

Series: Communion With The Triune God #1611

Title: 2 Corinthians 13:14; John 14:21, 23
God Loving Us, Us Loving God

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. It is good to have you here. We are talking about enjoying communion with the Triune God. God who is One existing eternally in Three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And our communion, our prayer, with Him. Here, we are following the penetrating and practical insights of the Puritan John Owen and his work *Communion with God*. During this series I am quoting from him and a couple of other very helpful resources. So, when we finished last time I reminded you that you have free access to my manuscripts from which you can easily get each quotation word for word.

In fact, I encourage you to have my manuscript in front of you and to read along as you listen, either by radio or the podcast or both! To get this manuscript all you have to do is visit godisministry.org. That's godisministry.org. On the homepage just find the episode you want, then click the link for "read along" and the script will be there. This is especially useful for those of you who are visual learners as well as for note takers who don't quite have the time to catch everything I say the first time around. We are trying to do everything we can to make the content here on *God Is* easy to capture, remember, and apply to your life. I hope this is beneficial to you. Please visit our website today: godisministry.org and tell others about this, as well.

Owen's text and also our text is 2 Corinthians chapter 13 and 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.**" 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. We have started with the Father's love for us and last time I pointed out that first, God loves us *freely*. That is, "He loves us because He will; there was, there is, nothing in us for which we should be beloved (*Communion with God*, 33-34)."

Second, the Father does not love us because He was somehow lonely or needy. I am quoting Owen now, "It is the love of Him (God) who is in Himself all-sufficient, infinitely satiated with Himself and His own glorious excellencies and perfections; who hath no need to go forth with His love unto others, nor to seek an object of it [outside] Himself... (2:32)." Third, God the Father's love is unchangeable. How re-assuring this is! Our heavenly Father loves us and He always loves us – consistently, unchangingly.

It is important to be reminded of this, as we now bridge this to what we want to say today. One of the essential ways that we experience the love our heavenly Father has for us is when we return our love to Him. And we do this in prayer. Owen says, "In receiving the Father's love through Christ, the believer returns the Father's love in his heart to the heart of the Father, from whom it originated. This returned love consists of rest, delight, reverence, and obedience (*Communion with God*, 2:28)." That's such a rich thought. When we pray do we rest in our Father's love for us? Do we delight in His love?

To do this requires that we not rush our prayers, doesn't it? Resting and delighting in this unfathomable love that God has for those of us who believe in His Son Jesus. We offer Him our rest and our delight. Practically, this means we bring before Him those worries and fears that make us rest-less. Because He loves us, we can rest in Him. "Lord, we give to You all our worries and fears and we rest in your abundant love for us." And this means we delight in Him through our worship and our praise and thanksgiving. "Lord, how we love You." Let us be still and quiet in communion with our loving God. Let us give Him the *time* – our best time – and let us not be easily distracted as we meditate on His love for us and as we return our love to Him in rest and delight.

Owen continues, "This returned love [of ours] consists of...reverence and obedience."

There is also this dimension to our communion with God the Father. How do Christians best return the love we have in our hearts to our Father who is in heaven? We do so when we revere Him and when we obey Him. Listen to the words of Jesus speaking in John chapter 14, beginning with verse 21, **“He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.”** Notice carefully what Christ has said. The one who loves Him is the one who has His commandments and keeps them. That is obedience. And the one who loves Jesus will be loved by His Father, who is God. And Jesus loves the one who obeys Him. So, if we want demonstrate our love for our Father, we revere and obey Him. This is what Owen is saying, and I agree. In fact, down in verse 23 of John 14 Jesus reiterates, quote, **“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.”**

That is all so profound. When we love Jesus, we keep His word. We obey Him. And God the Father loves us and the Father and the Son come to us and make their abode with us! They live with us. This truth is so intense I hardly know what to say. This is overwhelming love from God to us, and notice God best receives our love through our reverence for and obedience to Him. Let me put it this way: how does God know we love Him? Answer: we obey His Son Jesus. John chapter 14, verses 21 and 23.

But this raises a practical problem we sometimes face. We can call this an obstacle in receiving love from our heavenly Father and returning our love to our heavenly Father. Isn't it true that some days we do not feel God loves us, and we have difficulty receiving His love for us? What do we do when we feel *unloved* by our Father? And then when we feel *unloved* we have this poor tendency not to return our love to our Father. This is when we often do not pray, missing communion with our Father. Well, as it turns out, even though he was living and writing in the 17th century, John Owen wrestled with this and bequeathed to us encouragement in the 21st century.

He has three practical solutions. First, we must remember that God first loved us. 1 John 4.19, **“We love, because He first loved us.”** Owen admonishes us: we must not invert God's love, thinking that our love for God comes first. As we established last time, God loves us because He wills to love us. And since God the Father loved us when we were at our worst, separate and apart from Him, sinking in the quicksand of our sin, dying in our trespasses, why would we imagine that He does not love us now that we've been saved by Jesus? When we have those days when we do not feel loved and when we do not return our love to God, we must pause and think rightly about this: God first loved us. This will correct our attitude.

Second, Owen says we should “meditate on the eternal quality and unchangeableness of the Father's love (2:29).” This takes us back to what was said earlier: God the Father's love is unchangeable. We change. We are moody. We are up and down. We are inconsistent. We eagerly and earnestly commune with God one day but not the next. One hour but not the next! One minute but not the next! We sometimes express deep love for Him, sometimes only a little love, and sometimes none at all. *But*, God's love for us is unchanging. Just because we *feel unloved*, does not mean we are *unloved*. We must always subject our feelings to the facts of who God is. He is love and His love for us is unchanging. Contemplating this will correct our attitude.

Third, we “should remember that the cross of Christ is the sign and the seal of God's love (2:29)...” Friends, when we are having one of those days when we encounter an obstacle to God loving us and us loving God, it is imperative that we look to the cross of Christ. And when we stare at that splintered wood on which He was nailed for the full forgiveness of our sins – where He died so we would not have to – ah then, this will correct our attitude. The cross proves God's love. As a friend to me (Lucille says), “Keep looking to Jesus.”

God, our heavenly Father, loves us. And next time we will see that Jesus Christ is gracious to us. Join us then because God Is.

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