

Front Page - 2016 07

Fellowship With God

Introduction

Living in this world of the five senses (touch, taste, smell, hearing, and sight), we are able to have fellowship with those whom we see or at least know by voice, but it can be exceedingly difficult to live in the consciousness of the abiding presence of God.

Our busyness from day-to-day and dealing with the normal affairs of life, and even being totally dedicated to the work we have for God, it would seem to me that for so much of life, fellowship with God is theoretical. We believe it, when we pray we act as if we really believe it, yet in the reading of the Scriptures, in praying, and in trying to worship, God is so far removed from the world in which I live. Fellowship with God is never easy for one has to be liberated from the enticements, attitudes, and enthrallment's of the world in order to learn what it is to have true deep fellowship with God. Therefore, God brings into our lives experiences which very often we would rather not have. We need to experience them so that we can learn more deeply the reality of God, eternity, and a fellowship with God. Consider the following:

- 1) After a day of serving about 5000 men plus women and children (Jn. 6:10; Matt. 14:21), the disciples must have longed for a restful evening and night. Knowing the desire of the people to make Him king and how easily swayed the disciples would have been, the Lord instructs them to go to the other side of the lake. Having sent the disciples and multitude away, He went up into a mountain to pray. No doubt the disciples saw something that day which far eclipsed anything else they had ever seen, that being, the wonderful ability of Christ to provide food for all who were there. It was a day they would never forget, working with the Lord in being the channel to supply nourishment for the needy. As they crossed the lake a storm came, and in the midst of the darkness and boisterous waves the disciples suddenly became afraid. That which caused the fear was not the stormy waves, but something that they had never ever seen before, and would never see again. There, through the darkness, came a shadowy figure walking on the storm tossed waves. It was the Lord facing the same contrary wind as they faced (Matt. 14:24; Mk. 6:48), but walking on the storm tossed sea as if it was dry land. In the darkness, in the frightening circumstances and in a most unexpected way, they were given an understanding and an appreciation of the person of Christ, they could never have gotten had they been on dry land and had there not been the stormy waves. That storm was necessary, the conditions they were in were necessary for this new revelation of Christ. In our storm tossed lives and when everything seems so uncontrollable, then in the most unexpected ways the Lord draws near and we learn Him in a new way.
- 2) Mary and Martha had to learn the dark experience of death in the family before they could learn the fullness of Christ is the resurrection. In both these instances, the disciples and Mary and Martha entered into a deeper fellowship with the Lord which they had never known before. I recall my Uncle Marshall speaking with me some time after Auntie Jean died, saying, "Rowan, in those days the Lord was so real and comforting, I wish I could have those days again". He learnt the friendship of God in a deeper way, but had to go through the valley.

The Aspiration Of The Psalmist

I understand Psalm 25 to be written after David had known sore trials and the futility of depending on man or circumstances just to change. Destitute of any help from others, he looks to the only secure strength he knows and writes Psalm 25. He will write two statements which every individual who has come to crisis points in their life begins to experience. It is the pathway to fellowship with God.

- a) The first expression is: "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul" (Psa. 25:1). It is not the first time he writes such, for reading through the Psalms it will be observed that the statement has already been used. "Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name" (Psa. 18:49), and he will speak in the same way again in Psalm 62:12; 69:13; 86:4, 8; 101:1; 130:1; and 143:5).
- b) The second phrase he writes is: "Mine eyes are ever towards the LORD" (Psa. 25:15). This is the only time this expression is found in the scriptures.

The Primary Foundations

The Psalmist does not just tell of His desires but knowing that other hearts would yearn with the same desires, he informs others of the attitudes that are needed for such a high level of spiritual desire. Before contemplating the words of the Psalmist, there is a pre-condition the inspired apostle John told the saints about before there can be such a desire. Precisely he writes: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (1 Jn. 1:3, 4). It cannot be too much stressed, fellowship with the Father and the Son is dependent on and restricted to the writings of either Old or New Testament writings.

Furthermore, there must be transparency before God for He is Light and there needs to be the confession of sin and a willingness to have it exposed to the conscience by the Spirit of God. Those who ignore the scriptures always go astray for they are the "scriptures of truth" (Dan. 10:21), and any deviation leads to error. God wants us to be in a teachable spirit, and only then can an individual present the threefold prayer of Psa. 25:4-5. In his prayer the Psalmist asks the Lord: "Show me thy ways"; "Teach me thy paths"; and "Lead me in thy truth, and teach me". Interestingly he asks for God to teach him twice, but there is a difference. The second one is because there is an advancement in the pathway, and knowing the leading of the Lord, he desires to be taught more of His ways.

The New Testament is always exhorting us to develop spiritually. There will be written: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18); "Therefore as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also" (2 Cor. 8:7); "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment" (Phil. 1:9).

As I said at the beginning, for a deepening fellowship with God, there must be brought into our lives difficult experiences, for in them there is manifested whether the individual has the spirit of meekness that the Psalm speaks about in verse nine where he writes: "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way" (Psa. 25:9). The Lord, when giving the Beatitudes, said the following words: "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3). The haughty spirit that acts in defiance and disregard to the Scriptures will never know what it is to have fulness of fellowship with God. The injunction from the ancient scriptures still stands true: "What doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Deut. 10:12); and again, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, ~~ommon~~ but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic. 6:8)

For an individual to walk in fellowship with God, Psalm chapter 26 informs us of four characteristics of men that will be avoided:

- a) "I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers" (v.4)
- b) "I have hated the congregation of evildoers; and will not sit with the wicked" (v.5).

It could be said that "vain persons" are those who treat with lightness and casualness the divine and eternal matters. It is the opposite to having a reverential fear of God. Dissemblers are those who, with an intentional malice, are determined to hold the spirit of maliciousness. Evildoers are those who live with the intention of wickedness, the opposite of being good, and the wicked are those who live in non-subjection to the word of God, the opposite of obedience to the Scriptures.

Although David had these great aspirations, yet he recognized that he was far from being perfect in the sight of God. Therefore, he will pray: "Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart" (Psa. 26:2). The Lord himself very distinctly taught that despite outward appearances and pseudo spirituality, by the keeping of the law and human traditions, there was something deeper needed. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). For an ever deepening fellowship with God there must be purity of motives, goals, and heart attitude before God (Matt. 5:20; 6:1-18). Thank God there has been a man on

Front Page - 2016 07
Fellowship With God

this earth who lived in perfect fellowship with God. His every movement was in unbroken fellowship with God every moment of every day, whether in public or private, a life of absolute transparency and perfection before God. Consequently, He knew what it was to live in the deepest fellowship of God. God was not theoretical to Him, eternity was not theoretical to Him, He lived in the consciousness of God breathing the rarefied air of the divine presence.

Can we live, to a degree, in that same consciousness? We can if our attitudes and aspirations are in fellowship with God, but if our attitude is that of indifference to the Scriptures, our aspirations will be the seeking to satisfy the flesh by getting or doing things contrary to him. In such a case, the individual will never know what it is to have deep fellowship with God as a Friend.

May God give us a heart that longs to be such and an attitude that it says to the Lord: "I lift up my soul and mine eyes are ever toward thee".

. . . . Rowan Jennings