

Fellowship With God

A Sermon

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“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.”—1 John 1:3.

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD was one of the richest privileges of unfallen man. The Lord God walked in the garden and talked with Adam as a man talketh with his friend. So long as he was willing and obedient, Adam ate the fat of the land, and among the rich dainties and “wines on the lees well refined,” of which his soul was a partaker, we must number first and foremost, unbroken communion with God, his Father and his Friend. Sin, as it banished man from Eden, banished man from God, and from that time *our* face has been turned from the Most High, and *his* face has been turned from us;—we have hated God, and God has been angry with us every day. Christ came into the world to restore to us our lost patrimony. It was the great object of his wondrous sacrifice to put us into a position which should be equal and even superior to that which we occupied in Adam before the fall, and as he has already restored to us many things that we lost, so among the rest—fellowship with God. They who have by his grace believed, and have by the precious blood been washed, have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord, they are “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God,” and they have access with boldness into this grace wherein we stand. So they who are in the kingdom, and under the dispensation of the second Adam, have restored to them in all its fullness that fellowship which was lost to them by the sin and disobedience of their first federal head. John was among the number of those who had enjoyed this privilege with Christ in his flesh. He had been Christ’s chosen companion, elect out of the elect to a choice and peculiar privilege. During the incarnation, he was one of the favored three who had enjoyed the closest intimacy with the Redeemer; he had seen Christ in his transfiguration, had witnessed the raising of the dead maid, had been with the Lord in the garden, and he had lingered with him even when the thrust was given after death, and the blood and water flowed from his pierced heart. John had the nearest, the dearest, the closest fellowship with Christ in the flesh. As he had laid his head upon Christ’s bosom, so had he laid all his thoughts and all the emotions of his mind upon the heart’s love and divine affection of his Lord and Master but Christ was gone; it was no more possible to hear his voice, to see him with eyes, or to handle him with hands, yet John had not lost his fellowship, though he knew him no more after the

flesh, yet he knew him after a nobler sort. Nor was his fellowship less real, less close, less sweet, or less divine, than it had been when he had walked and talked with him, and had been privileged to eat and drink with him at that last sacred feast. John says, “Truly our fellowship *is*”—not *was*—“*is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

And now, my brethren and sisters in the common faith of our Lord Jesus, this morning I trust that many of us can say, “Our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” Did the apostle John need to say, “Truly”—as much as though some doubted or denied it? We, too, have sometimes an occasion to make as solemn an affirmation as he has done. There are certain sectaries who exalt the form of their church government into a *sine qua non* of piety, and they say of us that it is impossible that we should have a fellowship with Christ, because we follow not after them. Because we reject not the ministry which God has appointed, to take up with some newly-devised scheme, by which everyone is to instruct his brother, forsooth therefore we have not the fellowship which is reserved for their sect and party. We have been led, when they have spoken very bitterly, to question ourselves; but after deep searchings of heart, in reply to them we can say, “Brethren, whether you be right, or we be right in the matter of church discipline or organization, yet we can assure you that ‘truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.’” And oftentimes the doctrinalist—the man who thinks more of the doctrine of Christ than of the person of Christ, and who couples therewith the conceit that he himself must be right, and all others wrong,—because we may not be able to endorse all the heights of his doctrine, or, on the other hand, may not be able to join with him in his legal statements—says, “O these people! there are many of them, but they can have no fellowship with God, because they do not sound our Shibboleth, they do not join with us in every separate dogma which we teach, and therefore the Lord is not with them.” Ah, but we can say to them, “Brethren, we are content to leave these doctrinal disputes to the Great Arbiter of right and wrong; we have formed our opinion of Scripture; we hope, as in the sight of God, and as before the Most High, we can say, we have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.” But whether this be so or not, we protest to you, “Truly,” yes, “truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” And perhaps the experimentalist—the man who attaches undue importance to his own particular form of experience—may cry out that the minister has not had the same experience of human depravity as himself; he may condemn us utterly because we do not give prominence to a certain favourite but unhealthy standard of spiritual conviction. Well, we can say to him, “We have preached what we do know, we have testified what we have seen, and if we cannot go to all the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths, as yet, we hope to grow; but we can say, even should you doubt our declaration, ‘Truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.’”

This brings me immediately and directly to the text. You will perceive that there is suggested by the text, *a quiet investigation, leading to a most solemn affirmation*. “Truly our

fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” And then there is, secondly, in the former part of the text, *a most affectionate desire, leading to appropriate action*. Our desire is, that you may have fellowship with us, and, therefore, “that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.”

I. First, then, let us in all quietude and stillness of heart, talk this matter over with one another, and see if it be not so, that we have had, and do have real FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER, AND WITH HIS SON JESUS CHRIST.

Now, brethren, we have had fellowship with the FATHER. In order to have fellowship with any man, there must be a *concord of heart*. “Can two walk together unless they be agreed?” At the very bottom of fellowship there must be a likeness; we must have like wishes, like desires; we must have espoused like ends, and our spirits must be welded together in the intention to effect like purposes. Now, I think we can avow, this morning, in the first place, that we do feel a sweet concord with God in *his eternal purposes*. I read the Book of God, and I find that he hath ordained Christ to be the Head of his Church, and that he hath chosen unto himself “a number that no man can number.” I find it revealed in the Word of God that he is a God of distinguishing and discriminating grace; that he “will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion,” that he will bring many sons unto glory, “to the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” Brethren, cannot you and I say, as in the sight of a heart-searching God, we have full accord with God in his purposes? Why, we love them, we delight in them, the decrees of God are satisfactory to us. If it were possible for us to alter the roll in which his divine intentions are written, we would not do it, we feel that whatever he has ordained must be right, and as for his ordination of his people unto eternal life, and his loving them above all people that be on the face of the earth, why this is one of the richest joys that we know. The doctrine of election is a sweet cordial to the child of God. I can cry, “My Father, thou art King, thou hast chosen the base things of this world, and things that are not, to bring to nought the things out are; and in this I have fellowship with thee, for I can exclaim, ‘I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.’”

Again, we have fellowship with God in the object for which the purpose was first formed, namely, *his own glory*. Ah, the deeds of the Most High tend to manifest his majesty and glorify his Godhead. O brethren, do not we sympathise with God in this object? Give glory unto him, give glory unto him, O all creatures that his hand hath made! The highest aspiration of our spirit, when it is most enlarged, and most inflamed is, that he in all things may be glorified. *He* knows, for he can read the heart, that oftentimes, when we have ourselves been bowed down, and we have been made as the very dust of the earth, we have said, “This is still my comfort, that he is exalted, that *he* still reigneth, and doeth as he wills arming the

armies of heaven, and among the people of this lower world.” Do you not desire *his* glory as he desires it? He has purposed to stain the pride of all human boasting, and to make the world know that Jehovah is God, and “that beside him there is none else” do not you also desire the same, and do you not daily pray, “Let him be magnified from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof; let all creatures call him blessed, let all that have breath, praise, laud, and magnify his name?” In this, then—in his purpose, and in the object of his purpose, we have “fellowship with the Father.”

And now, have we not fellowship with him in *the plan by which he effects that purpose*? It pleased him, that in “the fullness of time, he should send forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” He laid one foundation, and one only, and he said concerning it, that “other foundation shall no man lay but that which is laid.” God has chosen “the stone which the builders refused,” that it might be made the “headstone of the corner:” this is the Lord’s doing, and cannot we say, “It is wondrous in our eyes?” As he is unto God “the chief corner stone, elect, precious,” so “unto you that believe *He* is precious.” Looking at all the plan from the beginning to the end, do you not agree in it? Does it not strike you as being the wisest, the most gracious, the most glorious scheme that could have been devised? And as from its first fountain in predestination, onward to the ocean of glory, you traverse the ever-flowing stream, do you not say of it in all matchless course, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath chosen us in him from before the foundation of the world, and who having, chosen us, will glorify us and bring us to himself at the last?” Yes, there is not a single word that we would alter, there is not a line in this divine scheme that we would wish to change. If it approves itself to him, it certainly approves itself to us, if he chose it as the plan of divine operation, we adore his choice, we reverence both the wisdom and the love which planned and carried out the design.

And yet more I think we may add, we have fellowship with God in the most prominent *characteristics of that plan*. Throughout the whole way of salvation, you have seen displayed the justice and the mercy of God, each with undimmed lustre. You have seen his grace in forgiving the sinner, but you have seen his holiness in avenging sin upon the substitute. You have seen his truthfulness acting in two ways, his truth in threatening,—by no means sparing the guilty, his truth in the promise,—“passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin.” Throughout the whole Divine plan of salvation, there is not a single blot upon any of the attributes of the Most High. “Holy! holy! holy! Lord God of Sabbath,” is still the son of angels, even when they see sinners who were once the vilest of the vile, brought to share their joys, and sing their songs. And, brethren, do not you and I feel we have fellowship with God in this? Would you have him unjust that you might be saved? I think you would say, “Never! never! not even for my sake let him be unjust.” Would you have him unloving to others, that he might make you his favourite? No! and there is no trace of anything like this. You

would not have him retract his threatening, for then you might fear that he would forget his promise. I am sure, as you look upon the character of God, as he manifests it in the face of Jesus Christ, your soul is filled with ineffable and delightful adoration; you can sing unto him, "Great art thou, O God, thy mercy endureth for ever," and taking up the words of David, you can say, "I will sing of mercy, and of judgment; unto thee, O God, will I sing!" In the purpose, then, in the object of that purpose, in the plan by which the purpose is achieved, and in the characteristics of that plan, the believer in Christ has fellowship or sweet concord with the Father.

But to proceed a step further: we have a most divine and precious communion with the Father in the *objects of his love*. When two persons love the same thing, their affection becomes a tie between them. The two may love each other, but when in the course of providence, children are brought into the house, their children become another bond between their parents, each of them mutually giving their hearts to their little ones, feel that their hearts are yet more fully given the one to the other. Now, there is a tie between God the Father and our souls, for did not he say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?" And cannot you and I add, "Yes, he is our beloved Savior, in whom we are well pleased?" Is it not written, "It pleased the Father to bruise him?" And do we not feel that ye have found a divine pleasure and satisfaction in looking into his wounds, his agonies, and his death? And has not Father determined to glorify his Son Jesus? And is not the fondest thought of our heart that we may help to glorify him here on earth, and may spread his glories even in heaven, by telling to the angels, and principalities, and powers, the height and depth of his lovingkindness? Does the Father love the Son?—even so do we love him, not to the same infinite extent, for we are finite beings, yet with sincerity, even as the Father loves Jesus, so sincerely do we love him—

"A very wretch, Lord! I should prove,
Had I no love for thee;
Rather than not my Savior love,
O may I cease to be!"

So in this, then, we have fellowship with the Father, seeing that we are both agreed in loving the Son. Does the Father love the *saints*?—even so do we. Doth he declare that "Precious shall their blood be in his sight? "Does he bear, and carry them, and show his interest for them? Will he say that "His delight is in his people," and that "they are his peculiar portion," and his "choice heritage?" My soul, canst thou not say, in the midst of all thy doubts and fears—"I know that I have passed from death unto life, because I love the brethren?" Canst thou not protest, "O my heart! that the excellent of the earth are all thy delight, where they dwell, I would dwell, where they die, I would die, their portion shall be my portion, their God shall be my God for ever and ever." In this, too, we have fellowship with the Father.

But you know, brethren, the word “fellowship” not only signifies concord of heart but it implies *a carrying out of that concord a little further, in converse or mutual communication*. May the Holy Spirit grant that we may not say a word which is not strictly verified by our experience! but I hope we can say we have had converse with the Divine Father. We have not seen him at any time, nor have we beheld his shape. It has not been given to us, like Moses, to be put in the cleft of the rock, and to see the back parts, or the train of the invisible Jehovah; but yet we have spoken to him; we have said to him, “Abbe, Father;” we have saluted him in that title which came from our very heart, “Our Father, who art in heaven.” We have had access to him in such a way that we cannot have been deceived. We have found him, and through the precious blood of Christ, we have come even unto his feet, we have ordered our cause before him, and we have filled our mouth with arguments, nor has the speaking been all on our side, for he has been pleased to shed abroad, by his Spirit, his love in our hearts. While we have felt the spirit of adoption, he, on the other hand, has showed to us the lovingkindness of a tender Father. We have felt, though no sound was heard; we have known, though no angelic messenger gave us witness, that his Spirit did “bear witness with our spirits that we were born of God.” We were embraced of him—no more at a distance; we were “brought nigh by the blood of Christ.” I trust, my brothers and sisters, you can each of you say—though you wish it could be more intense than it is—“I have in all these things had fellowship with the Father, for I have conversed with him, and he has spoken to me.” You can join in the words of that hymn—

“If in my Father’s love
I share a filial part,
Send down thy Spirit like a dove,
To rest upon my heart.”

Furthermore, and to conclude upon this point of fellowship with the Father, we can, I think, refer ourselves to the All-wise One, and we can say we have had fellowship with God in this respect, that *the very thing which is His happiness has been our happiness*. That which has been the delight of his Holy Being has been a delight to us. “And what is that?” say you. Why, brethren, doth not God delight in holiness, in goodness, in mercy, and in lovingkindness, and has not that been our delight too? I am sure our greatest miseries here have been our sins. We do not murmur at our afflictions, if we could but get rid of those sins which bind us down and hamper us when we would mount towards heaven. Holiness is our pleasure, purity is our delight, and if we could but be perfect even as he is perfect, and freed from sin, even as God our Father, is freed from everything like iniquity, then we should be in heaven, for this is our happiness; the same happiness which God finds in purity and righteousness, we find in it too.

And if it be the happiness of the Father to have communion with the persons of the Trinity—if the Father delights in his Son, even so do we delight in him, and such delight,

that if we told it to the stranger, he would not believe us, and if we spoke it in the wordling's ear, he would think us mad. Jesu, thou art the sun of our soul; thou art to us the river of which we drink, the bread of which we eat, the air we breathe; thou art the basis of our life and thou art the summit of it, thou art the prop, the mainstay, the pillar, the beauty, the joy of our being! If we have but thee, we can ask nothing besides, for thou art all in all, and if we have thee not, we are wretched and undone. So, then we have fellowship with the Father, because that which is his happiness is most certainly our happiness.

And so, also, that which is the Father's *employment* is our employment. I speak not of you all, He knows whom he hath chosen. We cannot join with the Father in upholding all worlds, we cannot send forth floods of light at the rising of the sun, we cannot feed the cattle on a thousand hills, nor can we give food and life to all creatures that have breath. But there is something which we can do which he does. He doeth good to all his creatures, and we can do good also. He beareth witness to his Son Jesus, and we can bear witness too. "The Father worketh hitherto" that his Son may be glorified, and we work too. O thou Eternal Worker! it is thine to save souls, and we are co-workers with thee. We are his husbandry, we are his building, he scatters the seed of truth, we scatter it too, his words speak comfort, and our words comfort the weary too, when God the Spirit is with us. We hope we can say, "For us to live is Christ," and is not this what God lives for too? We desire nothing so much as to glorify him, and this is the Father's will, as well as Jesus Christ's prayer, "Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." Do you not see, brethren, we stand on the same scaffold with the eternal God? When we lift our hand, he lifts up his eternal arm, when we speak, he speaks too, and speaks the same thing; when we purpose Christ's glory, he purposes that glory too, when we long to bring home the wandering sheep, and to recall the prodigal sons, he longs to do the same. So that in that respect we can say, "Truly we have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

2. And now I must turn with some brevity to announce also, and to affirm the fact, that we have fellowship with the Son as well as with the Father. In both these matters we are like little children that have begun to speak or learn their letters. We have not yet attained, O brethren, though I say we have fellowship with the Father, yet how little we have of it compared with what we hope to have! This fellowship is like the river in Ezekiel, at the first it is up to the ancles, and afterwards it is up to the knees, and then up to the loins, and then it becomes a river to swim in. There be, I fear, few of us who have waded where there is a river to swim in, but, blessed be God, though it be only up to the ancles, yet we have fellowship, and if we have but a little of it, that little is the seed of more, and the certain pledge of greater joys to come. Well, now we have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, I think we can say, for our hearts are united to him,—we cannot speak of this, but I think we can weep about it,—

"Jesus, we love thy charming name,

"Tis music to our ears."

We may sometimes have to sing—

"Tis a point I long to know

Oft it causeth anxious thought;

Do I love the Lord or no?

Am I his, or am I not?"

But I think we can come back after all and answer, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." At any rate, it is strange that I should never be happy without thee, it is singular that I can find no peace anywhere but in thee. If I did not love thee, should I have such longings after thee? Should I have such mournings and such sorrowings when thou art gone? Would it be so dark without thee if I still were blind, and would it be so bright with thee if I did not see a glimmering of thy light and some rays of thy beauties? Ye men and brethren, Satan may say what he will, and our sense may seem to contradict the statements, but still our soul followeth hard after him. He is to us all our salvation and all our desire. We have, then, fellowship with Christ, since his heart is set in us, and our heart is knit to him.

Further, we have had some small degree of fellowship with him in his sufferings. We have not yet "resisted unto blood striving against sin," but we have carried his cross and we have suffered his reproach. There have been some who could say—

"Jesus, I my cross have taken

All to leave and follow thee."

And others of us, whose path has been somewhat smoother, have nevertheless felt the cross within us—for the new spirit within us has had to contend with all that once we loved, there have been wars and fightings, and a perpetual conflict, not only from without, but what is far more severe, from within also. Yet if it should cause more sorrow we still would follow *him*, for we count it as our riches that we may bear the reproach of Christ as he bore reproach for us. I trust, my brothers and sisters you that profess to be his followers do not blush to own his name. I hope you do not turn your backs in the day of battle. If you do, you may question whether your fellowship is with the Son Jesus Christ, but if you can welcome shame and hail reproach because he remembers you, then in this you have been conformed unto his death, and have been made partakers of his sufferings. I have sometimes thought it were worth all the bitterness if we might drink of his cup and be baptised with his baptism. We can have no Gethsemane with all its bloody sweat, yet we have had our Gethsemanes too, we cannot die on Calvary, but I hope we have been crucified with him and the world is crucified to us, and we unto the world; we cannot go into the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, yet we have been buried with him in baptism unto death, that like as Jesus Christ rose from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also might rise to newness of life; and I hope, inasmuch as he has risen and ascended up on high, though our bodies

are still here, yet we have set our affection on things above and not on things on the earth; and as he has been raised up and made to sit together with his Father, I hope we know the meaning of that passage. "He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." And as he is to come and reign, I hope we know also something of that, for he hath made us kings and priests unto our God, and we shall reign with him for ever and ever. From the manger to the cross, and from the cross to the millennium, there should be in the Christian's experience a blessed fellowship. We ought to know Christ in his obscurity and littleness—the babe Christ being in our hearts. We ought to know him in his wilderness temptations—ourselves being tempted in all points. We ought to know him in his blasphemies and slanders—ourselves being accounted by man to be as Beelzebub, and as the offscouring of all things, we must know him in his passion, in his agony, and in his death, and then, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," we may know him in his triumphs, in his ascension upon high, in his session at the right hand of God, and in his coming to judge the quick and the dead, for we, too, shall judge angels through Jesus Christ our Lord. We have, I hope, in some humble measure in these respects, fellowship with the Son Jesus Christ.

But our fellowship has assumed also a practical form, in that the same desires and aspirations which were in Christ when he was on the earth are in us now. Oh! we have uttered feelingly the very words of Christ, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" And when we could not do all we would, when there seemed to be some insuperable obstacle in the path of our usefulness, we have nevertheless said, "My meat and my drink is to do the will of him that sent me." And when at any time we have been wearied in the Master's service, we have yet found such good cheer therein, that we could say with him, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." And at times, in the thoughts of serving God and even of suffering for him we have said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" For we have desired with desire to eat that Passover, that we, too, might say of our humble work, "It is finished," and commend our spirit into the eternal hand. Oh! have you never wept with Christ as he did over poor Jerusalem? Did London's vices never bring the tears into your eyes? Did you never weep over hard-hearted souls, perhaps in your own family? Have you never cried as he did, "How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not?" Oh! I hope, without egotism, without saying more than we have really felt, we have thirsted and panted to bring others up out of their degradation and their fall, till we have felt that if we might be offered ourselves, if by our sacrifice souls might be saved, we would be willing to have it said, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." In this, then, we have had fellowship with Christ.

And yet, further, as I have said, fellowship requires converse. Oh! ye daughters of Jerusalem, have we not had converse with Him? Tell ye of that happy day when we went forth

to meet king Solomon, and crowned him “with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals; and in the day of the gladness of his heart,” when he took us up into his chariot, the bottom whereof was of silver and the sides thereof lined with love for the daughters of Jerusalem, and we rode in covenant safety and in royal pomp with him. When the king came into his palace and he said, “Let the fatlings be killed, eat; yea, eat abundantly and drink abundantly, O beloved!” and we ate of all his sweet wines and of all his luscious fruits which he had laid up in store for his beloved till we said, “Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick with love, his left hand is under my head, and his right arm doth embrace me.” Brethren, we have leaped right out of the body to embrace him, at least so we have thought, from excess of joy, and that, too, when there was nothing in the world to give us content, when our prospects were blighted, when our health has failed us, when the sun of this world was quenched, then He came forth, even He who is all in all, and lifted the light of his countenance upon us.

You have had, I hope, some few of these in-flowings of love, when you have eaten angels’ food, when you have forgotten the dry bread and mouldy crusts that you had in the wallet of your experience, and did eat the new corn of the kingdom, and did drink the new wine with your blessed and divine Master; you no longer traveled in rumbling chariots, but your soul was like the swiftly-speeding chariots of Amminadib; you flew after your beloved in transport so divine, that tongue can never tell, and lips can never describe the sacred rapture. Yes, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

We have but a few minutes remaining for the second head, which might very well demand an entire discourse.

II. There was, secondly, AN AFFECTIONATE DESIRE, LEADING TO APPROPRIATE EFFORT. This affectionate desire was that others might have fellowship with us. Having found the honey, we cannot eat it alone, having tasted that the Lord is gracious, it is one of the first instincts of the new-born nature to send us out crying, “So, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” We would that others had fellowship with us in all respects except our sins; for we can say with the apostle, “I would to God that ye were not only almost, but altogether such as I am, except these bonds!” But these bonds of sin we would not wish that any should bear. Brethren, we would that you had fellowship with us in the peace we feel with God our Father, in the access which we have to his throne, in the confidence which we have in the truth of his promise, in the overflowing joys we experience when he manifests himself to us! We would that you had our hopes, that you could look forward to death and the grave with the same delight as we can, expecting to be transformed into his image, and to see him as he is! We wish you had our faith, only more of it—that you might have the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen! We wish that you had fellowship with us in prevailing prayer, that you knew how to cast

your burdens upon the Lord—that you understood how to bring every blessing from on high, by pleading the merits of the Savior! We wish to gather up all in one, that in everything which is lovely and of good repute, in everything which is happy, ennobling, divine, and everlasting you might be made partakers and have fellowship with us!

And this desire leads the child of God to make use of an appropriate effort, and what is that? It is to tell to others what he has seen and what he has heard. Now, I shall try to use that means this morning, for I think, perhaps, the illustration of fact may be better than any illustration of words. Do I not address many here who never had any fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Perhaps you hardly know what it means, and when you hear what it means, you attach no importance to it. It is nothing to you to talk with God; you never dream of such a thing as speaking to Christ, and Christ speaking to you. Ah! if you knew its sweetness, you would never, never be content till you had it, you would thirst with such a thirst, that you would never cease, but thirst till you drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate. Well now, soul, that thou mayest have fellowship with us in these things, let me tell thee what I have heard, and known, and seen, for this is what the text tells me to speak of—I have known and seen that Christ is one who is ready to forgive thee—able to forgive thee. Oh! shall I never forget when I first went to him, laden with iniquity, and black with sin, bowed down by five years of conviction, which had rendered my fears despair, and my doubts had gathered till they seemed impenetrable to the light! I went to him, and I thought he would reject me; I thought him to be hard, and unwilling to forgive. But I only looked on him, only looked at him,—one glimpse of a tearful eye at a crucified Savior, and that moment without a pause the burden rolled away; the guilt was gone, peace of mind took the place of despair, and I could sing, “I’m forgiven, I’m forgiven!” I had many sins, but He took them all away. Some of those sins were deeply aggravated. I would not tell them in a human ear, but they are gone, in one instant too, not because of any merit, but gone freely and graciously of his own abundant mercy, according to the riches of his lovingkindness in Christ Jesus the Lord. Now what we have seen and heard we do testify, that ye also may have fellowship with us, for “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” Still he is willing to receive you, he is able to forgive you. Laden with guilt and full of woe, hie thee to that full relief! Make no tarrying! “Linger not in all the plain!” Let not thy heavy heart tempt thee to refrain thyself from him! He stands with open arms, ready to pardon, with open heart, willing to receive. Nay, he runs, methinks I see him, though thou art yet far off, he runs and meets thee, he falls upon thy neck, he kisseth thee, he saith, “Take off his rags, clothe him in the best robe; put shoes on his feet and a ring upon his hand, and let us eat and be merry, for the dead is alive and the lost is found.”

But I testify yet again, soul, that after thou hast once believed in Christ, and received thy pardon, thou wilt find him to be willing to keep thy soul from sin. I thought that even

if Christ forgave me, it would be impossible for me to break off evil habits and the lusts of the flesh. And I have known many scores of men who were swearers, and they said they should never be able to rinse their mouths of their oaths. They were drunkards too, and they said that drink would get the upper hand of them yet, but we have seen and we have testified that when we believe in Christ, he changes the heart, he renews the nature, makes us hate the things we loved before, and love the things we once despised. We have seen it, and we testify it. O drunkard, he can make thee sober! unchaste man, he can make thee virtuous! There is no lust which his arm cannot subdue, no mighty sin which he cannot drive out, he shall make thee run in the way of his commandments with delight, thou shalt neither turn aside to the right hand nor to the left.

“But” saith another, “if he did uphold for awhile I should never be able to hold on.” What I have seen and heard, that I do declare unto thee. Blessed be his name, I am yet young in grace but he has been faithful to me. The child believed, and the child now testifies that God is faithful, and has not once forsaken nor left him, but preserved him. I half wish this morning that grey hairs were on my head that I might give force to this testimony of “what I have seen and heard.” I remember well, when declaring that God was a faithful God, my good old grandfather, who was sitting behind me in the pulpit, came forward and said, “My grandson can tell you that, but I can bear witness to it. I have passed my three score years and ten, but still He has been faithful and true.”

“E’en down to old age, all his people shall prove
His sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,
Like lambs they shall still in his bosom be borne.”

We testify this to you, that you may have fellowship with us, for “our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

I have this much to say, and if I should never preach again, and if this might be the last discourse I should ever deliver in this world, I would wish to make this the final testimony. There is that joy in religion that I never dreamed of. He is a good Master whom I have served, that is a blessed faith which He has bestowed upon me, and yields such blessed hope, that

“I would not change my bless’d estate
For all the world calls good or great.”

And if I had to die like a dog, and there were no hereafter, I would still prefer to be a Christian, and the humblest Christian minister to being a king or an emperor, for I am persuaded there are more delights in Christ; yea, more joy in one glimpse of his face than is to be found in all the praises of this harlot-world, and in all the delights which it can yield to us in its sunniest and brightest days. And I am persuaded that what he has been till now, he will be to the end; and where he hath begun a good work, he will carry it on. Yes, sinners,

Christ's cross is a hope that we can die by,—which can take us down to the grave without a fear, which can make us short in the midst of the swelling waters of Jordan, can make us transported with delight even when we are bowed down with physical pain or nervous distress. There is that in Christ, I say, which can make us triumph over the gloomiest terrors of grim death, and make us rejoice in the darkest of tempests which can blacken the grave. Trust ye, trust ye in the Lord, for our testimony, and that of all his people, is, that he is worthy to be trusted. "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."