

A Life of Union and Communion With God

by Dougan Clark

The sermon teaches that a life of holiness is fundamentally about union and communion with God through faith, knowledge, and love.

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5, 1 Corinthians 8:1, 1 Corinthians 13:2, Hebrews 11:6, 1 John 4:7

Topics: "Inner Holiness", "Faith And Obedience"

Description

Dougan Clark preaches on the inner life of holiness, emphasizing the importance of union and communion with God through faith, knowledge, and love. He highlights the need for believers to seek God's guidance in all aspects of their lives, including their studies and pursuits, to acquire wisdom and knowledge that align with God's will. Clark discusses the distinction between a life governed by faith, centered on God, and a life governed by desires, often fixated on earthly things, urging believers to transition from desire to faith to experience true rest, peace, and joy in God's will.

Transcript

The inner life of holiness is a life of union and communion with God. And since faith is the bond of union between God and man, this life, as has been stated before, is pre-eminently a life of faith. We become united to God in faith by simply believing, and continually believing just what God tells us to believe. We may be also united to God in knowledge by first knowing Him, and then asking Him what He wishes us to know, so that we may and should consult Him in regard to what we must know just as certainly as to what we must do.

Ask Him , beloved, what studies you are to pursue, what books your are to read, and where and how you are to obtain the knowledge which He wishes you to possess. No doubt He wishes His children to be well informed. He wishes them to be diligent and intelligent students of the Bible, and to acquire, in addition, such other knowledge as He by His Spirit or by His providences may suggest. But I cannot see that it is His purpose that any of His believing children should be mere bookworms, or that they should be mere critics.

It is the knowledge that pertains to salvation -- the knowledge which will make them wiser, more efficient, and more successful in winning souls -- that He will bring within their reach and enable them to acquire, if they will only let Him be their guide in this as in all other matters. The man whose heart is on fire with the love of God and love of souls is not likely to be, or to remain an ignoramus. He increases like his Master in wisdom and knowledge. He adds to his faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge. He may not rank as a great

and wise Christian, and certainly the highest scholarship and the most earnest Christianity are not at all incompatible. And yet we are not to forget that there are "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble who accept the call extended to all, to be saved themselves, and devote their lives to saving others." Besides the union with God in faith by believing what He tells us to believe, and besides the union with Him in knowledge of knowing what He tells us to know, we must also be united to Him in love by loving what He tells us to love. We are to love God supremely, that is above all other things, and we are to love Him with all our capacities of loving as the one object worthy of all our heart's affection, and then we are to love everything not only less than Him, but with reference to Him, and therefore with a love which He approves. We are thus to love all created beings in God and for God. And this is what the beloved Apostle calls "perfect love." The inner life of holiness, therefore, is a life of perfect faith on the one hand and a life of perfect love on the other.

Let us now dwell for a little while on the distinction between life which is governed and directed by faith, and the contrary life, which is governed and directed by desire.

We know that the unregenerate man dwells almost wholly in his desires. They constitute his home. He runs hither and thither as his desires lead him in one direction or another. To be sure, some unsaved persons are far more noble and pure in their desires than are others, but all are influenced and moved to action by that which in each individual constitutes his prominent desire. And the same is true, to a very large extent of Christian believers. These have been pardoned and adopted into God's family, and hence have new and higher desires begotten in their souls, and yet it is true of the great majority even of professing Christians that they live chiefly in their desires -and that their desires are still in a high degree fixed upon earthly things. There is an immense disproportion between their desires and their faith.

And this is true even when their desires are fixed upon things that are good and right. They desire temporal blessings without exercising faith in God for the needed supply. They desire also spiritual blessings for themselves, their families, their friends, or for the Church in general, or the salvation of sinners, but without the necessary faith for the bestowment of any of these blessings. It may be even said of some that the weakness of their faith is proportioned to the strength of their desires.

Now in all souls that are not wholly sanctified, desire has its center, or to say the least, it attaches itself in no small degree to created things, in a word, to the creature. The life of faith on the other hand, has its center in God, and attaches itself to Him. Desire is restless, eager, unsatisfied. Faith is quiet, calm, contented. Desire says I must have this, or I must have that, and is full of effort and impetuosity for the attainment of its object. Faith looks steadily to Christ and says:

"Give what Thou wilt, without Thee I am poor; And with Thee rick, take what Thou, wilt away."

Now, when the Christian believer passes the line that separates justification from entire sanctification, he also experiences a transition from the life of desire to the life of faith. Henceforth he desires not less ardently and powerfully than before, but his numerous and impetuous desires are now simplified and unified. His one desire now is that God's will may be done, and when he reaches that point and says in all things, "Thy will, not mine, be done," then in very truth he enters into rest, and into peace, and into joy with which the stranger inter-meddleth not. Beloved reader, learn then, I entreat thee, the distinction between the life of desire and the life of faith, and pass from the former to the latter by trusting Jesus.

But the union with God by love is even a greater and more precious thing than is the union by faith. The latter is indispensable to the former, but it is also subordinate to it; God is love. And since His essence is

love, it follows that all Christian love has its foundation in Him. If any individual really and truly loves God, it is because the love of God has been shed abroad in his heart through the Holy Spirit. God's love emanates from Himself. Man's love so far as it is Christian love is from the same source.

And as all true Christian love comes from God, so it is like God's love. Not equal to it, of course, for the finite can never measure up to the Infinite, but of the same nature. God's love goeth forth from His infinite heart with a desire to do good to His creatures. Man's love kindled at the same "eternal fire," goes forth first towards God Himself with a desire to promote His glory and, secondly, towards all mankind, with a desire to do them good.

And further, as this holy love comes from God, it must be ever subject to His regulation. My brother, my sister, let God determine for thee, who shall be the objects of thy love, and what shall be the kind and degree of love appropriate to each individual. Let thy prayer be as mine is. O, Lord, feed my heart from Thy heart. Teach me what persons and on what degree Thou wilt have me to love. Let all thy affections be right affections. Let me love enemies, friends, everybody, each with a pure love, and let me be united to Thee in love -- to all eternity.

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