

Keep Close to Christ

by James Smith

To keep close to Christ means to maintain a deep and intimate relationship with Him, characterized by faith, love, and obedience.

Scripture: Matthew 18:20, Mark 9:24, John 15:4, 1 Corinthians 11:25, 1 Corinthians 15:58, Colossians 3:16, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Titus 2:13, Hebrews 12:2, 1 Peter 1:8

Topics: "Christian Living", "Discipleship"

Description

James Smith preaches on the importance of keeping close to Christ, emphasizing the value of the soul and the solemnity of eternity. He highlights the necessity of staying near to Jesus by immersing oneself in His Word, participating in His ordinances, thinking highly of Him, praying fervently, exercising faith, loving Him deeply, being actively engaged in His work, and eagerly anticipating His return. Smith stresses that to conquer sin, overcome the world, find joy in tribulation, endure pain with fortitude, and ultimately be close to Christ, one must consistently prioritize Christ in every aspect of life.

Transcript

A minister of Christ was dying. He had a young sister whom he tenderly loved, and in whose welfare he felt the deepest interest. She came to pay the last visit, and receive from his lips the last words of advice. The words of a dying minister, realizing the value of the soul, and the solemnity of eternity, are important words. Taking her by the hand, and fixing his eyes upon her with a loving look, he said, "Keep close to Christ!" What could he say of more import? Her life lesson was comprised in four words, "Keep close to Christ!" She had come to Jesus, she professed love to Jesus, she found happiness in Jesus; but the dying brother knew the deceitfulness of the human heart; the power of the world's fascinations, and the craft and subtlety of Satan, therefore he exhorts, "Keep close to Christ!" May the Lord give us grace to get near to him, and then give us more grace, to keep near to him; for alas! how many of us, like Peter, follow him afar off.

It is an important inquiry, and will repay a few moment's consideration. What shall we do--to keep close to Jesus?

If we would keep close to Jesus--we must keep close to his WORD. Here he reveals his mind, displays his love, and exhibits his beauty. It is a revelation of his deepest, sweetest, kindest thoughts. It is an exhibition of his infinite, eternal, deathless love. It is a mirror in which we may see his unparalleled beauty and excellency. No one can keep close to Jesus, who does not daily, seriously, and prayerfully read his Word.

That word, received into the heart by faith, digested by meditation, and reduced to practice in the life, will bring the soul and Christ together. For the more we know of Christ, the more we shall love him, the more we shall prize, pant for, and seek to enjoy his presence. Blessed Spirit, help us so to read the Word, as always to find Christ in it; and by it endear him more and more unto us, and bring us into closer fellowship with him.

If we would keep close to Jesus--we must attend to his ORDINANCES. Gospel ordinances all exhibit Christ, bring us to Christ, and lead us into fellowship with Christ. Baptism, is a burial with Christ.

The Lord's supper, is feasting with Christ.

Preaching, is publishing Christ.

Hearing is hearing Christ.

Praying is unitedly addressing Christ.

In the ordinances, Christ meets with his people--and manifests himself to his people. They are the galleries in which he walks. The chambers in which he rests. The palace in which he is enthroned. Every believer can say, "We have seen the goings of our God, even the goings of our king in the sanctuary."

If we would meet with Christ, we must go where he directs us. If we would speak with Christ, we must go where he grants audience to his people. If we would keep close to Jesus, we must follow the Lamb wherever he goes. The footsteps of the flock, indicate that the shepherd is near; and Jesus has said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name--there am I in the midst of them." To despise the ordinances, is to despise the Savior who instituted them; and to neglect the ordinances, proves that we do not prize the presence and approbation of Jesus as we ought. Or, in one word, that we are not anxious to keep close to Jesus.

If we would keep close to Jesus--we must THINK much of Him. Our thoughts always influence our feelings. If we think too much of carnal things--we are sure to get at a distance from Christ. Christians often complain that they love Christ so little, enjoy Christ so little, resemble Christ so little. But how can it be otherwise, when they think of Christ so little? Jesus should have the cream of our thoughts. We should direct our thoughts to him often through the day, and fix our thoughts on him the last thing at night. "As a man thinks in his heart," said Solomon, "so is he." And this is true in reference to most subjects.

If our thoughts are not with Christ--our hearts are not with Christ. But we must not merely think of him--but think highly of him; yes, endeavor to think of him as God thinks of him, and speaks of him in his Word. Think much of Christ--if you would keep close to Christ.

If we would keep close to Jesus--we must be much in PRAYER. Prayer brings Christ and the soul together. If I pray, I must use his name, plead his merits, and rely on his influence--or I cannot prevail. Many professors are satisfied with certain set periods for prayer, and if they pray morning and evening--they are satisfied. But if we would keep close to Christ, we must learn to pray everywhere, to continue instant in prayer, to pray without ceasing. This proves that there is life in the soul, even more than set seasons of prayer; and if the heart is warm, if the desires are strong, if the soul is lively--it will be very frequently directing up its short, pointed, powerful prayers to heaven!

If we read much of Christ, and read rightly; if we think much of Christ, and think pleasantly; we shall be much in prayer to Christ, and thus shall we "keep close to Christ."

If we would keep close to Jesus--we must be exercising FAITH in Him. Not only believing that he is, or that he came into the world to save sinners--but realizing that he loves us, takes a deep interest in us, always keeps his eye on us, and is ever with us. We must stay the mind on Jesus, exercise confidence in Jesus, and look for the incessant attention of Jesus. A simple faith will view Jesus as taking an interest in all our affairs--even the minutest; as listening to our cries--even the feeblest; as prepared to confer on us blessings--even the greatest. Faith leans on Jesus--as the traveling spouse on her beloved. Faith looks to Jesus--as the sick man to his physician, and as the poor man to his generous benefactor. Faith confides in Jesus--as the child does in its kind and affectionate father. Faith, if Scriptural and lively--is always going to Jesus--and receiving from Jesus. It carries every care, every cross, every trial to Jesus; and pleads with him to sanctify it, until he sees fit to remove it.

Faith sees Christ, when reason cannot discern him. Faith hears Christ, when sense can detect no sound. True faith and Christ are never long apart, nor far apart. If therefore we would "keep close to Christ," we must daily, yes hourly, exercise faith in Christ.

If we would keep close to Jesus--we must LOVE Him. Nothing brings parties together like love, nor will anything keep parties together like love. Though love cannot be forced--it must be fed and nourished. I cannot compel myself to love anyone, by a mere effort of the will; but I may so think of a person's excellencies, and speak of a person's virtues, and dwell upon a person's beauty--that I may fire my heart with love.

If therefore, I would love Jesus, I must read of him, think of him, and get into his company; and if I do this, I shall soon feel my heart going out to him in desire, and at length, cleaving to him in love.

If I really love Jesus, I shall want to be in his company; and if I am much in his company, my heart will be soon filled with love to him; and if my heart is full of love to him--I shall get close to him, and keep close to him. It is when we allow our love to wax cold, or when we wander from the object of our love, that we sink into gloomy doubt and darkness; and when this is the case, we are at a distance from Jesus. Let us, therefore, direct our thoughts more to Jesus, lift up our souls more frequently to Jesus, and pray the Holy Spirit to shed abroad the love of Jesus in our hearts--and then we shall "keep close to Christ."

If we would keep close to Jesus--we must be EMPLOYED for Him. Jesus has something for us to do, and he wishes us to do it. Not that he not could carry on all his affairs without us--but he wishes us to show our love to him, by doing something for him. Active Christians, if they are working from a right motive, and if his honor is the object they aim at in all they do--enjoy much of the presence of Jesus.

The Beloved frequently goes into his garden, like Boaz--he goes into his harvest field, and speaks lovingly to his servants. The diligent soul is made fat, while the slothful soul suffers hunger. The idle must expect reproof--but the industrious will be indulged with his smile.

If I would "keep close to Christ," I must go where he is, I must do what he bids; and his bidding is, "Son, go work today in my vineyard!" Begin work at once, and keep on until I say to my servant, "Call the laborers, and give them their hire." If we do not devote our talents to Christ, and spend our time in the service of Christ--we shall never "keep close to Christ."

If we would keep close to Jesus--we must be constantly expecting his appearing. He says, "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give unto every one according as his work shall be." Primitive believers lived, expecting him; they stood prepared for him, therefore they could do, or suffer, anything in his cause. Death had no terrors for them--for it was only going to be with Jesus! This world had no peculiar fascinations for them--for they lived realizing the fact, that they knew not the day, nor hour, in which their Lord would come back! Nor did they appear to be at all anxious about it, their object appeared to be--to be prepared, either for death, or his second coming.

Hence Paul said, "Therefore we labor, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." "Accepted of him," this was the point. If they could commend themselves to Jesus, the world may scoff and persecute them; if they could commend themselves to Jesus--their grand object was obtained by them.

The writer can bear testimony from experience, that he has found nothing so effectual, in bringing him close to Christ, and keeping him close to Christ--as a daily realization of the uncertainty of the period of his Lord's coming, and the believing anticipation of his coming.

To CONCLUDE, if we would be happy in the ways of God, if we would adorn religion in all the relations of life, if we would be useful to our fellow men--we must "Keep close to Christ." If we would conquer inbred sin, if we would overcome the world, if we would triumph over the prince of darkness--we must "keep close to Christ." If we would be free from slavish fears, if we would enjoy the assurance of our salvation, if we would be joyful in tribulation--we must "keep close to Christ." If we would bear pain with fortitude, if we would endure privations with courage, and if we would meet death with confidence--we must "keep close to Christ." And if we would "keep close to Christ," we must prize his ordinances, peruse his Word, meditate on his glories, be much at his throne, believe in his name, love his person, work in his cause, and live daily expecting his glorious appearing!

Reader, do you know what it is to be close to Christ? Have you fled to him for refuge, as to the hope set before you in the gospel? By nature, we are all without Christ, strangers to Christ, afar from Christ. Grace teaches us our need of Christ, brings us to the feet of Christ, and then unites us to the person of Christ. Being thus brought to him--we should abide with him. Having received some knowledge of him--we should attend to Peter's admonition, "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." If our knowledge of Christ increases, if our faith in Christ strengthens, if our love to Christ abounds--we shall keep close to him; and if we keep close to him--we shall be useful and happy. But if we wander from him, if we fail to exercise confidence in him--we shall become dull, lifeless, and unhappy. Let us therefore see to it, that we have come to Christ, that we are believers in Christ, that we have received the Spirit of Christ; and then, let us make it our daily object, and aim, wherever situated, or however circumstanced, to "keep close to Christ!"

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