

Divine Intimacy

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The intimacy which the Lord has sought with His creature man is in a very blessed way evidenced throughout Scripture. It may have had different expressions or forms, but still it was intimacy. In patriarchal days it was *personal*. The Lord God walked in the midst of the human family, appearing personally to His elect — not so much employing prophets or angels, but mixing *Himself* in the action as it proceeded. (See Genesis.) In the times of Israel He was not so much in the human guise as before, but in mystic dress; still, however, He was *near* them. The glory in the cloud, the Lord in the burning bush, the armed Captain under Jericho, and then the glory filling the temple, or seating itself between the cherubim, all tell this nearness of God to elect man. The God of Israel seen by them on the sapphire throne, and the promise of His own lips to the house built in the midst of Israel — "Mine eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually," all this in like manner witness this desired and proposed intimacy.

Then, in the progress of His wisdom and counsels, the actual assumption of manhood, this is the witness of witnesses to this precious truth. I need not dwell on it. As we say, it speaks for itself.

But what at this time has the more strongly drawn my mind is, *the intimacy that He so wondrously and graciously seeks and has provided for, and secured, in this our present age or dispensation*. He has given the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of truth is in us. The Comforter abides with us for ever. Our bodies are nothing less than His temples or dwelling-places. And the Son has borne Himself to heaven as our Head and Representative, and we are in Him and with Him. No form of intimacy so wonderful as this, and none more true and real. If personally the Lord God would take a calf or a cake, as pledges of hospitality to a travelling man, from the hand of Abraham; if in the sight of the congregation He would let the glory dwell, and fill the temple courts, to show His joy in His new-found dwelling with Israel; if in the manhood of Jesus of Nazareth He would sit at a well with an elect sinner, or let another press His bosom at supper, and ask Him about the secrets that were lodged there; in this our very hour He has us, in the thoughts and purposes of His own heart, up in heaven with Himself, and the Holy Ghost is here in the midst of all the thoughts and purposes of our hearts. Is this intimacy of a feebler nature? Is this a retracing of His steps, and going back again into His own perfections and glories, or amid the principalities and dominions of angels? No. at is pursuing His former purpose of intimacy, only in a further stage, till He perfect it in the kingdom; for this indwelling of the Spirit tells us that in every pulse of affection that beats, in every duty or service that is fulfilled or performed, the thought of the Lord should mix itself; as in the details of precepts in the epistles we find it, the Lord, love to Him, and respect to His authority, being brought in as the animating and ruling principle. Is this reserve? Is this withdrawal of Himself? This seeing Him, and owning of Him in all human relations and social duties, is this the symptom of a God in the thick darkness, a God afar off? Blessed thought, it is the very reverse. It is only a richer pursuit of that same desire for intimacy with us which broke forth in its infant form in the Book of Genesis, and which is to bloom in its perfection in the kingdom.

It has been sweetly described by another, that the divine intimacy was preserved by Jesus - risen, as well as by Jesus in the flesh. This appears from His preparing the dinner on the sea-shore Himself, eating in company with His disciples (John 21); for He would with Himself now invest or clothe our spirits. He would relieve our consciences with a peace which He has made and wrought out for us

Himself to perfection; He would satisfy our hearts with attractions that are divine and ineffable, and fitted to teach us, that the half could not be told, because they are the attractions which nothing less than He Himself puts forth; and He would, as I have already said, bring Himself in amid all our occupations and relationships, that the recollection of Him and His authority and His grace may sanctify as well as bless the whole. It is faith that enters into this purpose of God and enjoys it. Faith apprehends a peace made by Himself, and therefore perfect, and clothes the conscience with it; faith apprehends the love and the other blessed attractions that are in Him, and gives the heart as a dwelling-place an unspeakably happy dwelling-place in Him; faith knows Him to be no stranger to the smallest action, and therefore invests the whole course of human life with the sense of His authority and His sufficiency, and His gracious and desired fellowship with it all, with all the joys and sorrows and doings and circumstances of His people, as He says, "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is," taking knowledge thus of the place and character of our abode. "Send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side."

And where does this intimacy appear at the end? In the Apocalypse redeemed man takes the place of . . . nearness to the throne. The tabernacle of God is with *men*, and the Lamb's bride becomes the habitation of the glory. J. G. B.