul which at one and the same moment, he assumed in the womb of the Virgin, he laid upon the altar of his Deity, presented both as a sacrifice to God's offended justice, endured therein the curse of the law, and by shedding his precious blood and by the travail of his suffering soul brought in an everlasting righteousness, redeemed and reconciled the church, and saved it in himself with an everlasting salvation. Never forget that at the cross is the foundation of fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

But this is not enough. All men have a participation in the sacred humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ by virtue of a common nature. Yet all are not saved thereby; nor are all called unto the fellowship of God's dear Son. It is only by being made a *partaker of his Spirit* that we come into fellowship with the Lord of life and glory; according to those words—"He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." When, then, the Spirit of Christ visits the soul with his distinguishing grace, and thus quickens it into life divine, he gives it a spiritual union with the Lord Jesus Christ; and out of that union, communion springs. So that the foundation of all fellowship with the Son of God is based upon two things, first, a participation in his flesh; secondly, a participation in his Spirit. By virtue of his flesh he is one with us; by virtue of his Spirit we are one with him. Through his flesh we have union; through his Spirit we have communion. In his flesh he came down to earth; by his Spirit he lifts us up to heaven.

ii. Having shewn the *foundation* of this sacred fellowship, I shall now declare its *nature*. 1. The first thing necessary to this is *agreement*. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" is the Lord's own momentous inquiry. If you are not agreed with Jesus Christ, what fellowship can you have with him? "What fellowship hath righteousness with

unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. 6:14.) Then you must be made righteous before you can have fellowship with a righteous Christ; and be enlightened with the light of the living before you can have communion with him "who dwelleth in the light, and in him is no darkness at all." (1 John 1:5.) This he gives by his regenerating grace, for he puts his Spirit into you, shows you the misery of alienation, raises up in your heart a longing for pardon and peace; and then, sooner or later by virtue of his atoning blood sprinkled and revealed, brings about a spiritual agreement, which is the first introduction into communion. Is it not so even naturally? What communion of mind, heart, or affection can we have with a person with whom we have no agreement? But the more points of agreement the more points of communion.

2. But besides agreement, there must be another thing, which is *acquaintance*. "Acquaint thyself with God and be at peace. There is a knowledge of the only true God and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, to possess which is to possess eternal life; but if we know him not, what union or communion can we have with him? But know him we cannot until he is pleased to reveal himself; to discover his lovely face; to take the veil of unbelief off our heart; and manifest himself as he does not manifest himself unto the world. In this knowledge there is a growth (2 Pet. 3:18); and the more the growth the greater the love, and the greater the fellowship. There are persons whom the more we know the less we want to know; and there are persons whom the more we know the more we want to know. The blessed Lord is one whom the more we know the more we want to know, but whom we shall never fully know till we see him as he is, and know him even as we are known. (1 John 3:2; 1 Cor. 13:12.)

3. But besides agreement and acquaintance, there is a third

thing needful to this sacred fellowship, *a measure of holy boldness and confidence*; because whilst there is so much doubting and fearing, trembling and hoping, there is no sweet fellowship. In earthly things, before you can walk and talk with open heart and mouth to a friend, you must have a measure of confidence in him that he is your friend; you cannot otherwise express your thoughts and feelings freely. If there be shyness on either side, a coldness, a distance, it is a bar at once to all communion. But if you have some testimony that he is a real friend, into whose ear you can lodge your complaint, who can sympathise with you in trouble, give good counsel when needed, and walk with you on terms of confidential intimacy, it establishes between you a communion of heart and affection. So it is as regards fellowship with Jesus Christ. There must be a measure of spiritual confidence to enable us to converse with him; a feeling that he loves us and that we love him; a looking unto; and hanging upon him as our best friend, our wise counsellor, our effectual teacher, our only Saviour, enduring hope, and abiding refuge!

4. Where there is fellowship, there will be also *having the same mind*. As the Apostle says—"But we have the mind of Christ." As lovers of truth and righteousness, as partakers of God's holiness, as redeemed and regenerated children of light, what fellowship can you have with a drunkard, with a profligate, with a gambler, with a swearer, with a profane wretch who despises and ridicules all religion? You say in a moment—"I can have no fellowship with such beings: my companions must be the children of God or none." So in grace unless you have the mind of Christ, so as to see with Christ's eyes, feel with Christ's heart, love what Christ loves, and hate what he abhors, you cannot walk with him in any sweet communion. If you love and live in sin, and he loves and lives in holiness, what communion is there between you

and him on the footing of love? If you love and live in the world, and he when below was separated from it, what communion can there be between you and him on the footing of heavenly mindedness? If you serve divers lusts and passions, and walk in the ways of perdition and death, what communion can you have with him who walked whilst here below as an obedient Son in all the beauty of holiness? Or again, if you are without affliction or exercise of mind, without grief or trouble, trial or temptation, what communion have you with him who was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief?" To have the mind of Christ you must be cast in the mould of Christ, be a partaker of the Spirit of Christ, and know something of the presence and power of Christ, and thus be drawn up into a measure of sweet fellowship and communion with him as your beloved Lord.

5 . But fellowship implies other things. It implies a *zeal for Christ's interest*. Look at partners in a bank or in a firm: how each is anxious for the others' interest, because the interest of one is the interest of all. So in grace: those who have fellowship with Christ are zealous for his interest; feel anxious for his cause; have a desire for his glory; and that his name might be served and obeyed amongst men. His honour is very dear to them; his name very precious; his truth highly esteemed; his people loved; his servants prized; and to sum up all in the words of Hart—

"And everything that's dear to Him,  
To them is also dear."

6. But fellowship implies also *participation in the same lot*, whether of joy or suffering, and that a willing participation; for there is a sharing the same lot unwillingly. The two thieves were crucified with Christ, and had thus a fellowship with him in external suffering, but unwillingly. But when

Moses "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," and Paul longed for "a fellowship of the sufferings of Christ," it was a willing participation that they coveted in the lot of the man of sorrows. If, then, we have fellowship with Christ, we must have fellowship with him in what he was here below as well as what he is in heaven above. Was he despised and persecuted? We must be despised and persecuted too. Was he hated? We must be hated likewise. Was he slandered and maligned? We must endure the same reproach. Was he misunderstood and misrepresented, called a drunkard and a wine-bibber, the friend of publicans and sinners, when his life was so pure and holy? We must submit to similar misrepresentations. Did he suffer in the gloomy garden under the temptations of Satan, and the hidings of God's face; did he sweat great drops of blood under the pressure of sin and sorrow? If we are to have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ in his sufferings in the garden and upon the cross, we must know by internal experience some of these sorrows under sin, or else we have no fellowship with him in his sufferings and death.

7. But fellowship, again, implies *communion*: the word is the same; that is, the communication of his grace to us and of our wants to him; an interchange, if I may use the expression, of commodities; he bestowing upon us his Spirit, his presence, his power, his love, and we giving him in return not only our hearts with its affections, our bodies and souls, to be wholly and eternally his, but laying our sins at his feet, casting our burdens upon him, telling him our griefs and sorrows, and pouring out our desires into his willing ear. This fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord is the highest privilege and greatest favour that God can bestow upon his people here below; and to be blessed with it is the sure pledge, as it is the earnest and foretaste, of eternal bliss. By this sacred communion the guilty conscience is relieved from

its burdens; the troubled heart comforted; the desponding spirit raised up; and the whole soul blessed. Through this holy fellowship the Lord Jesus Christ communicates out of his fulness every heavenly grace. Wisdom, strength, filial fear, tenderness of conscience, separation from and deadness to the world, a spirit of prayer and praise, brokenness, humility, self-abasement, godly sorrow for sin, worship, admiration, and adoration, with that crowning blessing, love—what a train of graces are communicated through fellowship with the Son of God! What condescension in the Lord to stoop so low to poor guilty sinners who, left to themselves, never have done anything but transgress, backslide, and rebel!

But even this fellowship, sweet and blessed as it is here below, is but an introduction to and commencement of a higher, happier, more enduring, and glorious fellowship above. If we have fellowship with Christ upon earth, there will be fellowship with Christ in heaven; and if we are privileged here below to enjoy his presence, feel his love, and know his power, we shall one day see him as he is without a veil between.

III.—But I pass on to our third point, which is to show *the faithfulness of God* in accomplishing the purpose which he has designed for his called people. "God is faithful." Having called his people unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, God will be faithful to his own *word*, and to his own *work*. 1. As a God "who cannot lie," he will surely perform all that he has promised. In heaven, before all worlds, he made a covenant with his Son and the Holy Ghost on behalf of a peculiar people. He will be faithful to that covenant. Such are his own words—"My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be

established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven." (Psalm 89:34-37.) Heaven and earth shall pass away, but God's everlasting covenant shall never pass away, for it is a covenant "ordered in all things and sure." Now, this covenant, made in eternity, he confirmed in time by an oath, as the Apostle speaks, "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee." (Heb. 6:13, 14.) This he did, as the Apostle declares, for the consolation of the heirs of promise: "For men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath." (Heb. 6:16, 17.) And not only did he swear unto Abraham, but he appointed his dear Son as the high priest over the house of God by oath, when he said unto him, "The Lord swore, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." (Heb. 7:21.) To that double oath he will be faithful, for if an oath is binding upon men, how much more will an oath be binding upon God? The faithfulness of God to his eternal counsel or covenant decree, and to his oath, are "the two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie;" in which we therefore "have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." (Heb. 6:18.)

2. But besides this there is the faithfulness of God to *his own work* upon the heart. Why did he begin that work but to complete it? Why did he call you by his grace but to give you fellowship with his dear Son? Having begun that work, nothing will ever move him from his determined purpose that his people whom he has called by his grace shall have fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. You may not be now enjoying it, or not yet have attained to that

distinguished favour; but he who has called you is faithful, and will renew it afresh, or bestow it in due time. And how we need this faithfulness! Many are the hindrances to this fellowship. Dark clouds gather over the mind; temptations assail the soul; sins vex and tease; backslidings draw aside and entangle; guilt presses hard and heavy; deadness and coldness chill and freeze; Satan harasses; the world allures; doubt and fear distress; the carnal mind frets and murmurs: all those inward evils are sad hindrances to communion, and are felt as such, in greater or less degree, by every Christian. Yet God is faithful, and will not suffer these hindrances wholly to prevent, though they may intercept fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

But God works by means, and it is through them for the most part that he maintains his work alive upon the soul. Prayer and supplication; reading the word; sweet meditation upon God's truth; hearing the preached gospel; communion with the family of God; watchfulness against besetting temptations; resisting Satan when he comes in like a flood; striving against all sin: these are certain means of God's providing; and the Lord is faithful in not only making his people to avail themselves of them, but blessing them in and by them.

May we not, then, well say, "God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord?" Here we rest our hopes—that God is faithful. Having called us by his grace, he will never suffer the work to be undone, marred by sin, and ruined by Satan. He will himself carry it on, and bring it to perfection; and giving us to enjoy whilst here below a taste of that sweet communion to which he called us when he quickened us into life by his blessed Spirit, he will complete it, when perfectly conformed to the image of Christ, the general assembly and church of the firstborn shall



enjoy eternal communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,  
the glorious Triune Lord God of Israel.