

Series: Communion With The Triune God #1607

Title: 2 Corinthians 13.14

The Trinity

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. I want to speak with you, for a few days, about enjoying communion with God. I want to speak pastorally (also biblically, theologically). And obviously here I speak to those of you who believe in the God of the Bible, the One True and Everlasting God. You, like me, believe in Him, you love and serve Him, through your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who is God's Son, our Savior from sin. The sin that kept us out of communion with God, Jesus has forgiven and taken away. So let us, the forgiven people of the Living God, think together about the content of our communion with Him.

By "communion" I *primarily* mean fellowship, intimacy, relationship, the conversation and the listening we have with God. I mean prayer. By "communion" I do *not* primarily mean the Lord's Supper – which in many traditions is called Communion. Of course Communion, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is certainly a *part* of how we commune with God, but we are focusing on the engagement of our daily walk with the Lord in His presence. You will see more of what I mean as we proceed. Please do plan to be with us each weekday at this same time on this fine station and/or visit our website and get each day's free God Is Podcast. Visit godisministry.org, that's godisministry.o-r-g. And when you subscribe to the podcast on the homepage, you will have this downloaded automatically to your phone or tablet each week. Godisministry.org.

What we are going to do is follow, a little bit, the theology and the practical piety of one of the Puritans. His name is John Owen and his work of particular interest is titled *Communion with God*. Let me tell you a little bit about him, since if you already know him you will enjoy hearing this again and if you have never heard of John Owen you will be able to put him into his proper historical context. He was born in 1616 near Oxford, England. He died in 1683. He was highly intelligent and a deeply committed student. Even throughout his teenage years he was known to study eighteen to twenty hours *a day*. Parents of teenagers: do your sons and daughters study 18-20 hours *per day*? Do any of us study those many hours in a day? Owen did.

Joel Beeke and Randall Pederson, in their book *Meet the Puritans*, say that at the age of twenty-six Owen began a forty-one year writing span that produced more than eighty works. Many of those would become classics and be greatly used by God. The 1650s were his most productive years, a period of which he served as vice chancellor of Oxford University. But he was no dry academic – which you will know if or when you read him. He endured sadness and trials in his life, as all of God's servants do. For example, of the eleven children born to him and his wife only one daughter survived into adulthood (and she died not long into her adult years). That's a lot of death and sorrow for any parent to endure. Towards the end of his life he suffered so much from asthma and gallstones that he could no longer preach. These difficulties informed and shaped his preaching and his writing.

And write he did! His works have been preserved for us. They come in a whopping sixteen volumes! Thankfully, much of that has been parsed out into softcover, shorter, readable books – such as books on the mortification of sin and overcoming temptation as well as justification by faith alone. One of his classics has the title *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*. (*The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*.) I recommend him to you. J.I. Packer, of more recent times, in his excellent work bringing to life for us the Puritans, wrote this about John Owen's less well known but brilliant book *Biblical Theology* (I am quoting Packer now),

"All the qualities we expect of Owen – the focus on God, the passion for Christ, the honoring of the Holy Spirit, the shattering depth of insight into human sinfulness and perversity, the concern for holiness, the radical view of regeneration, the vision of the church as a spiritual fellowship that worships, the distrust of philosophical schemes and styles for dealing with divine things, the celebration of God's wisdom in giving the Scriptures in the form in which we have them – all are seen here. The present treatise is vintage Owen, searching and spiritual, devotional and doxological, the product of a masterful mind and a humble heart." Close quote. J.I. Packer has captured John Owen for us.

His writing in *Communion with God* gives to us a gift, because in it he focuses on the Trinity. God is Triune. The Trinity is the doctrine that God is One and yet exists eternally in Three Persons. God is One and He exists as Father, as Son, and as Holy Spirit. Let me say that again. The Trinity is the doctrine that God is One and yet exists eternally in Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Let me be clear: this is not a series or a teaching on the Trinity. Sometime we shall do that, but not now. I am taking it as a given that God is Triune, He is Three Persons in One: God is Father, God is Son, and God is Spirit. What is then said about our communion with the God who exists eternally in Three Persons, this is what interests us at present. I trust you understand and you are with me.

The doctrine of the Trinity was foundational to John Owen. Sinclair Ferguson, one of today's best theologians, calls Owen a (quote), "deeply Trinitarian theologian." And again Joel Beeke and Mark Jones, in their great book *A Puritan Theology: A Doctrine for Life* write that "Owen asserted that if you take away the doctrine of the Trinity, 'the foundation of all fruits of love and goodness is lost to the soul.' (101)." So the Trinity is always foundational to Owen.

And we might ask, "How does Owen define the Trinity?" Great question! Listen to him answer, quote, "that God is one; that this one God is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that the Father is the Father of the Son; and the Son, the Son of the Father; and the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of the Father and the Son; and that, in respect of this their mutual relations, they are distinct from each other (*A Puritan Theology: A Doctrine for Life*, 102)." He added that "God had revealed Himself as the Trinity so that [we] would walk with [God] in obedience, love, fear, and happiness as [God] required of [us] (102)."

And here is what I find very practical and most helpful to us: Owen saw the Trinity as fundamental to saving faith in Christ and profitable for the spiritual experience of believers. In fact, "Owen viewed Christian experience as communion with the mysterious God (102)." And there is the connection. The Trinity is *not* abstract. The Trinity is *not* impersonal, detached from us, theoretical, and non-realistic! Friends, we live in daily communion with the Triune God.

Let me give you a few more thoughts here. In a key doctrinal statement developed in 1658 known as the Savoy Declaration, which John Owen influenced, we read, "The doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence upon Him." There you hear again the interplay between the Trinity and communion with God. And what did Owen mean by having fellowship or communion with God? Beeke and Peterson say, quote, "It is the mutual exchange of spiritual benefits between God and His people based on the bond between them in Christ (102)."

I will say more about this next time, but let me give that to you again so you can think about this throughout today and tonight. What does it mean to have communion with the Triune God? It is the mutual exchange of spiritual benefits between God and His people based on the bond between them in Christ. Brothers and sisters, we are bound together with God *in* Jesus Christ. And we gain our greatest benefits from God through Christ. And yes, we then bless God through Christ. We return unto God the faith, the love, the praise, the adoration, and the devotion that pleases Him. This is the obedience that Christ has taught and is teaching us unto *God*. Indeed, there is a mutual exchange.

Are you living in communion with God? Do you know God intimately as your Father, as Jesus His Son, and as the Holy Spirit who lives within you and upon whom you are dependent? When you pray do you relate to each Person in the Godhead in a deeply personal way? As we talk about having communion with the Triune God I hope you will join me in practicing a daily meditation with God who is Three-in-One.

Well, we are off to a good start. So much more needs to be said, and Lord willing, *will* be said beginning next time when you join me and all these other listeners as we continue to discover who God is!

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