

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST—A BAPTIZING SERMON

“Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?”

Amos 3:3

THE expression, “walking together,” is often used in Scripture as a figure for communion. “Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” Communion, if it is thorough and entire, implies activity. It is not merely contemplation, it is action and, therefore, inasmuch as walking is an active exercise, and walking with a man is communion with him, active communion with him, we see how walking comes to be the picture of true communion with Christ. An old Puritan said, “It does not say that Enoch returned to God and then left Him, but he ‘walked with God.’” All his journey through, he had God for his Companion and lived in perpetual fellowship with his Maker.

There is also another idea contained in the term, “walking together.” It is not only activity, but continuance. So, true communion with Christ is not a mere spasm—not just an excitement of ecstasy—but if it is the work of the Holy Spirit and if it is enjoyed by the healthful soul, it will be a continual thing.

It also implies progress, for, in walking together, we do not lift up our feet and put them down in the same place, but we proceed nearer to our journey’s end. And he that has true communion with Christ is making progress. It is true that Christ can go no further towards excellence, for He has already attained perfection, but the nearer we get to that perfection, the more fellowship we have with Jesus—and unless we progress, unless we seek to be more childlike in faith, more instructed in knowledge and more diligent in service—unless we seek to have more zeal and fervency, we shall find that, in so standing still, we lose the Presence of the Master, for it is only by following on with the Lord that we continue to walk with Him. It will, therefore, very readily strike you how walking with a person is an excellent figure for communion with him and how the term, “walking with God,” is the best expression for fellowship with God. Hence, our text implies by its very form that two cannot walk together unless they are agreed. And it teaches us, therefore, that unless we are agreed with Christ, we cannot attain to the sweet state of communion with Him.

We, shall, first, notice the agreement the necessity for this agreement. that they may have full communion with Him.

I am not addressing myself so much to the world outside as to the Church within. When we are preaching the Gospel of salvation, we preach that to the world. But communion is like the Holy of Holies! Salvation, itself, seems to be but as the court of the priests, but communion is the Innermost Place, that which is within the veil, and into that none but the Christian can be allowed to enter.

1. First, then, Christian, we shall endeavor to show you WHAT IS THE AGREEMENT which must exist between your Lord and yourself before you can walk with Him. We will do this in a very simple way. We shall keep to the figure and we shall see that there are certain things necessary to enable one person to walk with another.

First, then, it is quite certain that if we would walk with Christ, we must walk in the same path. Two men cannot walk together if one turns his head in one direction and the other turns his head

the opposite way. If one should turn to the right and the other to the left, they cannot walk together, although they may arrive at the same end by different roads, but they cannot walk together unless they walk along the same road. It is true that they can have a little conversation even if they are some yards apart, but if one walks on one side of the road, and the other on the other, we would think that their communion was rather distant and their love rather cold. But, the nearer they walk on precisely the same road, the more are they enabled to hold fellowship with one another.

Now, child of God, albeit you cannot be saved by your good works, and your salvation does not depend upon your works, remember that your communion does! It is impossible for you to have fellowship with Christ unless you are obedient to His commands. Let a Christian err and he will be pierced with many sorrows. Let the child of God forsake the way of God, let him, as, alas, we oftentimes do, go down by the stile to By-Path Meadow, and he will not have his Master go down By-Path Meadow with him! If we will be self-willed and choose our own path, we must go our own path alone. If, for some seeming pleasure, or some fancied gain, instead of following the fiery cloudy pillar, we follow the will-o'-the-wisp of our own desires, we shall have to go alone, and in the dark, too! Christ will go with us anywhere where duty calls us. If duty should call us into the burning fiery furnace, the Son of Man will be there. If it should lead us into the lions' den, He will be there to shut the lions' mouths. He would not have gone there with Daniel if Daniel had sought, by neglect of duty, to avoid the threatened destruction. Although the Lord would go with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego even into the heat of the burning fiery furnace, yet, if they had bowed down to the image, He would not have gone with them. "If you walk contrary to Me," says the Lord, "I will walk contrary to you."

Here I must guard what I have said lest I should be misunderstood. I do not mean that Christ forsakes His people so as to destroy them—but He forsakes them so as to take away their communion with Himself. For again I repeat that, although salvation does not depend upon good works, communion has this dependence—and cannot be enjoyed between Christ and the soul that is full of sin. A man may have much sin about him and yet be a saved man. And much of frailty and imperfection cleaves to us all. But if we are living in sin. If we are, in anyway whatever, breaking the commands of God—to the extent of our sin there will be just that extent of separation between our souls and Christ. Sin may not kill us, but it will make us sick. It will take Christ's right hand from under our heads. Take care, therefore, Christian, that you walk in the steps of your Master. Strive to be obedient to His Law. Live righteously, soberly and godly in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Be you like Caleb, who followed the Lord fully. Endeavor in every way to learn His will and then to do it. In all your Lord's appointed ways, pursue your journey. Remember all His ordinances, and perform His every precept. Resign yourself to His every dispensation. Be you not as the horse or mule which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle lest they come near to you—but be you guided by the Lord's own eye. Run in the way of His commandments and you shall find them a delightful road! This is the first point—those who walk together must go the same way.

Further, in going the same way, they must go with the same motive. Two persons may be going the same way, but suppose they are going for very opposite reasons? There is a lawyer walking side by side with the man whom he is going to fleece. Let the poor man know that he is to be robbed at the end of his journey and there will not be any communion between the two travelers! Suppose two men are going together and one is about to bring an action against the other—there will not be any communion between them. Suppose they are going to fight with each other—there will not be any communion between them. Suppose the two are going to the same election, intending to vote for opposite candidates—they will not be likely to hold very sweet conversation with one another, albeit they may go in the same way. So, it is necessary that we should not only go in the same road, but with the same motive.

Perhaps you ask, "Is it possible that we can go with Christ in the same road, but yet not with the same motive?" Certainly, it is. You see a man who appears to be quite as holy as a Christian. He seems to be as obedient to the Lord as the man who really follows the Master. As for ceremonies, he is the very first to observe them. As for the duties of morality, he attends to them most scrupulously. But ask him why he does all this and he says it is because he desires to save his soul

by it. Immediately, he and Christ are at arms' length! Christ calls such an one an antichrist and they are sworn enemies. You are trying to save yourself, are you? Then you are to be a savior, while Christ is a Savior? Then you and He are at enmity! But if you are traveling on this road to be saved by Grace, desiring to show forth your thanks with your lips and in your life, then you do not wish to rob Christ's kingly or priestly office of any of its dignity. You do not desire to set yourself up as another king in Zion. But if you are walking in this road with a motive contrary to Christ, you cannot hold any communion with Him.

There is very blessed communion with Christ to be enjoyed in the Lord's Supper, but if anyone comes to the Lord's Table merely with the thought that it may do him good and save his soul, there is no communion with Christ for him because that is not Christ's objective. And it is the same with Baptism. That ordinance is a blessed means of communion with Christ in His death and burial, but if anyone desires to be baptized, supposing that the observance of the ordinance will save his soul, then there is no communion! If anyone attaches more to the act than Christ has commanded and, therefore, makes it our duty to fulfill it—the moment a man supposes any efficacy in the water and in the body being buried therein—then the communion ceases, for unless we come to anything with Christ's motive, or with a motive which is congenial to Christ's heart, we are not capable of walking with Him. Two cannot walk together unless they are agreed, not only in the way they walk, but also in the objective with which they walk in that way.

Once again, two persons may walk the same road, they may walk with the same purpose and yet they may not be able to speak to each other unless they travel the same pace. If one person shall travel home very swiftly, tonight, and another, who lives in the same house, goes creeping home very slowly, perhaps they will go down the same streets, yet they will say nothing to one another because one will be at home long before the other. So we must agree in the pace at which we travel. Why is it that many Christians hold no fellowship with Jesus? It is because they travel to Heaven so slowly that the Lord Jesus leaves them behind! They are so lukewarm, so cold, so indifferent—they have so little zeal, so little love—they have so little true desire to glorify God that the swift heart of Jesus cannot be restrained to tarry with them.

“Oh,” says one, “I travel as fast as I can, but I am only a poor feeble creature! I often creep when I see others run and, when I do run, I often see others flying.” Beloved, Christ does not measure your walking by the speed at which you go. If your desire is slack, the Lord Jesus will leave you and travel on before you—and you will probably find the whip of affliction behind you goading your soul to travel more swiftly! John Bunyan has a good picture. He says, “if you send a servant for medicines and he goes as fast as he can, perhaps he rides on a sorry jade of a horse and he cannot make it go fast. But the master does not measure the pace by the rate at which the horse goes, but by the rate at which the servant wishes the horse to go, and he says, “That man would go fast if he could. If you put him on a horse that had some mettle in him, he would be back and bring the medicines.””

So is it with our poor flesh and blood. It is an ill pace at which we can ever go with such a sorry thing to ride on—but the Lord Jesus measures our pace, not by the actual distance traversed, but by our desires! When he sees us kicking and spurring, as it were, in prayer, pulling at the rein, and toiling to make our poor flesh and blood rise to something like devotion and zeal, He accepts the will for the deed and He keeps company even with us who are such poor disciples. But let our desires be cold, let us become lazy, let us do little or nothing for Christ—what wonder if the Lord Jesus says, “This man observes not My Words and keeps not My sayings. I will not sup with him and he shall not sup with Me. I will give him enough comfort to keep him alive. I will give him enough spiritual food to keep his soul from actually starving, but I will put him on a poor diet until he turns to Me with full purpose of heart. And then I will take him to My bosom and show him My love.”

There is one more thing. You can suppose two persons traveling on the same road with the same intentions and at the same pace, yet they do not walk together so as to hold any fellowship with each other because they do not like each other. Where there is no love (and that, perhaps, is the fullest meaning of the text), there can be no communion. Unless two are agreed in heart, they cannot walk together. You know some of our very excellent Hyper-Calvinistic friends. Now,

suppose one of them meets an Arminian—you cannot suppose for an instant that there could be any conversation between them unless it were some jangling and abuse of each other. Suppose some good strict Baptist Brother speaks to us, who have more enlarged principles. He smites us with his heavy weapons and cuts us down for the great sin of loving all who love the Lord Jesus Christ and welcoming to the Lord's Table all whom we believe the Lord has received. But, so far as communion is concerned, our Brother would be obliged to go on the other side of the road. There must be, he thinks, a little distinction and a little difference kept up, for the honor of his own views. And we know that there are some Brethren who have a peculiar obnoxiousness of temper—they seem to be covered with bristles and sharp quills to prick and annoy any and every person who happens to come in their way. You cannot commune with them. It is impossible for you to walk in the same road with them, for you would feel it better to hold your peace all the way because they would be sure to misunderstand what you said. There must be an agreement in heart, an agreement in opinion, or otherwise two cannot walk together.

O Believer, have you agreement of heart with the Lord Jesus? Do you love Christ and do you think a great deal of Him? Do you ever seek to magnify Him and speak well of His name? Do you think Him the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely? And do you feel that He also has a good opinion of you? Has He said to you, "You are all fair, My love; there is no spot in you"? Has He spoken soft words to your heart which have caused you to think that His heart of compassion has yearned over you? Ah, then, communion is easy with you and your Lord, for your two souls are bound up in the same bundle of life and, therefore, it is possible for you and Christ to walk together! Are you and He of the same opinion? Are Christ's Words your doctrine? Have You been taught to give up all divinity except that which came from Jesus? Can you say of Him, "He is my only Rabbi, my only Teacher in the Law and the Gospel. At His feet, with Mary, I could sit and receive His Words and believe all that He has uttered to be the very Truth of God"? If so, Believer, communion between you and Christ is easy, for, when two agree in thought, intention, way and affection, then they can walk together.

I have taken so much time for this first point that the other two must be very briefly hinted at.

II. The second point was to be THE NECESSITY FOR THIS AGREEMENT.

First, Christ will not walk with us unless we are agreed with Him because if He did so, it would be a slur upon His own honor. No, more than that, it would be a denial of His own Nature! Should Christ come into concord with Belial? Should He make Himself free and communicative with those who indulge the lusts of the flesh and who disobey His commands? It would look ill if the King's Son should walk arm in arm with traitors! We should not think it a good sign if we saw the highest in the land herding with the lowest. Christ keeps good company and if we do not have our hearts purified by the Holy Spirit, He will not come to us at all. He will not abide even with His own children so long as they harbor sin. Invite the devil into the front parlor of your heart, and Christ will not come. No, it would be a derogation of His own dignity, an insult to His own Character to do so. Give your heart up to the indulgence of some ambitious desire and you cannot insult the Savior by inviting Him to come to you. In our own houses we do not invite two persons who are at enmity, and is it likely that Christ will come where sin is reigning, or pampered, or indulged? No, Brothers and Sisters, He knows there is sin in the best human heart, but, as long as it is kept down and as long as He sees that our desires are to overturn it, He will come there. But when He sees sin petted and fed in the place which ought to be His own palace. When He sees self-righteousness and self-security harbored there, He says, "I will not return until they have repented of their sin."

There is another reason why you cannot commune with Christ unless you are in agreement with Him and that is because you, yourselves, are incapable of it. Unless your soul is in agreement with Christ. Unless, in motive, aim and will, you are, as far as possible, like your Master, you cannot rise to the dignity of fellowship with Him! Fellowship with Christ is a high privilege—no man can attain to it as long as he indulges evil purposes, or low desires. The heart must be assimilated to the likeness of Christ. It must be cleansed and renewed by the Holy Spirit, or else it loses its wings and is unable to mount to the high places of the earth where Christ shows His people His love.

There is another reason why Christ will not commune with us unless we are agreed with Him, namely, for our own good. Christ cannot and will not hold sweet fellowship with His people unless they are in harmony with Him. If Christians swerve from Christ's path and backslide from His ways—and Christ were still to indulge them with love feasts—they would not realize their sin and would still continue in it. Let a father indulge the erring child with all the usual display of his affection. Let him put away the rod. Let him never use a harsh word at all, but treat the sinning one with the same love as another who is dutiful and obedient—how is it to be expected that the child would ever forsake its faults? If Christ should give the same love, the same enjoyments in sin and after sin, as He does in duty and after duty, His people would scarcely recognize their sins and they would continue in them. But just as the Lord is pleased to make pain the telltale of disease, so that a headache becomes an indication of something wrong within the system, so does He make the absence of His own fellowship the tell-tale by which we may know that there is something within our soul that is hostile to Him—something that must be driven away before the sacred Dove will come, with wings of comfort, to dwell in our hearts. “Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” No. That is impossible.

III. Now, thirdly, I want to urge all Christians to SEEK AFTER THIS AGREEMENT WITH CHRIST.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, in order that you may agree with Christ, I have first to remind you that the perpetual indwelling of the Holy Spirit must be with you. Unless the same Spirit that dwells in Christ shall dwell in you, your agreement can never rise to such a height as to admit of any depth or nearness of union. Take care continually to seek the unction from on high, the indwelling of the Holy One of Israel! In the measure in which your heart has been endued by the Divine influence and baptized by the holy fire of the Spirit—in that proportion will your soul be in agreement with Christ and your union be true, close and lasting. Take care of that.

And then, next, under that Divine influence, look well to all your motives. Seek not to have any aim to get honor to yourself, or honor to your fellow men. Take care that in all you do, you do it with a single eye to your Master's honor, for, unless your eye is single, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If you will win the sunlight of your Master's face, you must seek His Glory and His Glory alone.

Then, if you would have union with Christ, take care, in the next place, that you do all in dependence upon Him, for if, in the affairs of your soul, you set up in business for yourself, Christ will be at enmity with you. Seek not only to turn your eyes to Him for direction, but also for support. And look to Him in your prayers, in your preaching, in your hearing and in everything, for so shall Christ and your soul be agreed and you shall have fellowship with Him.

And, lastly, be continually panting after more holiness. Never be content with what you are. Seek to grow. Seek to be more and more like Christ! And then, when that desire for holiness is strongest, you will have the same desire that Christ has, for His desire is that you should be holy, even as He is holy. And His command is, “Be you, therefore, perfect, even as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect.” And when your desires are Christ's desires, then shall it be possible for you to walk with Christ, but not till then!

I long to have a Church in complete agreement with the Lord Jesus Christ, for that would be a Church against which the gates of Hell could never prevail! If a church is merely founded by a man, the man will die and the church will perish. If a doctrine is only taught by a man and you receive it on his authority, his authority will pass away as all earthly things must. But, if it is of God, woe unto them that fight against it, for they can never prevail against Him! Woe unto him that dashes himself against this stone, for he shall be broken in pieces! And if it is rolled upon him, it shall grind him to powder! Let us be sure that a church is a Church of God in her doctrines, in her ordinances, in her prayer and praise—and we may know that she shall be like the stone we read of in Daniel, “cut out of the mountain without hands.” None shall be able to break her, but she shall break all opposers in pieces and she shall fill the earth!

Now there are some friends who are about to walk with Christ into this pool of Baptism. Can two walk here unless they are agreed? You may walk into this pool, but you cannot bring Christ with you unless you are agreed with Him. If you come without agreement with Christ, you will make a slip of it in your life, or else go back and walk no more with Him and be offended with Him. Remember, Brothers and Sisters, unless your two hearts are agreed, unless Christ and your heart are made one, you will fall out with one another before long! Christ will not long be at peace with you, nor will you be at peace with Christ. Your profession will be short-lived, after all, unless it is a true and real one—the expression of the inner heart. I pray that your profession tonight may be a sincere one, that you may testify to the world a true, saving and entire agreement with your Lord and Master. And if any of you are not agreed with Christ, I beseech you, though you have come so far, come no farther! Go not into this pool till you are thoroughly agreed with Christ! I charge you, in the name of the living God, as you shall have to stand before His bar at last, play not the hypocrite! Be sincere, for, if you give yourselves not wholly to Christ, you are doing like those who come unworthily to the Lord's Table—who eat and drink condemnation to their own souls—for he that is plunged into the Baptismal pool as a hypocrite, is immersed unto his own damnation!

But, O, you humble followers of Jesus, you have testified to us your fellowship in the faith! Be not afraid, now, to confess it before men—and may God acknowledge all your names, at last, among the followers of the Lamb, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.