

BENEFITS OF BEING A CHRISTIAN – COMMUNION WITH GOD AND HIS PEOPLE

1 John 1:1-3

INTRODUCTION

- A. Man is a “personal” being, and he thrives in the enjoyment of relationships with “persons” which correspond to him.
 - 1. Man is a personal being because he is created in the image of God, who Himself is a Personal Being GE 1:26, 27.
 - 2. The creation of a companion to whom Adam could relate followed God’s judgment that it was “not good that man should be alone” (GE 2:18-22).
- B. The sin which alienated man from His Creator also produced enmity among men themselves, and it soon bore terrible fruit: frustration, violence, fear, despair, and anguish.
 - 1. By Noah’s day, the divisive results of sin entering the world had reached such an extent that even God could not tolerate it: GE 6:11-13.
 - 2. Many of the sins described by Paul as resulting from man’s rejection of God involve discord and enmity: RO 1:18-32; cf. EP 4:17-19.
- C. The gospel of Christ addresses this problem of sin in which the personal relationships that we need are broken.
- D. Let us contemplate the importance and joy of various aspects of the fellowship and communion which are possible through Jesus Christ and through Him alone.

DISCUSSION

I. FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

- A. Peace with God.
 - 1. It has been said that sin is a refusal to accept God’s love.
 - 2. Man’s sin prevents God from extending Himself to man in the relationship He originally intended - GE 2:16, 17; 6:5-7. Cf. IS 1:15; 59:1, 2; MT 23:37-39; RO 1:18; 2:4; 2 PE 3:9.
 - 3. In sin, man declares himself the “enemy” of God, and fear displaces love - GE 3:8-10; EX 19:16; DT 5:4, 5, 23-27; RO 8:7.
 - 4. Through the forgiveness of sin in Jesus Christ, the cause of man’s alienation from God is done away - RO 5:1, 2, 10, 11. Cf. MT 11:28-30; JN 5:24, 25; 1 CO 1:9; 2 CO 5:18-21; 13:14; CO 1:19-23 (cf. EP 2:11-22); 1 PE 3:18.
 - 5. In truth, this is “grace” in which we stand - RO 5:1, 2. Cf. NU 6:24-26.
- B. Access to God - HE 4:14-16; 10:19-22. Cf. EP 2:18; 3:11, 12; 1 TI 2:5; HE 7:19, 25; JA 4:8.
- C. Continued forgiveness by God - 1 Jn. 1:7-2:1.
- D. Knowledge of God.
 - 1. The Christian enjoys a living, personal relationship with God. He “knows” God!
 - a. “Knowing” God - JN 17:1-3; 1 JN 5:13. Cf. JE 9:23, 24; 31:31-34; EP 3:19; 4:13; PH 3:8-10; 2 TI 1:12; 2 PE 1:3.
 - 1) Knowing God (as distinct from knowing about God) involves study, prayer, worship, and meditation — all aimed at the cultivation of genuine love for God as a person. Cf. MT 22:36-38; 1 CO 13:1-3; 1 JN 5:3.
 - 2) David is a good example of the kind of relationship with God that is possible. Cf. PS 1:1-3; 23:1-6; etc.
 - 3) What glorious eternal fellowship awaits those who have come to know the Lord, and who are unashamed of their acquaintance with Him - MT 25:21, 34. Cf. MT 10:32, 33; RE 3:5, 12, 21.

- 4) On the other hand, what an eternal tragedy not to know Him or be known by Him - MT 7:23; 2 TH 1:8.
- b. "Walking" with God - Gen. 5:24; 6:9. Cf. LK 24:32!
 - 1) "When we walk with the Lord in the light of His word, what a glory He sheds on our way!" (J. H. Sammis).
 - 2) "We must walk with the Lord before we can fight for the Lord."
 - 3) We have worthy examples: Enoch, Noah, Abraham (Jas. 2:23), Moses, Elijah.
- c. God's "dwelling" in us and with us - JN 14:23; RO 8:1, 9-11; 1 CO 6:15-20; 1 JN 2:24-27; 3:24; 4:12-16; etc. Cf. EX 29:45; LE 26:12; ZH. 2:10; etc.
 - 1) "God in man, and man in God" (Godet).
 - 2) Obviously, important duties belong to those in and among whom God dwells - 1 CO 3:16, 17; 2 CO 6:14-18; JA 4:4; etc.
2. We need to be careful not to neglect or undervalue the personal nature of our relationship to God.
 - a. Spiritual life involves personal fellowship with our God - JN 10:10; 17:3; 1 JN 5:12; 2 Jn. 9.
 - b. "Morality is conformity to an abstract law of right, while religion is essentially a relation to a person, from whom the soul receives blessing and to whom it surrenders itself in love and obedience...Religion in its essential idea is a life in God, a life lived in recognition of God, and under control of the indwelling Spirit of God" (A. H. Strong).
 - c. The "nearness" of God to us is one of our most precious spiritual blessings in Christ - MT 28:20; HE 13:5, 6. Cf. DT 4:6-8; PS 148:14.
 - d. Our songs rightly emphasize our need for a vibrant personal fellowship with God. Cf. RO 8:31-39; 2 CO 3:4, 5; PH 4:6, 7, 13.
 - e. The invitation of Christ is an invitation to fellowship with God - RE 3:20.

II. FELLOWSHIP WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD

- A. Peace with God makes possible true fellowship with others - JN 17:20-23; 1 JN 1:1-4.
 1. God's people in Christ enjoy a unique relationship as:
 - a. God's "own special people" - 1 PE 2:9, 10.
 - b. The "family" of God - GA 3:26-29. Cf. HE 2:11; 3:5, 6; 1 JN 5:1.
 - c. The "body" of Christ - RO 12:4, 5. Cf. 1 CO 12:12, 13; EP 1:22, 23; 4:13-16.
 2. This unique relationship binds together those who otherwise would be alienated - GA 3:26-29; EP 2:11-22; etc.
 3. This relationship entails unique responsibilities - JN 13:34, 35. Cf. RO 12:10; 15:5-7; 1 CO 1:10; 2 CO 13:11; EP 4:1-3; PH 2:1, 2; CO 2:2; 1 PE 1:22; 2:17; 3:8, 9; 1 JN 3:14.
 4. This relationship produces joy - 1 JN 1:3, 4.
- B. Christians' common relationship to God is the basis of a common life together - Acts 2:42-47; HE 10:24, 25.
 1. Our spiritual "kinship" transcends physical ties - MT 10:37; MK 3:31-35; 10:28-31.
 2. The mutual benefits and values of the relationship are important. Cf. RO 1:12.
 - a. Friendship, companionship.
 - b. Help, encouragement.
 - c. Knowledge.

- d. Correction.
- e. Comfort.
- f. Prayers.
3. We need to recover a sense of the “community” aspect of Christianity - RO 12:5; PH 1:3-5.
 - a. To be “cut off from his people” ought for the Christian, like the Hebrews in the OT, to be a dreaded prospect - GE 17:14; EX 12:15; etc.
 - b. There needs to be some “fellowship” which can be “withdrawn” in discipline – 2 TH 3:6.
4. Nothing in this life surpasses the joy of Christians together worshiping, praying, studying, helping, teaching, etc.
5. “Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love; the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above” (Fawcett).
6. Those of “like precious faith” (2 PE 1:1) are our “glory and joy” (1 TH 2:19, 20).

CONCLUSION

- A. Each of us is bound for one of two destinies:
 1. Eternal fellowship with God - PH 1:23; 1 TH 4:16-18.
 2. Eternal alienation from God - LK 16:19-31; 2 TH 1:8-10.
- B. The choice is ours to make, while opportunity lasts - HE 5:9; RE 22:17.
- C. There is even now no treasure we ought to cherish more dearly or guard more carefully than our fellowship with God and His people — it is the missing dimension we need so desperately.
 1. It is in the gospel that God has purposed to “gather together in one all things in Christ” (EP 1:10). Cf. CO 1:19-23.
 2. To “taste” what it means to have fellowship with God and with others is a powerful experience. Cf. HE 6:4-6; 1 PE 2:2, 3.
- D. Can we imagine life without God and His people? Dare we “take one step alone”?