

Divine Intimacy

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Article 36 of 47 **Short Meditations**

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The intimacy between the Lord and His elect is beyond, we may say, what is known elsewhere. Angels do His pleasure, wait in His presence, have kept their first estate, and excel in that strength that serves Him. But they are not where elect sinners are. They learn, *through the Church*, the manifold wisdom of God — to us, all that the Son has received from the Father, *He* has made known.

The Saviour acquaints Himself with the secrets of the bosom of the sinner; while He communicates to such an one the secrets of the Divine bosom. This is intimacy indeed. See it illustrated at the well of Sychar. See it, in the stories of Abraham, Moses, David, and others. It is marvellous to say this — but so it is. We are not called to prove it — Scripture does that both by doctrine and illustration. We are called to believe it and enjoy it.

We see the Spirit of God, by the Apostle, in the Epistle to the Romans, leading the saints along two different paths — the path of *grace*, in Rom. 1 - 8; the path of *knowledge*, in Rom. 9 - 11.

He finds us, at the beginning, in our ruins. We are taken up as sinners, having come short of His glory, and are in revolt and distance from Him. It is from such a point we start on the way. But He leads us along from our depths to His heights, from our ruins to His wonders and riches of mercy. And at last He plants us on an elevation where we can challenge all our enemies, and find ourselves above all that might be against us. Who can be against us? is the language of the heart there; who can accuse, who can condemn, who can separate?

Having thus conducted us the whole way, along the path of mercy, and settled our own questions for ever, He again takes us by the hand, to lead us along another path, the path of wisdom or knowledge, where we learn, not our own interests as sinners, but the various riches and secrets of His own counsels from the beginning to the end of them. Nor does He let go the hand of the saved sinner whom He is here conducting, till He plants him on another elevation, and puts another rapture in his spirit — not an exultation in his own blessedness under the gifts of grace, as we see at the end of the previous path, but a triumph in the ways and purposes of God through the light of these Divine communications now made to him.

And is not all this, intimacy? First, to bring home a banished one, to fit a sinner for His presence, and set him there in liberty and strength and joy, and then to tell him all His counsels?

The woman of Sychar got the first of these, but not the second; at least at that time. Very fitting that was. The Saviour told her all about herself, and then so showed Himself to her, that her spirit was filled with the exultation that we find at the close of the first of those paths we have been tracing in the Epistle to the Romans — *i. e.*, what we read at the end of Rom. 8. But the time had not then come, to lead her along the second path. Very fitting, again I say, all this was as to her.

But if we look far back, at Genesis 18, 19, there we shall see the case of a saved sinner, a saint of God, led along each of these paths; or rather, such an one already standing at the end of the one, led along, as from that standing, all the way of the other.

The Lord comes to Abraham as he was sitting at the door of his tent near Hebron. Like one who

knew Him well, Abraham rises and worships, and proposes to get some refreshment ready for Him. Accordingly, the repast is prepared and partaken. Abraham thus enjoys the grace in which he stood. The presence of God is his home. He illustrates a soul in Romans 8: 31-39. But being there, he is ready to take a further walk in company with his Divine Master. And so he does. They rise together from under the tree, where the feast was shared; and as they go on together, the Lord communicates His secrets to Abraham.

Can intimacy exceed this? "I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you."* Angels, again I say, are not presented thus to us — nor is Adam in the innocency of the garden of Eden. But saved sinners occupy these places, without robbery. They take the white stone and read a new name there, which no one knows but he who receives it.

*Wondrous grace! God the Father will not have us servants, but dons: the Lord Jesus will not have us servants, but friends.

Look at John's Gospel and John's Apocalypse as other illustrations of these same things. Here is one sinner after another, in that Gospel, led along the path of grace, as from his own depth of ruins, to God's own heights of salvation and peace, to exult there in the spirit that closes Romans 8. And in the Apocalypse, how is John himself, (saved sinner as he was, standing at the end of the path of grace,) led along the whole way of the Divine counsels, and instructed in the secrets of the seals, the trumpets, and the vials, till he is left in sight of the holy Jerusalem, as in the rapture that closes Romans 11!

These paths are bright indeed — the sinner, at the end of the one, exults in his own condition, saved with a sure and everlasting salvation — the saint, at the end of the other, exults in the counsels of God, all disclosed to him, so that he may walk in the light as God is in the light. What shall be done to the elect, we may say, whom the Lord delighteth to honour.

Now, I would further say, that Psalms 23 and 24 are utterances of a soul, while on these two paths which I have been looking at. In the twenty-third, the saint is walking along the way where grace has set him. He counts, therefore, upon every thing. All things are his; and He may surely want all. He knows that he is under the conduct and care of a Shepherd who can minister all to him; edification, refreshment, restoration, a rod and a staff for the valley of the shadow of death, a table and an overrunning cup, and anointing oil for the very presence of enemies; and a store of goodness and mercy till the path ends in the house of the Lord, till the care and tendence and provisions of grace end in the home of glory.

Thus the saved sinner contemplates his own blessedness, celebrates it in the secret of his own spirit, as he is taught to know it in Romans 1 - 8. He is *seen* in this Psalm on the path which that Scripture *casts up before him*.

In the twenty-fourth, the saint is walking along a line of wondrous light, on which the Spirit of wisdom and revelation has set him. He contemplates, not his own blessings and blessedness, as he had been doing in the twenty-third, but the purposes of God, the secrets of Divine counsels, the glories of Christ, His doings, His judgments, His virtues, His rights, His destiny. He listens, in spirit, to that welcome that awaits Him after He has ended the judgments He had to execute, and maintained the character He had to exhibit, at the very gates of the realms of glory — to the challenges which there addressed Him from those who delighted themselves in hearing again and again the story of His doings and His honours.

Thus the saved sinner contemplates the wisdom and way of God; not the grace that has visited

himself, but the counsels that have given Christ His place and glories. He *is seen* here on that very path which Romans 9 - 11 *had cast up before him*.