

Fellowship one with Another

1 John 1: 7

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It is cause for thanksgiving that, in spite of the general breakdown, the blessed God has preserved those with whom His people can associate. Doubtless there are still saints of God who, like John on Patmos, find themselves alone; to such, as to John, the Lord would draw particularly near, speaking to them of His unceasing love, and assuring them of the sympathy of One who had felt loneliness as none other. "I looked for some . . . for comforters, but I found none" (Psalm 69: 20).

In general, and especially in our favoured land, we can take up with gladness the word "God setteth the solitary in families" (Psalm 68: 6). This was ever His mind; of His earthly people we read "They wandered in a solitary way;" but when they "cried to the LORD," "He led them . . . to a city of habitation" (Psalm 107).

In the very early days of Christianity the apostles, after their trial by the rulers, "went to their *own company*" (Acts 4: 23); and in Acts 13: 13 and Acts 21: 8 we read of "Paul's company;" again at Appia Forum (Acts 28) Paul "thanked God and took courage" as his brethren came to meet him. Blessed indeed that the privilege of fellowship one with another has continued, surviving all the failure and the opposition of he "that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6: 19). Thus Paul in writing to Timothy, with last days in view, exhorts him to "follow . . . *with them* that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2: 22). May we not be encouraged to believe *and to prove* that such a path will continue to be available to all who seek it?

Amos, the rugged herdman of Tekoa, raises the question "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" We may perhaps be inclined to question the action of the two who went "to a village called Emmaus" (Luke 24), but they at least were "agreed" as they walked — "they talked *together*" (v.14); "they communed *together*" (v.15), and their whole conversation shows how completely they were "one" in their thoughts. Surely the Lord, as He drew near to them, appreciated this. And He said unto them, "What manner of communications are these that ye have *one to another*". Again He says to them "what things? And they said unto Him, concerning Jesus of Nazareth." "Slow of heart" and unbelieving — yes, indeed; the glory of that lowly Man as the Christ of God, the subject of all the Scriptures, had not illumined their beings — but they were *speaking together of Him*. Beloved brethren, is not this a challenge to each one of us? And does it not contain the secret of being "agreed"? How should we answer the question — "What communications are these?" If our minds and affections were definitely fixed upon our Lord, and the glories of His person which have been revealed to us, we should speak less (except in secret prayer and confession) of the failures and divisions amongst His people, and more of Himself and His interests.

Psalm 40 describes the blessedness of the position in which sovereign mercy, in answer to the cry of distress, has set the feet of the saints. Again the experience is an individual one — "He brought *me* up . . . and set *my* feet upon a rock, and established *my* goings." But the happy result is the mingling of praises from those of like experience. "He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto *our* God." Blessed indeed are the notes of joy issuing from hearts which appreciate the sovereign movements of God in mercy and in love. Infectious joy, too! for "many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." As Paul and Silas, in dire circumstances indeed, caused the praises of God to ring

through the prison at Philippi, what results there were for the blessing of men and the glory of God! "The doors were opened, and *everyone's* bands were loosed," and a whole household "rejoiced, believing in God." Do we wonder that Paul's subsequent letter to the believers at Philippi should be so replete with the feature of "rejoicing"? he would have all to know the joy that Silas and he shared together as they thought upon the preciousness of the One to whom they were soon to render so powerful a testimony.

Finally — "Draw me, we will run after thee" (Song of Solomon 1: 4). Have we not proved that there is no love like that of our precious Lord — no name so fragrant as His (vv. 2, 3). How wonderfully the beauty and charm of the Beloved is set forth in this Song! We are in no doubt as to whom "the chiefest among ten thousand" — the "altogether lovely" One is! Weaned from all else, attracted to Himself; speaking amongst our brethren of Him and His glories alone — how precious to thus influence others to run with reciprocal affections after our precious Lord! What a blessed feature of fellowship is this — each individual affection in the appreciation of His infinite preciousness and delighting to share those impressions with His lovers. Satisfied hearts, affections led by the Spirit in ever increasing attraction to a glorious Christ, enjoying *together* that which is beyond and outside of all this world can offer; meditating upon the incomparable preciousness of Him who is God's Beloved and — through wondrous grace — our Beloved too!

Is it not a further source of joy to our hearts to realize that, whilst *we* enjoy these precious times of communion with one another, the blessed Lord Himself derives pleasure and joy too? Surely the blessedness of Malachi 3: 16,17 remains true today — "Then they that feared the LORD spake often *one to another*, and the LORD hearkened . . . and they shall be Mine, saith the LORD of hosts."

Implicit in all this is the *present* enjoyment of eternal life — "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell *together* in unity! . . . there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

"If then there be any comfort in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and compassions, fulfil my joy, that ye may think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking *one* thing." Here are the beautiful *inward* features which make for happy fellowship — and here is the practical *outward* effect "in lowliness of mind, each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves" (Philippians 2. New Trans.).

Thus may we abide in union
With each other and the Lord,
And possess, in sweet communion,
Joys which earth can ne'er afford.