

# Principles for Continued Fellowship

by Paris Reidhead

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*The sermon emphasizes that man was made for God and that our happiness and completeness come from glorifying and enjoying God.*

**Duration:** 37:46

**Scripture:** Genesis 1:1, 2 Chronicles 7:12, 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 27:4, Psalm 27:8, Matthew 6:33, Revelation 22:13

**Topics:** "Fellowship"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of prayer and seeking God's guidance in all aspects of life. He uses the analogy of trying to jump to the balcony instead of using the steps to illustrate the need for a step-by-step approach in prayer. The ultimate purpose of our existence and worship is to bring glory to Christ and satisfy Him, rather than seeking personal gain. The speaker also highlights the fallen state of the world and the presence of evil, reminding listeners of the need to stay pure and seek cleansing through God's provision, such as the labor in the tabernacle.

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## Transcript

2 Chronicles 7.12 And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice. I wish that you would read this last issue of the Alliance Witness. I wish you'd read every issue, but particularly the editorial that was there this week when the editor said that we were to seek God for himself, not as a means to an end, but simply for himself, because he's infinitely worthy to be sought, to be loved, to be adored, to be worshipped, to be obeyed, to be served.

And we need not condition our service by Lord, if you will then, for it is demeaning to this infinitely holy and righteous and majestic God to have to add anything to his work or character in order to merit our love and our worship. He is to be worshipped for himself, he is to be loved for himself. God has been on the seeking hand from time immemorial, from the very beginning, yes, before the foundation of the world.

God as father wanted children, God as eternal son wanted brethren, God as bridegroom wanted bride, God who is loved desired someone like himself to whom he could reveal himself and with whom he could share all that he is. And this is the reason why he made man. He made us with a great inner cavern in our spirits so immense that only he can fill it.

He made us in such a way that nothing can satisfy us but himself. Our work, as interesting as it may be, is inconsequential. And God will often give us work that in the midst of success we discover the emptiness of anything other than himself.

God has given to some riches and they have thought that in this they were having the greatest blessing of God. But there came a time when the riches were but a burden from which they sought reliefs because somehow they felt that in answering their cry for riches they had been robbed of that which their soul infinitely needed, namely God himself. And it is thus that we have to recognize that position and place and honor and things and experience, all that is in the world is utterly incapable of meeting the need of a human spirit.

You are made for God. Now, the great tragedy of the universe is not that man sinned and thus became subject to hell. The great tragedy of the universe is that man's love turned away from God and turned in upon himself, and he robbed God of that which he sought from eternity past.

It wasn't what man sustained by his crime that was tragic. It was what God sustained, the loss that he sustained by man's crime that was the true tragedy and the only tragedy of the ages, that God should have made sake in such infinite care and pains to prepare an ideal place for the creature he was making. And then having perfectly fashioned this man so that he could be all that he intended and having provided everything that he needed, then to have this one exercise the most Godlike part of him, his imagination and his will in a revolt against God.

And by so revolting to rob God of all the purpose for which he'd had in making man. This, I say, is probably the true and the only tragedy of the universe. It is not necessarily tragic that a murderer who's impenitent and absolutely unwilling in any wise to reconcile himself to society by a changed attitude should be electrocuted at Sing Sing.

This is regrettable, but it's not tragic. And were the judge to release this one without having had some or adequate indication of the justice of the law, it would then to have shown contempt for those that were righteous and law abiding. You can't say that the prisoner behind the bars is in a tragedy.

Now, it may be to him and to his desire to continue in his crime. And there have been, unfortunately, miscarriages of justice. But the principle is that when man sin and became subject to hell, this was the just consequences for his enormous crime.

The tragedy was that God was robbed of that for which he'd made all preparation from eternity past. And of course, then to see the measure of God's love and the measure of his desire that he should have even before the foundation of the world have anticipated this crime and himself had been willing to become flesh as a man, subject himself to his own law, live in the place where the man that he'd been put and placed was expected to live and then sinless to identify himself with sinners and to die the just one for the unjust that he might bring man back to God. This is a measure of love, infinite.

The proportions and the dimensions are such that they never can be penned or expressed. That that longing that he had before the foundation of the world should, in the fullness of time, be measured in this avalanche of outpoured grace and mercy is inconceivable to the human mind. I can't conceive how God could have loved us at all, but to have loved us enough to become what we were in order that we could become what he is.

This, I say, staggers our minds. And yet this is the measure of his love, that he was willing to be made what you were to become in the eyes of the father what you were so that you could be made the righteousness of God in him. You could be remade, refitted, recreated so that that would be possible for God's purpose to be realized in you, whether in anyone else or not, at least in you.

For this was a very personal matter. And so we find that this book is not the record of man seeking God at all. It's the record of God's great desire for man, his great longing for man, his mercy extended in an infinite compassion and a tender desire that beggars words.

When God moves on every page of this book to reach man and draw him to himself and man appears as the monstrous rebel who, though he has sinned, has no concern for his sin, a criminal with no sense of guilt for his crime, a rebel that is willing to engage in constant rebellion. And then at times when he does begin to realize that God is, he views God as merely an instrument for his own convenience. The Bible is the fulcrum.

Then the revelation is the lever and God is on the other end. And he tries by some means to press down on the lever of truth, resting on the word of God in order that he can move God to some further usefulness in his own life. And the while losing all sense of interest in God as an end, but viewing him primarily as a means.

This is the crime of religion that is irreligious Christianity that is non-Christian devotion that is devotionless. When God is viewed as an end, he has worshiped, he has adored, he has served and he is satisfied. When God is viewed as a means, it's simply another kind of Christianized idolatry.

And thus you got to recognize that whether it was out of fear of hell that you came to Christ and many of us came aware of our guilt and saturated with the sense of our sinfulness and completely convinced that we deserved hell and the good work of fear pressed us to the cross and drove us to Christ. And we're grateful for that lever and we're grateful for that instrument of fear. But I submit to you that early in our encounter with him in the word and through the word, we ought to understand that whereas he had to use fear as an instrument to awaken us from our sleep of death, that this ought not be the primary motive for our seeking God.

We ought to recognize and realize, dear friends, that God has something in us, something that he wants from us. And there ought to come into our hearts a great concern that he see of the travail of his soul and he be satisfied. And there should come to us then a sense in which we are greatly concerned and our primary concern is not to get God to work for us, not to get God to become useful to us, but that he should find in us what he wants and receive from us what he desires and secure that which is rightfully his.

And this then becomes Christianity, when you are you are Christian to the degree to which you, being one of Christ's, live for the glory of Christ and the concern of your heart is the honor of Christ and the satisfaction of Christ. Now, if you recognize this, then you will realize that whereas you may have come to Christ in order to escape hell, the real reason now why he wanted you to come was not just to keep you out of hell, but that in your repentance and in your faith, the Lord Jesus might receive what you had denied him in the days of your rebellion and your sin. You see, he was worthy to be worshiped long before you began to worship him.

He was worthy to be adored and to be served and to be loved. And you were loving yourself. And so was I. We were worshiping ourselves.

We were serving ourselves. We were seeking to please and gratify ourselves. And this is the state of sin, when self is the center of our being.

And a sinner is just an individual who lives for himself to please himself and gratify himself. He's egocentric. He's just centered.

Everything is centered in him. And he may be religious. He may be engaged in any kind of priestly service.

But still, this is sin. But when we come to that place that the concern of our hearts is that Jesus Christ should get something out of us, that we repent because he was worthy to be been served and worthy to have been obeyed and worthy to have had everything there was of us. And we didn't give him that which he deserved.

And now we see that this is wrong. We see it's a crime and we've changed our minds about it. And we've renounced this as the end of our being.

And now we've committed ourselves to an entirely new purpose, which is to bring to Jesus Christ what is rightfully his. And now we're moving into the realm of what we would call biblical Christianity, when this is the motivation of our hearts. When we recognize that we're not to pray essentially to get from God, that we've got to test everything we would ask of God by this, will it be to his glory? Will it be to his praise? Will it be to his honor? Is this that which he wants? Our first prayer in almost almost every instance of praying is not Lord, give me this.

But Lord, open my eyes, the eyes of my understanding to see whether or not this for which I am praying is needed now. And it's needed in the manner in which I am petitioning you. And it's going to be to the end.

It's above the supreme reason for your doing everything in the universe today, which is to glorify your son with the glory he had before the world was. And thus the first prayer you have to pray before you pray any other is, Lord, teach me how to pray. Teach me how to pray about this thing.

If you want to get from this lower auditorium here to the balcony, there's one way you can do it. You can stand here and try to jump. But I assure you that there are very few among us that will make it on the first try at least.

And I am confident that most of us aren't going to make it on any number of tries. At least I have no prospect of it. But I know how to get to the balcony without straining myself to jump for right around there are steps.

And so sometimes people pray with enormous jumps of faith for which they're not prepared. But if they would simply approach it from the standpoint of praying this step and that step, and this answer encourages that petition, then they would find that they're certainly soon in the balcony without the great disappointment that comes from a leap for which they were unprepared. And so it is that we should recognize that the end of our being is the glory of Christ and the end of our worship is his satisfaction rather than we worship simply that we can get.

Now, this, I say, is a basic fundamental principle in this book. It goes from Genesis in the first chapter and ties to the last of Revelation. And if you would understand the the basic theme of this, it is that man was made for God, that he could only be happy and rendering to God what God deserved, that man's happiness would come as a result from this.

Now, this was beautifully couched in the words of the Westminster Catechism. What is the chief end of man? And the answer that's rung across the centuries, unchanged and unchangeable, the chief end of man is to glorify God and then the answer to enjoy him forever. But he only becomes enjoyable when he's been glorified and man only becomes complete when he can enjoy God for he's made for God.

Now, Solomon has presented to God a temple and God's accepted it. He said, I've heard your prayer and I've accepted the place. And God invariably does this.

When you came to him in repentance and faith, you gave to God a temple not made of stones and the cedars of Lebanon and plated with gold with furniture of brass. No, no. When you came to him, you gave to God a temple just as definitely and specifically as did Solomon.

You see, Solomon's was a temple made of stone, temple made of timber. Yours is a temple made of bone and of flesh and of sin and of blood. Yours is your body.

But the scripture tells us that, no, you're not that your body is the temple of God. And when you came to Jesus Christ in repentance and in faith, you signified at that time that you were submitting what you were to him. You did because you said he is to be Lord and Savior, and by so doing, you recognized he bought you with all that he is, and since it cost him all that he is to get you, he ought to have gotten all you are in exchange.

And so in the beginning sense, back there at the point of repentance, when you said the purpose is to please God, I'm not going to rule, he is, that this issue was settled in principle. But you notice it wasn't just enough that the fire should come down and the smoke fill the temple and God seal it as he is. It wasn't long after this that that temple became as vacant and as useless spiritually to God as a pair of old shoes are that have been sitting out in the shed, mildewed and warped are to the man whose feet they once fit.

And this was signified by God when he allowed Nebuchadnezzar's army to come in and take the thing down and just wreck it. He said, it's useless to me. Now, dear heart, when you understand that it isn't enough for you to be born of God and thus constitute a temple of God, which he and his invading presence makes his by regeneration, it is that you should therefore understand that the place that God's going to meet you is there.

David said, the secret of the Lord is in the sanctuary, the sanctuary in the Old Testament was the temple tabernacle in David's time for God dealt in the tent until then. But in Solomon's time, it was of stone, as we've said. Now, the temple of God is not this building.

It was erected by thoughtful men that impoverished themselves 80 years ago in order to provide us today a place of meeting. And we're grateful for it. We recognize, however, that this is not the church and this is not the temple and this is not the place of God's dwelling.

And as attractive and satisfying as it is to my heart, the Lord, thy God in the midst of thee is mighty. Believe me, this is not the wings of the cherubim and God's glory doesn't dwell between the extensions of the sign on the wall. You are the temple of God.

You are his temple and this you are the place. And when you come together, then his temple is present. And when we disperse, his temple is absent.

The building is here, the window above and beside and all that we're associated with is here. But this is not the place of God's dwelling. You are the place of God's dwelling.

And so what God would have said regarding the temple of brick and stone, he now applies to us. And so we discover that he's sensitive. His name is holy and we obviously recognize that he's got to be that.

And he said, my name is holy. I dwell in the high and holy place with him that is of a broken and a contrite spirit to revive the spirits of the broken and revive the hearts of the contrite ones. And consequently, since we're flesh and blood and bone human beings and we have wills of our own and minds of our own, there is going to be in the course of our pilgrimage failure, failure to appropriate the provisions of his love and grace, failure to walk as we ought to walk.

This is a terribly filthy world that God's called us to traverse. It's a world that's governed by his archenemy. The whole philosophy came not from the book, but from the pit.

And we're in this world. We have to walk through it. We're assaulted by what we see on the highways and signs.

And you can't pick up the newspaper without having to associate yourself mentally, at least in imagination, with a world that's under the sentence of death. It's an evil world. They sing, this is my father's world.

Well, he made it. But man turned the governorship over to God's archenemy. And when our Lord was here, he said, the prince of this world cometh and then nothing in me.

And that friendship has not yet been extracted from the imposter, will be, but it hasn't yet. And so the system is still under the control of Satan. And this is the kind of a world he's asking you to walk in.

And so he knew that you were going to be dirtied, you're going to be soiled. And thus, very thoughtfully, he put into the tabernacle the labor between the altar of burnt offering and the place of fellowship. Can you imagine what judgment would have come? What would have happened if a Levite had gone from the court or a priest had gone from the court where he'd been tending the fire with the ashes? Have you ever seen burning flesh and the stench and the soot and the grease that comes with the smoke and all that's associated with the putting of the carcass of an animal on a huge fire of coal and having it consumed? And God knew that these could not go in.

And so there's something even at the cross that makes our hearts bend and cringe. People think of the cross as a place of beauty. To me, my friend, the cross is the place where we never come until we come with our heads down.

It's not a place of beauty. It's a place where justice and righteousness and holiness met sacrifice and sin. It's not the place to stay.

There was a beautiful place in there, the holiest of all, illumined by the presence of God, the holy place. But out there in the courtyard, there wasn't much of beauty. And so God put the laver between the altar and the holy place.

And now he's speaking to Solomon and he's saying, my people are going to understand that in this pilgrimage, they're going to have recurring need and they will deal with it the way I have prescribed, then I can bless them. And you're the temple of God. And he spoke of his temple in Jerusalem.

But what he said of his temple in Jerusalem is applicable to your heart today. And so it's very personal. You can't say this is Israel.

You can't even say it's the church. This is too broad. If you understand Second Chronicle 714, you have to see this is you.

You, if my people, put your name there, put your name there as much as you'd put it in John 316, for you belong there. This is a covenant. This is a covenant that goes right through the word from beginning to end, if and put your name.

If my people, which you call by my name, do you bear his name? Do you call yourself Christian? One of Christ is what it means, belonging to Christ. Do you bear his name? Then remember, he's concerned about his name. He's interested in his name.

He's burdened about his name. My people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves. Oh, my dear friend, do you not understand that this is what you did when you came to the cross? You humbled yourself.

This is why so few go in, because it's such a straight gate. It's a gate where only the bankrupt and the hopeless, the helpless, the crushed, those that are without strength and sinners and ungodly and enemies can come. That's all.

Have you come there? Did you humble yourself by coming to the cross and testifying that you needed a savior? Well, listen, because you've been forgiven, are you changed? Because you've been justified from all things whatsoever you've done, have you changed? Are you any other than you were? Isn't it true that you are the same kind of stuff you were before? Yes. And so is it hard for you to say, if I needed a savior to die for me, I need his continuous intercession. I need his constant advocacy.

I need someone at the right hand of the father who loved me enough to have my name written upon his hands. I need a high priest that continueth ever, whoever lives to make intercession for me. Can you humble yourself, humble yourself at the point of failure, at the point of need? This is what you're saying.

How often? Well, how often did the priest go to the labor daily? How often should you humble yourself? Whenever there's necessity. Yesterday or this past week, rather, I was talking with one with Jimmy, my boy, and something hadn't gone quite right. And I became impatient with him and I scolded him and he knew he didn't deserve it.

And after I'd done it, I knew I hadn't deserved it. He hadn't deserved it. And, you know, I began to realize something of this that I'm speaking to you in this connection.

When I had to say, Jimmy, I'm awfully sorry. Do forgive me. I shouldn't have been that impatient with you.

It wasn't your fault. Now, this is something utterly new for me. That is, according to nature, I've had to do it in the past.

But you see, the scripture says, humble yourself. I don't know how far to extend it. I don't know where to go, but I'd rather err on the wrong side than do stop short.

And I believe, dear friends, that we as Christians ought to be the first to become sensitive to our failure and our need and not wait to be caught in a mesh and exposed because God loves us too much to let us

get by with anything. He says, humble yourselves, humble yourselves. The broken and the contrite spirit he'll not despise.

You know, we're afraid people will despise us. Well, they do anyway. Why don't we just go ahead and get on the right side with God? And this means humbling yourself and keeping it that way, not just once in a while, but just that way.

Humble yourself. This is the first thing. And don't pray for humility, because if you do, you know, God has such a rough stone on the on the arbor.

He'll make you humble. But, oh, dear, don't let's not force him to shower. Let's understand that.

He said you do it now. He will. He will.

But if we force him to. But let's not do that, shall we? He said, if my people, which you call by my name, will humble themselves, then the next thing he said was this, if my people, which you call by my name, will pray. Now, there are several kinds of prayer.

There's the prayer of the sinner that comes to savingly embrace Christ. There's the prayer of the of the Christian that comes in confession. I believe I told you of a young lady at a Christian college some months ago.

And she came at the close of a meeting and I said, what's the matter? She said, well, I worked in a certain situation and due to a series of temptations and my own weakness, I sinned against the Lord. I said, yes, well, let's pray. So we got down to pray.

And, you know, she started out, oh, Lord, thou who art sovereign and majestic in the heavens, thy servant hath failed thee in particulars that are common to the race. Well, after a few moments of this kind of nonsense, I touched her shoulder. I said, look, we're just wasting God's time as well as mine.

And she we got up, she said, well, I thought we were going to pray. I said, not like that. That isn't what he meant when he said pray.

He said, well, what does he mean? Well, he says he wants you to use the same words he used. So what do you mean? I said, the only way I'll pray with you, if you'll get down on your knees and tell God what he said, that that what you did is. The tears just gushed up.

You mean I have to tell her? I said, that's right. Oh, I'm through. I'm going.

Oh, she said, don't go. So we knelt again at the bench there at the auditorium in the college chapel. And she got down there and the fountain of her heart broke up.

She said, oh God, I have. And she said it. But you see, it was for her.

She was trying to fool God and fool herself. But when she said what God said, she was praying. And this is what prayer always is.

Humble yourself. And then he says, pray. But pray means to say what God says.

And then the next thing is, he said, seek my face. My people, which are called by my name, will humble themselves and call things by their rightful name and seek my face, my face. Now, why do you seek God?

Is it you want something from him? Well, bless your heart, you need something from him.

We all do, don't we? But you know, you need him more than you need anything from him. And he said, if you'll seek my face. David said, when thou saidst unto me, seek ye my face, my heart said, thy face, Lord, will I seek.

Now, what are you seeking from God? Are you asking God to bless you so that you'll be effective in your service? Good, but not good enough. Are you asking God to give you power so that you'll be a fruitful in your Sunday school class? That's good, but not good enough. Are you asking God to bless you so that you'll be a faithful pastor, street preacher or a witness in the home or or successful in your business? Now, God does all of these things, but he didn't say seek them.

He said, seek my face. You shall search for me and find me, but you shall seek for me with all your heart. See, God died out of love, loved you with an everlasting love, and he died out of love for you.

He loved you so much that he died out of a broken heart for you. Now, he wants to be loved for himself. He wants to be sought for himself.

He doesn't want you to come to him just on a basis of seeing how you can use him. He loves to be longed for and he wants to be wanted. And if you come to him with anything less than wanting him, you're robbing him and you because God can't give you what you want.

But when you come just seeking him and you don't care about anything else, then God can trust you with things and other in place and so on. He said, seek my face, the smile of his face brings joy to your heart, light of his eyes brings wisdom to your life, seek my faith, bring satisfaction to you, for you're made for God. And so he said, if you'll humble yourself and pray and seek my face and then, of course, the last and turn from the wicked way.

Because if you were not to turn from your wicked way, you'd give evidence that you had not humbled yourself, you had not prayed and you'd not sought his face. Now, you're going to this is a crisis. You see, here's the crisis.

Humble yourself. That's a crisis. Pray.

That's a crisis. Seek my faith. That's a crisis.

Now, what's the evidence of the genuineness of the crisis? The process. Turn from your wicked way. Do you see? This is exactly what the spirit of God is telling us as the principle for continued fellowship, whether it's in the temple in Jerusalem or the temple of your own heart.

This is an extendable principle that God wants to have operative in every Christian life as long as we walk in this world. It's a principle of that is not restricted to this temple. It's a principle.

It's as eternal as God is. Now, what are we going to do about it? You're either going to say, yes, wasn't that that's true, what he said was so or else you're going to say God spoke to my heart and he asked me to humble myself and he asked me to name things by name and pray and he asked me to seek his face and he asked me to turn from my wicked way. Would be derelict of me to have brought you to this point, not give you an opportunity to have the crisis today, today.

Now you want to do it now, you see. That's why we're going to bow in prayer just one minute or two at the most. I'm going to ask you to say to your own heart, am I where God wants me to be? Am I what God wants me to be? I know I've been forgiven.

Most of you will say, if you haven't, I speak to you and say, we invite you today to make this clear. But perhaps I speak to someone said, yes, I know I passed from death to life. I know I've been born of God.

I know the past sins are under the blood, but oh, my, I've come in attitudes and they've come in actions, they've come things into my life which I deplore and know to be sin. But today I'm going to humble myself, testify to my need, I'm going to pray, I'm going to seek God's face. You know your need, you know your heart.

Because we only have a moment, I'm going to say, if God has spoken to you, will you not stand right now and right where you are and by your standing say, yes, I've heard the voice of God. Quickly, just stand, remain standing. And in a moment, I'm going to ask you and others to go with me into Wilson Chapel so we can have a time of quiet prayer together.

But it would be derelict, I say, not to challenge you to mind God. Now, there'll be no time as propitious and wise as right now. Would you stand? God bless you.

Yes. Every head bowed, every eye closed. Are there others? Are there others? Right now, mind God now, don't wait.

My people, do you know his name? Will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked way. Then will I hear, then will I heal, then will I forgive. Would you stand? I said it would only be a moment.

But, oh, that moment is long enough for you to say, yes, Lord, how wise it would be if things aren't right with you and God to take this morning to meet him. Do mind him now. I'm going to ask that one or two of our deaconesses go, the one standing into Wilson Chapel right now.

Will you do that, please? Would you, would you just slip out and go to the back? We'll join you in Wilson Chapel. Now, what have you, if things are right, the glory fills the temple, then just rejoice and praise God that you see again how to maintain that life of fellowship and union. What if it's not been so? Do you not think we ought to pray that God would just deal with you until you come to the place where you do what you ought to have done? I would like to ask you this before we go.

How many would say, if I had done what I ought to have done, I would have stood? Pray for me. Would you put your hand up if this is your heart? Yes, I see it. God bless you.

Other others, if I had done what I ought to have done, I would have gone. Let us stand for the benediction. As we go, our father, help us to go realizing that thou hast loved us with an everlasting love and thou hast desired us for thyself.

Grant that we shall ask our hearts, have I given to God in me what he wants from me? Is he satisfied with me? Is he getting out of my life that which is to delight his heart? Deal with us, father, this word that you gave to Solomon at the dedication of the temple, we apply to our own hearts and hold as a continuing principle that the truths in it are unchanging for your covenant, keeping God. For the one whose hand has been raised saying, if I had done what I ought to have done, I have gone for the one who's gone, who's

quietly praying. Oh, meet that one.

Our father with victory and blessing for all of us. Let the continuing abiding presence of the Lord be upon us. May thy grace and mercy and peace be in abide with us now and until Jesus comes again, amen.

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