

Lecture II.

Union And Communion With God The End And Design Of The Gospel

Psalm lxxiii. 24-28.—“Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, &c. Whom have I in heaven but thee? &c. It is good for me to draw near to God.”—1 John i. 3. “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.”—John xvii. 21-23. “That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, &c.”

It is a matter of great consolation that God's glory and our happiness are linked together, so that whoever set his glory before them singly to aim at, they take the most compendious and certain way to true blessedness. His glory is the ultimate end of man, and should be our great and last scope. But our happiness—which consists in the enjoyment of God—is subordinate to this, yet inseparable from it. The end of our creation is communion and fellowship with God, therefore man was made with an immortal soul capable of it, and this is the greatest dignity and eminency of man above the creatures. He hath not only impressed from God's finger, in his first moulding, some characters resembling God, in righteousness and holiness, but is created with a capacity of receiving more of God by communion with him. Other creatures have already all they will have,—all they can have,—of conformity to him, but man is made liker than all, and is fitted and fashioned to aspire to more likeness and conformity, so that his soul may shine more and more to the perfect day.

There was an union made already in his first moulding, and communion was to grow as a fragrant and sweet fruit out of this blessed root. Union and similitude are the ground of fellowship and communion. That union was gracious,—that communion would have been glorious, for grace is the seed of glory. There was a twofold union between Adam and God,—an union of state, and an union of nature, he was like God, and he was God's friend. All the creatures had some likeness to God, some engravings of his power and goodness and wisdom, but man is said to be made according to God's image, "Let us make man like unto us." Other creatures had *similitudinem vestiga*, but man had *similitudinem faciet*. Holiness and righteousness are God's face,—the very excellency and glory of all his attributes, and the Lord stamps the image of these upon man. Other attributes are but like his back parts, and he leaves the resemblance of his footsteps upon other creatures. What can be so beautiful as the image of God upon the soul? Creatures, the nearer they are to God, the more pure and excellent. We see in the fabric of the world, bodies the higher they are, the more pure and cleanly, the more beautiful. Now then, what was man that was "made a little lower than the angels"?—in the Hebrew, "a little lower than God," *tantum non deus*. Seeing man is set next to God, his glory and beauty certainly surpasses the glory of the sun and of the heavens. Things contiguous and next other are like other. The water is liker air than the earth, therefore it is next the air. The air is liker heaven than water, therefore is it next to it. *Omne contiguum spirituali, est spirituale*. Angels and men next to God, are spirits, as he is a spirit. Now similitude is the ground of friendship. *Pares paribus congregantur, similitudo necessitudims vinculum*. It is that which conciliates affections among men. So it is here by proportion. God sees all is very good, and that man is the best of his works and he loves him, and makes him his friend, for his own image which he beholds in him.

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At length from these two roots this pleasant and fragrant fruit

of communion with and enjoyment of God grows up. This is the entertainment of friends, to delight in one another, and to enjoy one another. *Amicorum omnia communia*. Love makes all common. It opens the treasure of God's fulness, and makes a vent of divine bounty towards man, and it opens the heart of man, and makes it large as the sand of the sea to receive of God. Our receiving of his fulness is all the entertainment we can give him. O what blessedness is this, for a soul to live in him! And it lives in him when it loves him. *Anima est ubi amat, non ubi animat*. And to taste of his sweetness and be satisfied with him, this makes perfect oneness, and perfect oneness with God, who is "the fountain of life, and in whose favour is life," is perfect blessedness.

But we must stand a little here and consider our misery, that have fallen from such an excellency. How are we come down from heaven wonderfully? Sin has interposed between God and man and this dissolves the union, and hinders the communion. An enemy has come between two friends, and puts them at odds, and oh! an eternal odds. Sin hath sown this discord, and alienated our hearts from God. Man's glory consisted in the irradiation of the soul from God's shining countenance, this made him light, God's face shined on him. But sin interposing has eclipsed that light and brought on an eternal night of darkness over the soul. And thus we are spoiled of the image of God, as when the earth comes between the sun and the moon. Now then, there can no beams of divine favour and love break through directly towards us, because of the cloud of our sins, that separates between God and us, and because of "the partition wall," and "the hand writing of ordinances that was against us,"—God's holy law, and severe justice, Eph. ii. 14, Col. ii. 14.

Then, what shall we do? How shall we see his face in joy? Certainly it had been altogether impossible, if our Lord Jesus Christ had not come, who is "the light and life of men." The Father shines on him, and the beams of his love reflect upon us,

from the Son. The love of God, and his favourable countenance, that cannot meet with us in a direct and immediate beam, they fall on us in this blessed compass, by the intervention of a mediator. We are rebels standing at a distance from God, Christ comes between, a mediator and a peace maker, to reconcile us to God. "God is in Christ reconciling the world." God first makes an union of natures with Christ, and so he comes near to us, down to us who could not come up to him, and then he sends out the word of reconciliation,—the gospel, the tenor whereof is this, "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," 1 John i. 3. It is a voice of peace and invitation to the fellowship of God. Behold, then the happiness of man is the very end and purpose of the gospel. Christ is the repairer of the breaches, the second Adam aspired to quicken what Adam killed. He hath "slain the enmity," and cancelled the hand writing that was against us, and so made peace by the blood of his cross, and then, having removed all that out of the way, he comes and calls us unto the fellowship which we were ordained unto from our creation. We who are rebels, are called to be friends, "I call you not servants, but friends." It is a wonder that the creature should be called a friend of God, but, O great wonder, that the rebel should be called a friend! And yet that is not all. We are called to a nearer union,—to be the sons of God, this is our privilege, John i. 12. This is a great part of our fellowship with the Father and his Son, we are the Father's children, and the Son's brethren "and if children then heirs, heirs of God," and if brethren, then co-heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 17.

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Thus the union is begun again in Christ, but as long as sin dwells in our mortal bodies it is not perfect, there is always some separation and some enmity in our hearts, and so there is neither full seeing of God, for "we know but in part," and we see "darkly," nor full enjoying of God, for we are "saved by hope," and we "live by faith, and not by sight." But this is begun which

is the seed of eternal communion, we are here partakers of the divine nature. Now then it must aspire unto a more perfect union with God whose image it is. And therefore the soul of a believer is here still in motion towards God as his element. There is here an union in affection but not completed in fruition,—*affectu non effecta*. The soul pants after God,—“Whom have I in heaven or earth but thee? My flesh and my heart faileth,” &c. A believing soul looks upon God as its only portion,—accounts nothing misery but to be separated from him, and nothing blessedness but to be one with him. This is the loadstone of their affections and desires, the centre which they move towards, and in which they will rest. It is true, indeed, that oftentimes our heart and our flesh faileth us, and we become ignorant and brutish. Our affections cleave to the earth, and temptations with their violence turn our souls towards another end than God. As there is nothing more easily moved and turned wrong than the needle that is touched with the adamant, yet it settles not in such a posture, it recovers itself and rests never till it look towards the north, and then it is fixed—even so, temptations and the corruptions and infirmities of our hearts disturb our spirits easily, and wind them about from the Lord, towards any other thing, but yet we are continuing with him, and he keeps us with his right hand, and therefore though we may be moved, yet we shall not be greatly commoved, we may fall, but we shall rise again. He is “the strength of our heart,” and therefore he will turn our heart about again, and fix it upon its own portion. Our union here consists more in his holding of us by his power, than our taking hold of him by faith. Power and good will encamp about both faith and the soul. “We are kept by his power through faith,” 1 Pet i. 5. And thus he will guide the soul, and still be drawing it nearer to him, from itself, and from sin and from the world, till he “receive us into glory,” and until we be one as with the Father and the Son,—“He in us and we in him, that we may be made perfect in one,” as it is in the words read.

This is strange. A greater unity and fuller enjoyment, a more perfect fellowship, than ever Adam in his innocency would have been capable of! What soul can conceive it? what tongue express it? None can, for it is that which “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into man's heart to conceive.” We must suspend the knowledge of it till we have experience of it. Let us now believe it, and then we shall find it. There is a mutual inhabitation which is wonderful. Persons that dwell one *with* another have much society and fellowship, but to dwell one *in* another is a strange thing,—“I in them, and they in me,” and therefore God is often said to dwell in us, and we to dwell in him. But that which makes it of all most wonderful and incomprehensible is that glorious unity and communion between the Father and the Son, which it is made an emblem of. “As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.” Can you conceive that unity of the Trinity? Can you imagine that reciprocal inhabitation,—that mutual communion between the Father and the Son? No, it hath not entered into the heart to conceive it. Only thus much we know, that it is most perfect, it is most glorious, and so much we may apprehend of this unity of the saints with God. Oh love is an uniting and transforming thing. “God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” He dwelleth in us by love, this makes him work in us, and shine upon us. Love hath drawn him down from his seat of majesty, to visit poor cottages of sinners, Isa. lxvi. 1, 2 and xlvi. 3, 4. And it is that love of God reflecting upon our souls that carries the soul upward to him, to live in him, and walk with him. O how doth it constrain a soul to “live to him,” and draw it from itself! 2 Cor. v. 15. Then the more unity with God, the more separation from ourselves and the world, the nearer God the farther from ourselves, and the farther from ourselves the more happy, and the more unity with God, the more unity among ourselves, among the brethren of our family. Because here we are not fully one with our Father, therefore there are

many differences between us and our brethren because we are not one perfectly in him, therefore we are not one, as he and the Father are one. But when he shall be in us, and we in him, as the Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father, then shall we be one among ourselves, then shall we meet in the unity of the faith, into a perfect man, “into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,” Eph. iv. 13. Christ is the uniting principle. While the saints are not wholly one, *uni tertio*, they cannot be perfectly one *inter se*, among themselves. Consider this, I beseech you Christ's union with the Father is the foundation of our union to God, and our union among ourselves. This is comfortable, the ground of it is laid already. Now it is not simply the unity of the Father and the Son in essence that is here meant, for what shadow and resemblance can be in the world of such an incomprehensible mystery? But it is certainly the union and communion of God with Christ Jesus as mediator, as the head of the church which is his body. Therefore seeing the Father is so wonderfully well pleased and one with Christ, his well beloved Son and messenger of the covenant, and chief party contracting in our name, he is by virtue of this, one with us, who are his seed and members. And therefore, the members should grow up in the head Christ, from whom the whole body maketh increase “according to the effectual working [of the Spirit] in it,” Eph. v. 1, 16. Now, if the union between the Father and Christ our head cannot be dissolved, and cannot be barren and unfruitful, then certainly the Spirit of the Father which is given to Christ beyond measure, must effectually work in every member, till it bring them to “the unity of the faith,” and, “to the measure of the perfect man, which is the fulness of Christ.” So then every believing soul is one with the Father as Christ is one, because he is the head and they the members, and the day is coming that all the members shall be perfectly united to the head Christ and grow up to the perfect man, which is “the stature of Christ's fulness.” “And then shall we all be made perfect in one,” we shall be one as he is one,

because he and we are one perfect man, head and members.

Now, to what purpose is all this spoken? I fear, it doth not stir up in our souls a desire after such a blessed life. Whose heart would not be moved at the sound of such words? "Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son." We are made perfect, he in us, and we in him. Certainly, that soul is void of the life of God that doth not find some sparkle of holy ambition kindled within, after such a glorious and blessed condition! But these things savour not, and taste not to the most part, "the natural man knoweth them not, for they are spiritually discerned." How lamentable is it, that Christ is come to restore us to our lost blessedness, and yet no man almost considers it or lays it to heart! O how miserable,—twice miserable—is that soul that doth not draw near to God in Christ, when God hath come so near to us in Christ, that goes a whoring after the lust of the eyes and flesh, and after the imaginations of their own heart, and will not be guided by Christ, the way and life, to glory! "Thou shalt destroy them, O Lord," Psal. lxxiii. 27. All men are afar off from God, from the womb behold, we may have access to God in Christ. Wo to them that are yet afar off, and will not draw near, "they shall all perish." "I exhort you to consider what you are doing the most part of you are going away from God, you were born far off, and you will yet go farther, know what you will meet with in that way,—destruction."

You have never yet asked in earnest, For what purpose you came into the world? What wonder ye wander and walk at random, seeing ye have not proposed to yourselves any certain scope and aim! It is great folly, you would not be so foolish in any petty business, but O how foolish men are in the main business! "The light of the body is the eye," if that be not light, "the whole body is full of darkness." If your intention be once right established, all your course will be orderly, but if you be dark and blind in this point, and have not considered it, you cannot walk in the light, your whole way is darkness. The

right consideration of the great end would shine unto you, and direct your way But while you have not proposed this end unto yourselves—the enjoyment of God—you must spend your time either in doing nothing to that purpose, or doing contrary to it. All your other lawful business, your callings and occupations, [012] are but in the by; they are not the end, nor the way, but you make them your only business; they are altogether impertinent to this end. And the rest of your walking, in lusts and ignorance, is not only impertinent, but inconsistent with it and contrary to it. If you think that you have this before your eyes, to enjoy God,—I pray you look upon the way you choose. Is your drunkenness, your swearing, your uncleanness, your contentions and railings, and such works of the flesh,—are these the way to enjoy God? Shall not these separate between God and you? Is your eating and drinking, sleeping as beasts, and labouring in your callings,—are these all the means you use to enjoy God? Be not deceived; you who draw not near God by prayer often in secret, and by faith in his Son Christ, as lost miserable sinners, to be saved and reconciled by him, you have no fellowship with him, and you shall not enjoy him afterward! You whose hearts are given to your covetousness, who have many lovers and idols besides him, you cannot say, Whom have I besides Thee in earth? No; you have many other things besides God. You can have nothing of God, except ye make him all to you.—unless you have him alone. “My undefiled is One,” Cant. vi. 9. He must be alone, for “his glory he will not give to another.” If you divide your affections, and pretend to give him part, and your lusts another part, you may be doing so, but he will not divide his glory so, he will give no part of it to any other thing. But as for those souls that come to him and see their misery without him, O know how good it is! It is not only good, but best, yea only good; it is *bonum*, and it is *optimum*; yea, it is *unicum*. “There is none good, save one, even God;” and there is nothing good for us but this one, to be near God, and so near, that we may be one,—one spirit

with the Lord,—“for he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” Rejoice in your portion, and long for the possession of it. Let all your meditations and affections and conversation proclaim this, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in the earth whom I desire besides thee.” And certainly he shall guide you to the end, and receive you into glory. Then you shall rest from your labours, because you shall dwell in him, and enjoy that which you longed and laboured for. Let the consideration of that end unite the hearts of Christians here. O what an absurd thing is it, that those who shall lodge together at night, and be made “perfect in one,” should not only go contrary ways, but have contrary minds and affections!