

Series: Communion With The Triune God #1609

Title: 2 Corinthians 13.14; 1 John 4.8, 16
God Is Love

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. Welcome back. We are talking about having communion with the Triune God and to do this we have fallen under the instruction and the conviction of the Puritan John Owen and his work with the title *Communion with God*. And thus far we have learned that by communion or fellowship with God Owen means the mutual exchange of spiritual benefits between God and His people based on the bond between us and Christ. And this communion exists between us Christians and the Triune God – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is the doctrine that God is One and yet exists eternally in these Three Persons.

Furthermore, Owen learned from Augustine that communion with God is the enjoyment and the delight in the Triune God. Both of these men, our much older brothers in the faith, enjoyed their communion with God who is Father, Son, and Spirit. And we want to learn how to do the same. As J.I. Packer puts it, “Communion with God is a relationship in which Christians receive love from, and respond in love to, all three Persons of the Trinity (*A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life*, 204).” Let me say that again. Communion with God is a relationship in which Christians receive love from, and respond in love to, all three Persons of the Trinity. Wow. I desire this and I hope you do too!

Now, before we look at our relationship to each member of the Trinity, how God relates to us and how we relate to Him as Father and as Son and as Holy Spirit, we have to be careful about something. We have to make certain that we uphold the unity of the Godhead. Let me quote again from our guides to Owen, Joel Beeke and Mark Jones as they write, “Owen carefully guarded the unity of the Godhead by clarifying that distinct communion is not exclusive communion with any one person, but communion primarily *appropriated* by that person according to his distinct property and role (*A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life*, 103).”

So by Person we mean that God the Father is One Person in the Trinity. God the Son is One Person in the Trinity. God the Holy Spirit is One Person in the Trinity. By “person” we do not mean a person like you and I are persons. Person is simply the best word we (persons!) have to describe each one of these when we talk about the Trinity with our *very* limited vocabulary and knowledge. Think of what Owen says this way. When I am enjoying sweet fellowship with God the Father – while He is my focus – always, at the same time, simultaneously because of the nature of God, because God is One, I am still in fellowship likewise with the Son and the Spirit. I am never in *exclusive* fellowship with the Father even though in that instant I am enjoying what the Father distinctly offers me according to His role.

Or, when in prayer, you are focusing on God the Son, who is Jesus Christ, you are enjoying what the Son distinctly offers you according to His role within the Trinity. You are not in *exclusive* fellowship with Jesus only because Jesus is God and God is One. And when any of us are enjoying sweet union with the Holy Spirit we benefit from what He distinctly offers us according to the Spirit’s role in the Trinity, but we cannot separate Him out from the Father and the Son because the Holy Spirit is God and God is One. Do you see what I mean? When we get God we get *all of God always*.

Should your mind be in a bit of a twist at this point, two thoughts. One, no one is blaming you! What feeble minded human is up to the task of easily comprehending the Trinity? None! Two, do not turn to another radio station or stop this podcast. Hold on...we are about to focus on each member of the Trinity one by one, and that will help you grasp what is now being said. The point I want to make here is that – be careful! – God is One. Guard the unity of the Godhead in your thinking (in your theology) and in your own heart. At the same time, do not be afraid of relating to each Person of the Trinity. *Do* relate to each one in a distinctly personal way.

Those of us struggling in our prayer life, this can be transformational for us. Those of us enjoying great fruitfulness in our prayer life, this can likewise encourage us and continue to help us grow. This teaching is practical and applicable to our lives. In prayer, in meaningful, biblical, thoughtful meditation before God we want to focus on all Three Persons. And we can continue to learn from John Owen who experienced the Three Persons as such. Let's begin with his text, which is also ours. 2 Corinthians chapter 13 and verse 14. Listen to how the Apostle Paul signs off in his second letter to the church at Corinth. This is 2 Corinthians 13, verse 14: **"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen."**

Ah, therein Paul writes of the Trinity in his blessing upon those who read his letter then and now. He begins with the Son (the Lord Jesus Christ) and then God (meaning the Father) and then the Holy Spirit. There is the Trinity: Father, Son and Spirit. The Three in One. This is the final verse in 2 Corinthians and what a way to end. This tells us that Paul Himself enjoyed communion with each Person in the Trinity when he prayed and when he wrote what is now Scripture. Picking up on this verse, John Owen reflects, communion with the Father is *love*. Communion with the Son is *grace*. And communion with the Holy Spirit is *comfort*. So that in our own prayer with the Father we experience love, with the Son grace, and with the Spirit comfort. See! I told you this was practical, and very, very helpful.

We begin with God the Father and in communion with the Father we receive love. We believers enjoy God's love freely, undeservedly, and eternally. Where do we find this in the Scripture? In several texts, actually. For example, in 1 John chapter 4 and verses 8 and 16 the Apostle tell us this: **"God is love."** That is quite a statement. God *is* love. Of course, as we read all of Scripture it is obvious that God is *more* than love. God has many attributes of which love is one. God is more than love, but He is not less than love. In the core of His being, true to the nature and character of who He is, God is love.

As the time came for my wife and I to be married it was very important to both of us that we acknowledge, honor, respect and worship our heavenly Father as part of our wedding and associated festivities. We love Him and we have many friends and family, who would be with us on that special occasion, who do not love God. And so there were various ways in which we testified publicly to who God is. But there is something we did that was done quietly and privately that no one knew about. Although I am about to tell *you* about this. When it came time to buy wedding rings we directed the jeweller to do this: on the inside of each of our wedding bands we had these words engraved: "God is love."

If you looked down at my wedding ring today you would not know that on the inside, on the underside of the ring, closest to the skin on my finger are engraved the words from 1 John 4: God is love. Same for my wife. Why did we have the rings engraved as such? There were several reasons, but one of the primary reasons was (is) this: we wanted to be reminded every day that God, our heavenly Father, loves us. He loves us as individuals and He loves us together as one flesh. The primary reason that I love my wife and my wife loves me is because Father God first loved us. Without His love, we would not and we cannot love one another, at least not with the highest and purest form of love – God's love.

Twice in 1 John chapter 4 we read, "God is love," because, well because God *is* love. And this love comes pouring forth from the heart of God the Father. And next time we will look at a couple of other Scripture verses that reveal God as One who loves, deeply, thoroughly, wholeheartedly. But as we soon come to a close, I want to invite you, in your times of prayer this day and this night, commune with God the Father who is love. Focus on this First Person of the Trinity and receive His love for *you*. Do so, and then join us again next time as we continue to discover who this God of love is!

---END---