

Communion

by Norman Meeten

The sermon emphasizes the importance of communion with God as a priority in Christian experience, and how it can be achieved through regular time spent with God, reading His word, and meditating upon it.

Duration: 54:25

Scripture: Philippians 1:3

Topics: "Communion"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the inadequacy of human language to describe the depth and significance of the preaching of the word of God. The sermon focuses on four aspects of this truth as found in the Philippian epistle. The first aspect is the fellowship of the gospel, which goes beyond mere words and doctrines and involves partaking of divine nature. The speaker encourages the audience to engage in Bible study by reading the book, allowing the Spirit of God to absorb it and write it upon their hearts. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the simplicity of the gospel and the need to continually declare the inward reality of God's presence in our lives.

Transcript

One of the greatest privileges of Christian men and women who have a living relationship with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Ghost, is to fellowship and commune with Him. I believe that that is the very heart and centre of all Christian experience in its ongoing outworking in our lives. Our communion, our fellowship, our union, our oneness with Him, maintained consciously and deliberately, praise God, and the primary purpose for which we have gathered together this morning is to recognise and enter into and confess that glorious fact, praise God.

In a little while we will break bread, it's sometimes referred to as the Holy Communion. It is a public declaration of that which we internally know and enjoy, and by the grace of God have been brought into, glory to His name. The New Testament has a lot to say about communion.

The language is varied, most of it taking us back to common words in the original language of the scripture, but it's rich and wonderful and intimate, and I believe that it is God's will that we understand it more and more fully. First of all, in the depths of our own spirit, where in many senses it's inexpressible, indefinable, human language is totally inadequate to describe what it's all about. I don't know about you, but often when I come to think of subjects like this, and when I spend time in the presence of the Lord, words seem to be so totally inadequate and insufficient to express what it is that's really happening on the

inside.

Glory be to God. And tonight, this morning, I just want us to look at four aspects of this lovely truth as they appear in the Philippian Epistle, not exhaustive, only a glimpse into a subject that we could spend hours in considering and meditating upon. Bible study basically is ever so simple.

All that you have to do is keep reading the book, page by page, turning it over, allowing the Spirit of God to enable you to absorb it and write it upon your heart and then work it out in your life. The tragedy is that many people don't read the book, they read books about the book. I want to tell you from personal experience, you can go to a theological college and get a degree in theology at the end of it and scarcely ever open the book.

So long as you read all the right books about it and answer the questions with a bias that will impress the examiner, you will get your degree at the end of it. You don't need to read the book. One of the things that happened to me when I was baptized with the Holy Ghost was that the book became a living reality.

Things that I'd wrestled with, grappled with, failed to understand. Paul was an enigma to me. I couldn't grapple with his concepts and his thoughts and his arguments and his definitions, but when the Spirit of God came, what was formerly so obscure and so complicated suddenly became so sublimely simple, not that I claim to know it all or understand it all.

None of us do, praise God. But suddenly my eyes were opened, the veil had been removed, and I could see and understand and comprehend, and God began to unveil secrets, keys, insights that illuminated great avenues of truth that as time has gone on have enlarged and increased and developed both to my own understanding and to my great joy. Praise his name.

And it's this lovely sense of communion. I suppose if I yielded to my natural disposition I'd end up a contemplative. Hallelujah.

God's kept me out of obscurity. I often think he's got a tremendous sense of humor. I often imagine when I allow my natural mind to run away with me how happy I would be in a monastic cell.

One nice little room, a bed, a chair, a table, a suitable collection of literature, a fairly nice window, upon a pleasant scene, a temperature higher than most people enjoy, and no noise. Praise God, I can't stand noise. I mean the wrong sort of noise.

No more than I can stand disorder or untidiness or impunctuality. All those sort of things are a tremendous trial to me. I don't know about you, my boys call me Mr. Fussy, because I like everything tidy and clean and in order and on time.

Amen. I don't think that that's just naturally me. I have a natural inclination that way, but I don't think that it's just naturally me, because God brings an order and a discipline, and we don't like that word many of us, an order and a discipline in our lives, and if our life is undisciplined or indisciplined we won't really know very much about communion, because the devil will make quite sure that it's crowded out of our lives and that there's no time for it.

Bless God. I believe that one of the greatest priorities in Christian experience and ongoing Christian living, beloved, is communion with God. You can call it what you like.

If you want to call it your quiet time and be old-fashioned, I won't take exception to you. Hallelujah. But I know that there is a priority that Christians must establish in their life, that they're going to grow and develop and increase and come into all that God's got for them, and nothing can be replaced, replace that, beloved, as a substitute.

I once went to a meeting down somewhere in Hampshire. I was hauled off there by a brother, I think, who's in the meeting. I was told it was a revival center, and I was to preach there.

I've never had such a devastating experience. In fact, when I left there, I'm glad that I wasn't in what they called revival. And one lady came to me, and I've made reference to the importance of reading the scripture in the course of what I've been saying, and one lady came saying to me as I was going out of the meeting, and she said, oh I gave that sort of stuff up long ago, she said.

When I was baptized in the Holy Ghost, I got a hotline to heaven, and I didn't need a Bible, and I didn't need quiet times or anything like that anymore, and I knew that that was basically the explanation, beloved, to the condition that I faced. Because when I stood up to preach that afternoon, I looked out upon a company of people amongst whom I saw more people demonically troubled than I've ever seen in any one company before. I saw it, beloved, and I'm not clairvoyant.

I'm as thick as two square planks on that level. I saw it, and before I could preach, I publicly prayed and took authority over the power of Satan, in order that men and women might be liberated and set free to hear what God had got to say to them, and delivered from the terrible delusions under which many of them had labored. And that was called revival.

It's far removed from anything that I even knew about revival in those days. Praise God. I want to say again, beloved, that communion, ever-extending in time, communion is a priority.

Fellowship with God, also fellowship with other men and women, but primarily fellowship with God is a priority in your spiritual life, growth and development, or you will never be anyone or anything, for you will only have to give to others, beloved, what you receive yourself in the quiet flesh. Praise God, in communion with Him. Hallelujah.

Let me ask you, how much time do you spend with God? Day by day, regularly, consistently, waiting upon Him, talking to Him, allowing Him to talk to you, reading His word, meditating upon it, and imbibing the truth as it's ministered to you by the Spirit of God. How much time, every day, do you give to that activity? Does that find a place at the top of the list of the priorities of your daily life? Amen. If that's not true, beloved, then you need to do business with God, and repent, because you've allowed something to usurp His place of superiority in your life.

You're seeking something less than the Kingdom of God. Praise His name. I love Him, and the thing I enjoy above everything else is to be alone with Him, and commune with Him, if possible, in a quiet place.

But it doesn't always have to be a quiet and comfortable place. In fact, the very epistle that we're going to look into this morning, beloved, where the Apostle writes with such tremendous conviction and authority on this glorious subject, wasn't a conducive location. In fact, just the contrary.

It was a jail. Amen. And I don't believe in those days that they had separate cells.

Most prisons don't today. They should have, according to the rules, but they don't, because they're so overcrowded. They were all thrown down, often into one hole, rather like people are in communist prisons, herded together like animals, sometimes not room to move an inch, hardly space to breathe, no conveniences to make life bearable.

And it was in that sort of context, and from that sort of context, that the Apostle wrote this lovely epistle. And it's a magnificent epistle. It is a letter, beloved, that proves the reality of God working out in the life of a man as a testimony to his intimate relationship and communion with God.

It's the epistle to the Philippians. And his whole relationship with the church at Philippi started with persecution, affliction, adversity, beatings. Amen.

And bleeding from head to foot, beloved, on that original occasion when he was imprisoned in Philippi, along with Silas, in the middle of a night, beloved, they weren't lamenting, they weren't preoccupied with themselves and bewailing their own circumstances, but they were communing with God, praising him, worshiping, singing psalms, glorifying God for the reality of the relationship that he had brought them into. Beloved, you can talk about this sort of thing theoretically, but it's when you're faced with the tremendous reality that you discover whether it's true or not. I was saying to brother, and I was talking to Ben just before the meeting just a few weeks ago on my way to church down in Catania in Sicily.

I was held up by two highwaymen, modern ones, on a motorcycle. They confronted me and wasted their time and then robbed me. Amen.

I praise God for that. One thing that it proves to me more than anything else is the things that I've said theoretically, and I trust I don't speak theoretically, but the things that I have preached, beloved, out of the glorious truth of God's word, proved in that moment of crisis and time to be an absolute reality. Amen.

You can quote texts like none of these things move me. Amen. But when you're suddenly faced in a situation to prove whether it's true or not, and find that it works, it's wonderful.

I will be robbed a thousand times, beloved, over. Praise God. I just went on and preached at the morning service, and it didn't make a scrap of difference that everything that I possessed that was of any value had gone.

Passport, air ticket, money, pens, the lot, it's all gone. Don't feel sorry for me, beloved. I have a father who's more than abundant in the embarrassments with my goodness, his goodness.

I'm twice as well off as before I was robbed. Amen. Amen.

But I can tell you this morning, and I testify to the fact, beloved, that the working of communion isn't some ethereal, nebulous, unrealistic thing, but something that is powerful and mighty, and when put to the test, proves to be true. Praise God. And the apostle knew it, beloved.

He wrote out of the authority of that which he was living in. He was communing with God there in the prison, originally in Philippi, and then away in Rome, beloved, when he was writing to them again, and speaking along this lovely line, glory to his name. I want to ask you this morning, is your God real? Is your God practical? Is your God, beloved, a person who isn't affected and influenced by the circumstances, the experiences that happen to you in the course of living, down here in this wicked and perverse generation in which we have to abide? Praise God that you have a relationship, a communion, a union, a oneness, a

fellowship with God that maintains and sustains and keeps you and holds you in the midst of adversity and affliction and hardship and difficulty, and doesn't disturb you within.

Glory to his name. Oh, I love him. Bless the Lord.

Beloved, is Jesus real to you this morning? More real than the person sitting here? Because of your communion with him, deep within. Everything's regulated from in here. Not up here, not over here, not in the meeting, but in here.

Praise God. Wonderful to come together, but it wouldn't matter if we never did again, although the scripture says we're not to neglect the assembling of ourselves together. Praise God.

Same with the breaking of bread, beloved, it wouldn't matter if you never broke bread again. Drink wine, apart from the fact that the scripture says you should, and if you love him you'll keep his commandments, and therefore given opportunity, beloved, you'll do it not once in a blue moon, but as often as you can, giving you opportunity to declare the reality of that which you know to be true within. Beloved, this is a testimony of the inward reality of that which God is, and is to me and you this morning.

Praise his name. Well, let's look at these lovely truths. The first one appears in chapter one.

I said it's ever so easy. There's a one in chapter one, in chapter two, one in chapter three, and one in chapter four, so you know where I'm going, and if you can read faster than I can, you'll get there before I do. Amen.

But if you read well, you should be listening to me, beloved. You'll miss what God is wanting to say to you. It's like when I give people homework, and I often give people homework in meetings.

Most good teachers do. It's amazing how many people do the homework on the fly. You hear the paper going over, and you catch them reading until you, and then you see them, beloved, and say, this is not fine for you, your homework.

You do it when you get home, and I'll mark you the next time I come. Amen. Here's our first lovely truth.

It's in chapter one, verse three. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you, making requests with joy for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that he which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. Praise God.

The fellowship of the gospel. Amen. Obviously, the apostle was writing to men and women, beloved, with whom he experienced anew a oneness, but it's not that aspect of the fellowship of the gospel that I want to emphasize this morning.

The aspect I want to emphasize, beloved, is our own personal fellowship and relationship with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the apostle was the embodiment of that gospel, and could speak of his gospel as my gospel. Amen.

He was a true representative of that gospel, the testimony of Jesus to men and women, and those to whom he wrote, beloved, he knew, and into relationship of fellowship, of oneness, of spirit. Glory be to

God. The fellowship of the gospel.

What is that? I believe that it's clarified for us a little in the verse, he who has begun a good work in you will perform it even unto the day of Jesus Christ. This word fellowship, beloved, or communion, alternatively rendered in the New Testament, comes from the Greek word kolonia. I'm not a Greek scholar, I'm not airing my knowledge, beloved, I just do my homework with the aid of a young analytical concordant.

You can do the same. Very good instrument or tool to assist you in understanding, perhaps, the truth of God more deeply. Amen.

It's the word kolonia, fellowship. He who has begun a good work in you. This word fellowship, beloved, always relates to that which is internal, inward, intimate.

Glory to his name. The fellowship of the gospel, and those who enjoy the fellowship of the gospel, beloved, aren't those who read the book, primarily, or listen to the truth, or agree with the creedal definitions of biblical truth, and say that we believe the whole of the scriptures and Genesis to Revelation, I do, without argument, praise God, but they are those, beloved, who have partaken of it. Peter uses this same lovely word in his second letter, where he speaks of us as being partakers of the divine nature.

Praise God. Beloved, that's fellowship in the gospel. It's not approving of it, agreeing with it, intellectually attending to it, it's not reading it, beloved, it's partaking of it.

We are partakers of the divine nature, and the divine nature was incarnated in the person of the Lord Jesus. And Jesus, beloved, is the gospel. It's not a theory, it's not words, it's not ideas, it's not definitions.

All those things serve to exemplify him. That's why he's called the living word. And because we're human beings, we need words, beloved, to describe the things that we try to grapple with in our inward man.

But ultimately, you get the onwards. You come to a place, beloved, where you have to act upon that which you inwardly know, and you partake of divine nature. It will be illustrated for us again this morning as we break bread and drink wine.

We will partake, we will imbibe, we will lie the truth of what God is saying to us, not just verbally, beloved, but demonstratively, dramatically, gloriously. We will imbibe that reality into the depth of our being so that we fellowship in the gospel. We become a part of the gospel, we become integrated and involved and implicated in all that the gospel is.

Amen. There are many people, beloved, who will sit and listen to the gospel today, call themselves evangelicals or Pentecostals. There are those who sit and listen, beloved, who fall into different categories with whom we would find it difficult to have fellowship.

The only person you can have fellowship with, beloved, is the person who has received the reality of the life of Jesus on the inside. They've come into fellowship, they've partaken of the gospel, they've partaken of divine nature. Beloved, that's all a mystery.

Anyone who's tried to grapple with ideas or thoughts like this, beloved, will find themselves constantly beggared. The word terminology, beloved, is so utterly inadequate. That's why it has to come down to something as simple, beloved, as eating and drinking bread and wine.

I don't know whether you've noticed or not, but when Jesus seeks to grapple with the most profound truths and the deepest of doctrines, beloved, he has an ability to find the simplest of analogies. That's wonderful. Bless God.

You tell me anything simpler than eating and drinking. There is nothing simpler. In all the experience of humanity, you don't have to be educated, you don't have to be learned, you don't even have to be grown up.

Praise God. A baby knows how to do it, beloved, even before it emerges from its mother's womb. It never has to be taught or instructed.

It is something that it intuitively knows and is able to do. As years go by, beloved, people can analyze it. Many people get into problems when they analyze it, because they work out what they can eat and what they can't eat.

And they go buy books on dieting and how you keep slim, or how you get fat, or how you keep well, or how you get sick. Now, the more men talk about it, and think about it, and write about it, the simplicity of it, beloved, becomes more and more complicated. And that's why God has to bring it back again and again to the simplicity.

When we talk about the fellowship of the gospel, beloved, it's not just words, it's not doctrines, it's not fine sermons. If it depended upon fine sermons and fine preachers, beloved, I wouldn't qualify. Praise God.

But it comes right down to the simplicity of partaking of divine nature. Glory to his name. When did you do it? I didn't ask you when you broke bread last.

When did you partake of divine nature and enter into the fellowship of the gospel? So that you could say with the apostle, my gospel. Beloved, the only thing that you will ever communicate to another person is what you are. The only thing that you'll ever have to minister or give to another human being, beloved, is what you have first received.

And if you've partaken of divine nature and entered into the fellowship of the gospel, beloved, your life will essentially be the gospel. Amen. You shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

That's the outworking, beloved, of the fellowship of the gospel. Are you the gospel this morning? Because you've partaken of that divine nature, and you're living in the fellowship or communion of that glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Let's move on to the next lovely truth, and it's in chapter two and verse one. If there be therefore any conservation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bows of mercy fulfilling my joy, that she be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Amen.

Here's our second lovely truth, the fellowship of the Spirit. Amen. Now, it's not the external that counts here again, it's the internal reality.

Amen. As I say, Paul was incarcerated in a jail when he was writing this truth, beloved, and he lived in the fellowship of the Spirit. Amen.

Nothing hindered it, nothing frustrated it, nothing restricted it. That's why his enemies, beloved, were such fools. They thought that if they put him into prison, they would deprive him of the privileges that he enjoyed.

Of course, they did just the opposite. They put Jesus in prison with him. That's what they didn't understand.

It's the same thing you see. The devil was deceived when he crucified Jesus. He thought, well, if I exterminate Jesus, that will make an end of it.

Little did he know, beloved, there was going to be a tremendous multiplication of it within a matter of days. Instead of there being one, beloved, by the end of the day, by the beginning of the day of Pentecost, there was about 120. By the end of the day of Pentecost, there was 3,120, and then it grew and grew until you get to the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles and you'll find it's all multiplying.

Phenomenal reproduction. All the pressure, adversity, difficulty, disadvantage, and everything that the devil can hatch up in hell, beloved, and plaster upon anyone who knows and loves the Lord Jesus, will only serve to enlarge and increase and develop and enrich and build them up in Christ. Praise God.

Have you found that to be true? Because you have a living relationship with Jesus, beloved, and what the devil thinks he can taint you. It's only like pouring oil on the fire. Amen.

You come into a relationship with him whereby you can fellowship with him in the Spirit, and no external circumstances can affect that one single step other than aid and abet the reality of what God is doing on the inside of you. That's why John says, you are of God's little children and has overcome them because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. Blessed be his name.

That's why Jesus said at the great exposition of the illustration of this lovely truth in John chapter 6, the words that I speak unto you, they're Spirit and they're life. It's not just the external definition, it's not just the external forms, but the internal reality. Now, beloved, sometimes we talk of the breaking of bread in this sort of terminology.

Figures, types, pictures, analogies. I was down in Worthing last Sunday and the Worthing folk won't be cross with me for repeating something that I said. I do not believe that it's a picture.

I do not believe that it's a figure. I do not believe that it's a type. I believe that God has brought us out of the partial and brought us into the real.

When I break bread, beloved, I'm not doing it pictorially, I'm not doing it figuratively, I'm not doing it symbolically, beloved, I'm doing it really, in the Spirit. Now, because people have perverted the truth on this point, beloved, and when they talk about real presence, talk about transubstantiation whereby bread and wine are literally transformed into the physical body and blood of the Lord Jesus, I will have nothing to do with that. But because people have perverted the truth, beloved, so often we've shied right away from the very art and secret and mystery of it all and missed the boat completely and relegated it, beloved, to a position which is virtually as idolatrous as the person who says that it all changes.

Beloved, I don't do it figuratively, I don't do it symbolically, I'm not doing it externally, I'm doing it really, intimately, wonderfully, in the Spirit. Praise God! The words that I speak unto you, they're Spirit and life. Praise God! When you break bread, beloved, do you literally commune with God in your spirit, by faith, in

your heart, with thanksgiving? Praise God! You'll all discover and know that I'm an Anglican, or was.

Amen! Those are the words in the context of the administration, beloved, of the community. Praise God! By faith, in your heart, with thanksgiving. Not pictorially, not symbolically, not figuratively, but really in the Spirit.

Beloved, I believe in the real presence. Is that shocking? I believe in the real presence. If I didn't, beloved, I'd be an idolater when I transacted in that thing.

I would just be doing something that was purely external, had no relationship to the essential truth that God speaks to my heart. I believe in the real presence of Jesus, by the operation of the Holy Ghost. Amen! Not that it's limited to, or can be relegated to a moment in time, the utilizing of bread and wine, beloved, but when I do that, as I do it in my spirit all the time, it's real.

Amen! Is it real? Is Jesus real, beloved? Praise God! Your fellowshiping in the Spirit, His Spirit with your Spirit, your one Spirit. Amen! I hope you understand what I'm saying. I am not a Roman Catholic, and could not be associated with Catholicism in any sense of the word.

I've just come from a country, beloved, where Catholicism can be little, shows little difference from Hinduism. I spend most of my time in India. But when I was in Katami, beloved, last year when I was there, they had the paternal festival of Saint Agatha, and when they hauled her out of the cathedral and walked her around the city, beloved, for a whole week with fireworks and crackers and dancing and singing and perusing and all the rest of it, beloved, there was nothing to choose between that and Hinduism.

Nothing at all! And people who've been the victims, beloved, of that system, most of them are demonically troubled. I ministered to one woman, beloved, who at her baptism as an infant was cursed by her godmother, who was a witch, under the approval of the system in which she was being baptised. I don't think I've ever seen things, beloved.

I'm not prejudiced, I'm not bigoted in my heart, I love every single human being upon the face of the earth. I don't ask what their label is, but I tell you the system is an abomination. I do not believe, beloved, in the perversion of the truth, but I believe in the real presence of Jesus, because it's fellowship in the Spirit.

Praise God! I don't want anyone, beloved, to go through the breaking of bread as a habit or a custom, or because it's being done, or because the person sitting on either side of you does it. You don't want to be embarrassed because of it. But I want you to know and enter into the reality of what you're transacting in the Spirit, and when you break bread, beloved, you do the real thing.

Amen. So that we don't say one thing and do another. Glory be to God.

Chapter three, the fellowship of the gospel, the fellowship of the Spirit. We'll break into the sentence in the relevant verse for the sake of time, verse 10 of chapter three, that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Praise God! That I might know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings.

I used to think that Paul had got the language all the wrong way around there. I thought it should have been the fellowship of his sufferings, the power of his resurrection. Beloved, but it's not the wrong way around, it's the right way around.

Praise God, because if you don't know the power of his resurrection, you won't be able to enter into the fellowship of his sufferings. Glory be to God. That I might know him.

Beloved, that word know is so closely related to the whole concept and thought of fellowship. It's a different analogy. It's related in the scripture primarily to the subject of marriage, that speaks of union, communion, oneness.

It's the outworking of the prayer that Jesus prayed when he prayed, Father, that they may be one, even as we are one. Knowing, spoken of in the context of marriage, beloved, is the most intimate definition describing that which makes two persons one. That's why we read in Matthew's gospel that Joseph knew her not until she had brought forth her firstborn son and called his name Jesus.

Hallelujah. That was the intimacy of a relationship between two human beings called consummation, beloved, that makes them one. Glory to his name.

And that is what God wants us to know with him in the Spirit. Jesus said, this is like eternal, that you might know him and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent. And it's that intimate, inward knowing of him.

No one knew Jesus Christ, beloved, until the Spirit of God came. No one, not a single soul upon the face of the earth knew Jesus Christ until the day of Pentecost. They knew about him, they'd heard prophecies, they'd been the subject of God's ministry over the years.

There had been a manifestation of him incarnate in flesh and blood. He'd moved amongst them, ministered to them, healed them, fed them, delivered them, done everything that he could for them, but none of them knew him. Came to the end of his three years' ministry and said to the disciples, have I been so long time with you, and hast thou not known me to them? The world's a difference in knowing about something, beloved, in actually knowing.

Praise God. Some of you have heard me say before, I know a lot about the Queen of England, but I don't know her. Not like I know my wife.

Praise God, that's the difference between knowing and knowing. That I might know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings. Amen.

The fellowship of his sufferings. Those who have entered into communion with the Lord Jesus Christ have identified with the explanation of all of God's activity in him, both before his incarnation, during the period of it, and following it. Praise God.

God has always worked by one great principle and law. It's called the law of the spirit. It's the law of death under resurrection.

Death under resurrection. It's written in the creation. It's declared, beloved, in every living thing.

Nothing lives unless there is death. Praise God. And those, beloved, who fellowship with Jesus Christ come into the activity of that law of the spirit.

We're identified with him in his sufferings. We're identified with him in his death. We discover the secret, the key, the very crux of all his power.

Beloved, if we don't know that, then we will know no life, either in ourselves, and we will have no ability to impart life to anyone else. Jesus defined it perfectly when he said, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die to bite us alone. But if it die, it will bring forth much fruit.

That's fellowship in his sufferings. Amen. I suppose if I were to quote my hero, they would all fall into that sort of category, because they are the embodiment, or the explanation of their life, was that sort of life.

Amy Carmichael, a man called Ragland, Jim Elliott, Hildred Cable, and a host of other names, beloved, that fall into the category whose biographies are written, which now are, the majority of which are out of print, or on dusty bookshelves, because people aren't interested in reading the solid explanation to their lives. They had embraced, beloved, the fellowship of his sufferings, and the fruitfulness of his life, with the declaration of the integrity and commitment of the heart of God's whole principle, beloved. That is infallible.

I want to say, beloved, that the secret of all true evangelism is to be found in that great principle and law, and no one will reproduce, beloved, and bring forth fruit unto God that will remain unless it is the outworking and the result of fellowship in the spirit. Fellowship in his sufferings, praise God. That's what makes the glorious fellowship of the gospel a reality.

That's what makes the fellowship in the spirit, beloved, a reality. That's what makes the fellowship of his sufferings, beloved, produce that which is tangible and has upon it the mark of that which is eternal. Glory to his name, the fellowship of his sufferings.

Isn't that what the breaking of bread is all about? The declaration of his death and resurrection, a constant reminder to us, beloved, of that great sacrifice for our sin, an explanation to the spiritual life of every one of us, and when we identify ourselves with him in this act, beloved, we are saying we are fellowshiping in his sufferings. We belong to the same spirit and disposition, beloved, that motivated him. Amen.

It may mean that you live in obscurity and die in obscurity, never be heard of again. Glory to his name. But if you discover the gospel, if you're living in the fellowship of his spirit, and you're identified with the fellowship of his sufferings, beloved, then the fruitfulness of your life will be eternal, because God is committed to it.

Blessed be his name. One last truth, not quite so obvious, but those of you who know how to read your bible will find it in the fourth chapter, where in verse 13 I read, I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me. You could only say that, beloved, as a result of his relationship and communion with God.

Notwithstanding ye have done well, that ye did communicate with my affliction, now ye Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. Amen. The word communicate, beloved, there comes from the same word.

The Philippian church, beloved, had a testimony from the lips and the pen of the apostle that they had learned the secret of communion in giving and receiving. He said no one else did it, but you did. Not that I need it.

He learned in whatsoever state, beloved, there was to be content. It didn't matter whether he had anything or whether he didn't. He found a relationship and a place in God, beloved, where he was totally and absolutely satisfied.

He wasn't looking for any man or any group or any church, beloved, to do anything for him. Praise God. But it rejoiced his heart when he found that the reality of the gospel that he'd been entrusted, that he'd ministered in the fellowship of the Spirit, that was an outworking, beloved, that the great fellowship of his suffering was producing fruit that was tangible and visible.

Glory be his name. They discovered and entered into the fellowship of giving and receiving. Amen.

We'll read about it in Acts chapter 2 and Acts chapter 4 where it says they had all things in common. Praise God. And that word common, beloved, comes from the same word.

Amen. This is what I love about the New Testament. You know, if the gospel wasn't a practical, realistic, tangible thing that worked, beloved, I don't think I would be too interested in it.

Praise God. God has a tremendous ability, beloved, to take the most sublime truth and bring it right down and outworship. You read the letters of the apostles, beloved.

They begin with great doctrinal expositions. Amen. And give us insights into eternal reality.

But before you get to the end of them, pause in the business of applying the truth practically, realistically. Husbands, wives, children, masters, servants, and so on. Hallelujah.

The proof, beloved, that you've got the real thing, that you're living in fellowship with God this morning, is that it's working in human relations. It's working in your home. Husband to wife, parents to children, employer to employee, and vice versa.

Praise God. In your business, in the way you handle your money, in the way you run your affairs, in the way you look after your belongings. Everything, beloved, is the proof of the reality of it.

If it doesn't work out at that level, there's very much doubt, beloved, as to you've really grasped and understood and entered into what fellowship is all about. Fellowship, beloved, is when it found its most perfect expression on the face of the earth at a place called hell. Everybody wasn't in an ethereal idea or a mental or intellectual gymnastic that took place, beloved, in the mind of Jesus.

But that which enveloped people for living in fellowship with God this morning, is that it's working in human relations. It's working in your home. Husband to wife, parents to children, employer to employee, and vice versa.

Praise God. In your business, in the way you handle your money, in the way you run your affairs, in the way you look after your belongings. Everything, beloved, is the proof of the reality of it.

If it doesn't work out at that level, there's very much doubt, beloved, as to whether you've really grasped and understood and entered into what fellowship is all about. Fellowship, beloved, is when it found its most perfect expression on the face of the earth at a place called hell. Everybody wasn't in an ethereal idea or a mental or intellectual gymnastic that took place, beloved, in the mind of Jesus.

But that which enveloped each whole person through its soul and body that went to die totally. Amen. Not partially, totally, completely, absolutely.

There was nothing partial about the commitment of Jesus at all. Glory to his name. He responded as a result of his communion with the Father, beloved, and went there absolutely and completely.

Not my will, but dying begun. That was the disposition of his heart. That was the sort of communication that went to and fro.

Amen. From the moment he came into the world to the moment that he left it. As he was coming into the world, he said, a body has now prepared for me to do thy will, O God.

One of the final statements that he made, beloved, one of them, not the last. He said, not my will, but thine be done. That was the bracket to the whole life of Jesus.

A testimony, beloved, that he was bracketed in the communion of his spirit and the Father's spirit. Glory to his name. And it worked out, practically.

The original church, beloved, and we talk a lot about wanting to be New Testament, consistent with the original revelation. One of the reasons why we started gathering together in conferences like this, and the reason for which many of us have continued to come, beloved, because there is in our hearts a longing and a yearning to see the realism of New Testament Christianity worked out in the 20th century. We can't have 1st century Christianity, beloved, but we can have New Testament Christianity worked out in the 20th century.

Amen. God has an ability, beloved, to apply the divine principle to the present age. Amen.

Now the original church, beloved, allowed this great principle of fellowship to become operative in their relationship with one another. They had all things in common. No one had need in the original church.

That was the proof of their relationship with God. You can't love God and hate your brother. That's impossible.

God says so. You say you do love God, then you'll love your brother. And the outworking of loving your brother, beloved, essentially is having all things in common.

That doesn't mean to say that no one possesses anything, because God makes people stewards of what is his. But your disposition and attitude to everything that you possess, beloved, is radically changed. It's no longer yours, it's his.

And you're but his steward. And as you live in communion and fellowship with him, you will know what to do and how to live. Glory to his name.

The Philippian church, beloved, has discovered something of the reality and the truth that they've lived out. The fellowship of the gospel in the fellowship of the spirit, embracing the fellowship of his sufferings to outwork the fellowship of giving and receiving. Glory to his name.

Again, beloved, the breaking of bread is a declaration of God's total goodness to you and me. For he gives without measure. Praise God, he doesn't give us little bits and pieces.

He gives without measure. He says, drink ye all of it. How many of us, beloved, are prepared to give our lives, not just to him, but to each other without measure.

I was once in a town called Darjeeling up in North India, breaking bread with a group of young evangelists and pastors from the hills. Some of them had never been to a breaking of bread before, because they'd never been in a context where that was possible. Therefore, when it came to actually breaking bread, they

listened very carefully as to what they were to do.

Now, when we came to the bread, that was comparatively easy, because it was broken up and it was passed around and each person had a little piece. But then it came to the cup, and we only had one cup, and I was glad about that. I wish we had one big cup this morning, it would take much longer.

I think those little tiny cups, which some places have, beloved, are an abomination. Perhaps that's a personal prejudice, but it violates, as far as I'm concerned, it violates the whole concept and thought that's implicit in what we're doing, communion, commonness, oneness. And anything, beloved, that militates against the truth, no matter how minor or trivial that it might seem to be, is always the thin edge of the rage.

You know, I was in a church, I can't remember where it was now, where you could choose your alternative. Oh yes, it was, it was in a place called Missouri in India. You could either go to the side of the church where there was one cup, or you could go to the side of the church where they had little touch.

I tell you, that was the era, beloved, magnified so far out of proportion that I nearly didn't participate at all, by way of protest. But I couldn't even allow that, beloved, to deprive me of having a testimony to the reality of that which I knew God had brought me into. I went to the side where there was one cup.

People said, you might catch something. These people have TB, these people have amoebic dysentery, these people have all sorts... Well, if that's where I'm going to catch it, beloved, well, if I catch it in the cup communion with my brethren, well, I'm happy to have it. Bless God.

Like my dear friend Dhirga Bhatt in Kathmandu, he visits a leprosy village every other Sunday, beloved, and his friends tell him, they said, Dhirga, you're mad. If you go on going to that place, staying there overnight because you preach so long or spend so much time counselling people, and end up wearing their clothes because you're so cold, having exposed yourself to the elements of the mountains late at night, you will end up with leprosy. He looked at them and he said, if living in the centre of God's will and doing what he tells me to do, implicates me in having leprosy, then I will happily have leprosy in the will of God, rather than get off scot-free and live outside of God's will.

I tell you, I counted a tremendous privilege to be identified with people who embrace the fellowship of the gospel, who move in the fellowship of the spirit, who are prepared to be identified with the fellowship of the suffering, and know the fellowship of giving and receiving to that degree. Not that one behaves or acts foolishly, beloved, but those are the sort of implications. Well, up in Darjeeling, when we were breaking bread when it came to the cup, these young brothers listened very carefully to what I said they were to do.

And the first brother took the cup and he looked very, very perplexed. He sort of looked around and he saw there were quite a lot of other brothers, but the problem was there was only one cup. Now he'd listened very carefully.

He'd listened to the words of Jesus, did he all of this in remembrance of me? So, hallelujah, beloved, do you know what he did? Drank the lot. All the older pastors were so upset, so put out, beloved, they thought it was a terrible mistake. I'll tell you, I rejoiced at last I found someone, beloved, who was prepared to literally do what they were told to do.

Amen! It was an indication, beloved, that he wasn't messy. Some of us drink so little, beloved, it's either because we're afraid of the contamination or we don't believe what God's saying. There was plenty more

where that had come from, and we soon got some more.

And he learned that you did have to share. Hallelujah. But he drank all of it.

You've got to have a heart disposition like that, this morning. Doesn't mean you're going to drink the cups of the dregs, beloved, the first person, or we might be here all day and Terry might have to get a contact with some Ribena firm. Amen.

But it's a heart disposition, beloved. Praise God. When God gives of himself, beloved, he gives totally, completely, absolutely, without measure, without limit.

Amen. And that's his declaration to us as we break bread. And if we haven't got a heart that can respond at that sort of level, beloved, and then allow the spirit to work it out in our attitude and disposition to each other, we know nothing, essentially, of what God is saying to us when he speaks to us in bread and wine.

The fellowship of the gospel, I partake of divine nature, testify to it when I eat and drink. Fellowship in the spirit, not just an external form, beloved, but an inward reality, not figure and type and picture. Real fellowship in his sufferings.

Identification with Jesus in his death. The greatest exposition, beloved, of the law of the spirit. Death unto resurrection.

I'm partaking of it, glory to his name. Fellowship in giving, as well as receiving, as a declaration that I'm identified with a generosity of the heart of God that knows no bounds and no limits. Glory to his name.

Beloved, are we prepared for what it means to be identified with the truth of fellowship as it unfolds in the scripture? I've only touched on fragments of that truth, and I want us all to know and understand, ere we come and break bread this morning, that we really know what we're doing, what we're testifying to, what we're committing ourselves to, what we're involving ourselves in, and are prepared for the outworkings of the implication, beloved, of this act. Amen. It would be better that we didn't partake if we're not prepared, beloved, for what it means.

One of the most common words in our gatherings, beloved, is the word real. Reality. God save us from anything that's sham, beloved, mere external form, and cause us to understand more and more.

Amen. We may come as a babe, beloved, not understanding that out here, but in here, knowing that something says, amen, that's what I'm identified with, that's what I'm involved in, and those are the implications that I am prepared for in the days that God affords to me in his grace to follow me. Blessed be his name.

Beloved, I want to fellowship with God this morning, and I want to fellowship with you, his people, in the spirit of the truth that emerges from his word. Blessed be his name.

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