

Communion with the Love of God the Father

(1 John 1:1-4; Romans 5:8)

4 July 2010 (St Francis)

© Curtis I. Crenshaw 2010

¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— ² the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us— ³ that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have **fellowship** with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And these things we write to you that your joy may be full (1 John 1:1-4).

Introduction

Sometime we just need grace. Notice in the verses above, that we are said to have fellowship “with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” What does this mean?

I. Communion in the Trinity

We commune like the Trinity so let us consider how the persons of the Trinity commune with one another. To have communion there must be a relationship between the Persons, things in common, partaking of the same nature. Thus,

Communion with the Love of God the Father / 2

within God, there is one divine essence (same nature) and three persons in relationship.

In Islam, there is only one person so there can be no love with another person. Love requires an object and another person, and there is no object or person within Allah for him/it to love. And since we creatures are infinitely below him, we cannot have fellowship with him/it. There is an infinite gap between Allah and his/its creation.

In some other religions (Mormonism), the "Trinity" is thought of as three distinct individuals, one in purpose but three essences, and each with his own body or essence. If so, this would require three atonements and three ways to establish communion with each separately.

(What happens if the persons were just roll playing, which means there was only one person who was the Father, then later the Son, and then the Holy Spirit? We could not know God, for if the Son were not really the Son, and the Father not really the Father, then they were fake, and we don't know God. Likewise, if all we hear is about Jesus (and we can't hear about Him too much), and the Father is ignored, then we miss who God is, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and we miss the preciousness of this communion with the Persons of the Holy Trinity.)

But the Triune God is one in essence, not three essences, but three in Persons who made us in His image, which at least means the ability and the desire to have communion with Him. The human race fell into sin, but we still have the potential to have communion with Him if the sin question is addressed.

Communion with the Love of God the Father / 3

You know what it is like when you are at odds with someone you desperately love. It tears up your insides. The tenseness is in the air, as we say. The sweetness of fellowship, love, and communication is broken. Covenant is broken, or at least compromised. When that happens, we should seek to make it right as soon as possible. Relationships are the main thing in life, first with God and then with one another. We must maintain the sweetness of communion with one another and with God.

Recall one thing Christ said on the cross, which I've struggled to understand over the years: "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" What can that possibly mean? Whatever it is, it is the center of what happened on the cross for you and me. It cannot mean that the Father and Son broke in essence to form two gods. Moreover, some think that if the Son called the Father God, it would mean He (the Son) was not God. The whole Bible screams against that, and the Father calls the Son God in Hebrews 1:8. The expression reveals the judgment the Son took in our place, but does it mean that communion with the Father in some way was compromised?

At least it demonstrates the love of the Father for the Son, for if that love was not the greatest thing of all, the pain would not have been so severe to cause the Son to cry out. It also demonstrated that the Father had given the best He had for the world, and that pain was real, very real, as He took the penalty of sin for us. The great mystery is that God saved us from God. Again, it says that the Son, not the Father, died on the cross, for the Son experienced the pain, not the Father, so they are distinct, though not separate. Another thing is that if Father and Son had been two distinct individuals separated

by distinct essences, the pain would not have been so extreme, for the identification of the two Persons of the Holy Trinity contributed to the pain. If they had been completely separate, not one in essence, One would not have had complete empathy with the other One. Though God as God cannot suffer, yet there is something going on between Father and Son that is unique and intense. The Son in His humanity can and did suffer.

Thus **the atonement of the cross was the work of the Trinity**, and here is one verse that demonstrates that:

¹³ For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Hebrews 9:13-14; one could also read Ephesians 1:3-14 where we read that the Father chose us, the Son redeemed us, and the Holy Spirit applies the merits of the Son to us.)

Thus what happened on the cross was the work of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The expression "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me" does **not mean that the Father disapproved** what the Son was doing, for His death on the cross was the very reason He sent His Son into the world.

The statement does **not mean that the Son was in despair over the outcome**, for He was the lamb slain before the foundation of the world so that the outcome was certain.

But in this context of extreme bodily and mental anguish “My God, My God” perhaps emphasizes the judgment under which He was suffering. Here is the purest being who has ever existed, so He cries out to Him as “My God,” the one He trusted, the One who had never failed Him, the One to whom He “committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously” (1 Peter 2:23).

Was the sweet communion broken for a moment in time between Father and Son? If so, it just demonstrates how important that communion is between the persons of the Holy Trinity and between us and God and between us and one another. It is everything.

II. We Are in God’s Image

Since we are made in God’s image, we are made to desire communion, relationship, things in common with other humans. **Solitary confinement** is a terrible punishment and contrary to our human natures. We have the same human nature as the first man, Adam, which means that like him in the garden, we have the capacity to commune with God and with one another. Our divine image cries out for this dual communion, but sin has destroyed it. Since we’re in His image, we can potentially commune with Him with our souls, minds, using thoughts, words, love, faith, but this relationship must also be in holiness and agreement:

Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?
(Amos 3:3)¹

¹ The translation is debated, but the NKJ has the basic idea.

The “My God, My God” that is broken communion with God is restored by the Son who took that penalty for us. If communion is broken with God, it is also compromised with one another so we fight and war among ourselves; conversely, if we are at odds with one another, our relationship with God is compromised. Indeed, we are forbidden to worship God until we are reconciled with our brother (Matthew 5:23-24).

Because there is communion and love between the Father and Son, and because we partake of His image and nature, we intensely desire communion with them and with one another. This is what makes marriage so potentially wonderful. Christians have oneness with God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that becomes the basis for oneness with our spouse. The spiritual oneness must be the basis for the physical oneness; otherwise, we make other humans the definition of what it means to be human. If we just behold other humans, we turn inward and become twisted.

This is what makes **modern worship so potentially dangerous**, for people gather to behold one another, not the Triune God. **One becomes what he worships**, and if worship is all about me, I become distorted, and love is turned inward. It is as we behold Christ that we become like Him:

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:18).

That is why I emphasize Him so much and why the BCP emphasizes God so much, to keep our focus on Him.

So how can we have a relationship with God who is so different from us and infinitely above us even if we are in His image?

III. The Incarnation

Enter the Son of God and the Incarnation. He was (and is) God's peer with oneness of nature with the Father, and He is our peer by oneness of nature with us. Moreover, if His human and divine nature were not connected in anyway, if He were two persons, one human and the other divine, nothing would be solved, for we would only have two persons in moral cooperation with one another. But since He is one person, now we have communion with One who is equal to us in His humanity but also can carry us to God, so to speak, as one who is equal to Him. So we have communion with the Father through the Son who mediates to us the Father's love from Him through His own deity and to us through identification with our humanity.

Since we partook of flesh and blood, the divine Son of God did the same (Hebrews 2:14-18) so that He might deliver us from Satan but even more that we might be one with Him. Through the one and only mediator, we commune with God. (We do not need a mediator to take us to the mediator, such as Mary.)

So in this text of 1 John at the beginning of this sermon, we see that we have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. How so? God is light, holiness, but the Son has died for our sins, thus **we come to the Father's love by**

His Son. Through the gift of the divine Son who is also now man, the **Father's love is communicated to us:**

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

⁹ In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:9-10).

The Father has communicated His love to us by the gift of His Son. We in turn communicate ourselves to Him by responding to His love in obedience, in faith, in humble submission, pursuing holiness of life. Notice again what John says:

that you also may have **fellowship** with us; and truly our **fellowship** is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

One cannot sustain a relationship with Him by physical absence from His presence in worship. Likewise, one cannot sustain a marriage by physical absence, as witnessed by many celebrities who divorce when they are not together.

To have fellowship with the Apostles and their doctrine is to have fellowship with God. In other words, we come to God through Christ, whom we learn of from the Apostles,

and especially as the word is broken in our corporate worship, and the Apostles are the foundation stones for the Church.

We cannot benefit from worship unless we are there. It is the incarnational principle: physical presence. Thus God became physically present with us in the Incarnation. Moreover, we must be physically present to Him in corporate worship: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” (Hebrews 10:25).

IV. Communion with the Persons of the Trinity

Communion with God is with all three persons together. The Lord said:

Jesus answered and said to him, “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” (John 14:23).

We go to the Father by the merits of the Son as we are enabled by the Holy Spirit.

So the Father expresses His love **to** us by the giving of His Son **for** us. We respond to Him in faith, love, obedience, and love. We commune with Him by receiving His care for us in every area of life, but His highest love to us is in the giving of His Son.

The **Son expresses His love to us** by His death and resurrection for us (Hebrews 12:2), in giving Himself for us. He is the one who is our mediator, who takes us to the Father, who shed His divine blood (Acts 20:28) so that we are acceptable to the Father. We respond by trusting in the death and resur-

rection of Jesus Christ, by trusting in His blood for us, by confessing our sins. We give ourselves totally to the Father, resting in Him as our sustainer, our supplier of all our needs, physically and spiritually. We walk with Him by faith in a covenant that was ratified by the blood of Jesus.

The **Holy Spirit** is the One who enables us to go to the Father through the Son, who supplies us with grace (Philippians 2:13), who applies the merits of the Son to us (Ephesians 1:13-14), who testifies to us of the Son (John 16:7-11, 13, 14).

But **we commune with all three simultaneously**, and it can't be otherwise. For there is only one God, not three.

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees to the **Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ that **Christ** may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— ¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:14-19).

Here is an example of how this is done. In the knowledge that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit make their abode with the soul (2 Corinthians 13:14), that the Father has supplied all that we need, **we rest** in His mercy and care. So

when trials come, such as money trials, death in a family, we know that since He has given us the greatest—His Son—thus He will give us all lesser things (Romans 8:31-39). If a loved one has died, we know that He raised His Son, so we can be sure the loved one in Christ will be raised and is even now in the presence of the Son Incarnate.

More specifically, regarding the Father:

“Father, I have lost my job, and by the merits of Your Son, I ask you to intervene. I know that you love me, for you gave me your Son. Therefore, please supply ‘this day, our daily bread.’ These things I ask in the Name of your only Son, whose merits I have by faith in Him.”

“Father, you know that I was sorely tempted today with an old sin, which I fell into once again. I know that it grieves you, for it grieves me. I know that I’m not supposed to do that so I confess it as sin, and ask you to forgive and cleanse me (1 John 1:9). Moreover, I ask that you enable me by your Holy Spirit to overcome this, whose power is mine through your only begotten Son, in whose name alone I pray.”

“O holy Father, today was a wonderful day for me, and I thank you for it. I pray that you would help me to rejoice in your goodness that is offered to me daily as your Son intercedes for me. Help me so to rest in your providence that I will not be fearful of whatever you send me, knowing that ‘all things work together for good’”(Romans 8:28).

Here are some passages regarding the Father and the Son and our communion with Them:

⁹ If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. ¹⁰ He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. ¹¹ And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue to* believe in the name of the Son of God. ¹⁴ Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us (1 John 5:9-14).

²² Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. ²³ Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. ²⁴ Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father (1 John 2:22-24).

There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).

Communion with the Love of God the Father / 13

We are in the Son, who in turn is in the Father (John 14:20); conversely, the Father is in Christ and Christ in us (John 17:23).

Here are some passages to meditate on regarding the whole Trinity:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit *be* with you all. Amen. (2 Corinthians 13:14).

⁴ John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come [the Father], and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne [Holy Spirit], ⁵ and from Jesus Christ [Son], the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶ and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 1:4-6)

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)

For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father (Ephesians 2:18).

Now until we receive the Father's love, we have no communion with Him. We receive it by faith in Jesus, who in turn leads us to the Father:

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me (John 14:1).

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

We return the Father's love, for He initiates, and we respond:

"We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

Thus, we see the Father's love, and we return it. We delight in the Father as Father, in His sovereign love for us, and we respond to that. In fact, one of the characteristics of love is that it initiates. The Father is called Father in relation to the Son, and He gives Himself to the Son fully in love. The Son is called Son in relation to the Father, and He gives Himself to the Father in loving obedience. Neither Father nor Son are ever said to love themselves but the other. Likewise, human fathers must love their wives as Christ loved the church, and then the wives will respond accordingly.

The Father's love for us is unconditional, original, incapable of improvement, manifested in the gift of His Son to us. The Father had no need to love us since He and the Son and the Holy Spirit have had perfect love from all eternity, and we did not draw His love out of Him; rather, He freely gave it. Therefore, it will not diminish. If His love depended on our response, He would love us one day and not the next, for we are fickle and sinful. But since it depends on who He is—not

on who we are—it is constant, the same yesterday, today, and forever. The Father chose to love us based on who He is, and since He cannot change, His love for us does not change.

Conclusion

Now let's make some other applications. Christ did not win the Father's love, but He manifested it (Romans 5:8).

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him (1 John 3:1).

To be "called children of God" means that He calls us to be His children by His sovereign grace, not that we are just named "children," though that is true also.

- Our hearts must be toward God the Father who is full of love for us that is free, eternal, original by sovereign choice, demonstrative in the giving of His Son, and is immutable because that is His nature.
- When we are angry at circumstances, frustrated with God for not giving us what we want, it is very sinful.
- When we doubt His love for us, which means we doubt His word as written in His love letters to us in Holy Scripture, we doubt His goodness. Satan tempted Eve to doubt God's goodness when he said that God was holding out on her, that He really knew that she would be like Him if she ate the

forbidden fruit, and could be her own god. For example, if we become ill over the loss or potential loss of our toys, it demonstrates that we love them more than Him, and covetousness is idolatry, which He will not allow in His children.

- It pleases God the Father that we hold Him accountable for meeting our needs, for it means we are resting content in His gracious love, which He delights to do.

Our security, therefore, in life is not in our bank accounts, not in our retirement programs, as good as those things may be in themselves, but **our security is in the Father's love for us**. With that love, come what may, we are content, secure, trusting, resting, peaceful. He has given us the Son; all else is thrown in. Whatever the cares of the world, the trials of life, the removal of fortunes, the death of loved ones, with the Father's love manifested to us by the giving of His Son, with our love returned to Him through His Son, and by the Holy Spirit's enabling, we are in communion with Him. What else matters?

The Father loves the Son, the Son loves the Father, and the Holy Spirit communicates that love between them.

Likewise, the Father loves us by the giving of the Son, we love the Father through the Son, and the Holy Spirit communicates that love between us all. **AMEN.**