

The Communion of the Holy Ghost

by Samuel Chadwick

The communion of the Holy Ghost means that we are partners, colleagues, and comrades with the Spirit of God, and it is the basis of His work.

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Church Fellowship"

Description

Samuel Chadwick preaches on the concept of communion as partnership, emphasizing the shared work and resources among believers and the Holy Spirit. The communion of the Holy Ghost signifies a deep partnership with God, where believers are called to share in His mission and power. This partnership involves communication and putting resources together for common purposes, as seen in various examples in the New Testament. The fellowship of the Spirit in the Church highlights the essential relationship between the Spirit and the Church, where both are interdependent for the work of God to be accomplished.

Transcript

Communion means partnership. The word passes through various phases in the New Testament, and is variously translated, but the idea of sharing runs through them all. In Luke 5:10, it is said that James and John, sons of Zebedee, were partners with Simon. Paul says of Titus (II Cor. 8:23) that he was his partner and fellow laborer; that is, they were colleagues in the ministry of the Church. Of Philemon and Onesimus it is used in the still more intimate sense of comradeship. The communion of the Holy Ghost, therefore, means that we are partners, colleagues, comrades with the Spirit of God. We are partners in vocation and resources, sharers in work and power. Such communion involves communication. The partners put into the common stock for common ends. The New Testament insists upon this grace of fellowship in the Church. The Christians at Philippi are commended because they communicated with the Apostle in the matter of giving and receiving (Phil. 4:15, 16), and the Romans are exhorted "to communicate to the necessities of the saints" (Rom. 12:13). The rich are charged "that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate" (I Tim. 6:18). This idea of partnership is carried into the highest aspects of our calling. We are called of God "into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (I Cor. 1:9); we are "partakers of His sufferings and His comfort" (II Cor. 1:4-7; Phil. 3:10); and through Him we "become partakers of the divine Nature" (II Pet. 1:4). In all these senses the Holy Spirit of God enters into partnership with us, and becomes to us colleague and comrade, sharing what we have, and admitting us into His Mission and placing at our disposal all the resources of His Person and Power.

Our Fellowship and His

Emphasis is laid upon the fact that He enters into partnership with us rather than that He takes us into partnership with Him. Both aspects are true, for all fellowship must be mutual, but it is never said that our fellowship is with the Spirit. It is always "the Communion of the Holy Ghost be with you." In Philippians 2:1, it is "fellowship of the Spirit," and not "with" Him. John says "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (I John 1:3). There is no mention of fellowship with the Spirit, and yet "communion" is the special function and distinction of the Spirit. The omission implies that there is a difference between our fellowship with the Father and the Son, and the communion of the Holy Ghost with us. "In the one case we are partakers with Christ; in the other the Holy Ghost is partaker with us. This may possibly be connected with the special intimacy of His communion, by which He, as a Spirit, enters into the deepest and closest relation with our spirits. That is the first form in which we know it; but thereafter there is a reflex fellowship which we come to have with Him. He enters at first into our position, because He fills our heart and sympathizes with all our need. He then leads us to enter into His position; but that is a higher thing."

This distinction makes plain many things. The Christian Benediction ascribes Love to the Father, Grace to the Son, and Communion to the Holy Ghost. These qualities are common to all the Persons of the Trinity, but distinctive of each. Love is attributed to the Son and Spirit, as well as to the Father. Grace is of God the Father as well as of the Son; and our fellowship is expressly said to be with the Father and the Son. There is a distinction, however, that must not be confused. The love of the Father is the origin of Grace; the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is the medium of redeeming love; and through the Spirit is communicated both the grace of the Son and the love of the Father. The Spirit is the executive agent of the Father and the Son. He brings us into the fellowship of the Father and the Son by entering into communion with us. The range of our experience of love and grace is therefore determined by the measure of His communion with us. His partnership with us is progressive, and often His progress is hindered because we admit Him into partnership with qualifications. There are reserves of mind and heart and life. His communion is with us. He seeks to come into co-operation with us. The negotiations are from Him, the consent is with us. There are no reserves with Him. He is straitened in us, for all His negotiations wait for our consent.

The Fellowship of the Spirit in the Church

This distinction is observed in all the teaching of our Lord concerning the Spirit. He is the Paraclete, sent by the Father and the Son to abide in the Church until the purpose of redeeming love is accomplished in the world. For all the work of the Church they were to look to Him for light and guidance and power. They were sent forth to witness, interpret, and save, but they were first to receive a Witness and Teacher, and the Spirit of Power. He would be in them and with them. From Him would come the knowledge of the Truth in Jesus, by Him they would have the right word at the critical moment; through Him they should do greater works than they had seen Him do. The Church would be a second Body of Christ prepared and indwelt of the Spirit. In the corporate life of the Church He would find a temple, a medium, and an agent, and in Him the Church would find all its supply of life and grace, wisdom and power.

The basis of His work is always that of communion. That is why the work of the Spirit is always linked with the life of the Church, and the power of the Church is associated with the presence of the Spirit. The Church derives its authority from the Spirit, but the Spirit speaks and works through a praying and consecrated people. The Church that has authority "to bind and to loose" is a Church agreed in prayer and gathered in the Name; and the Church that has power to cast out devils is a Church that believes and

prays. The Spirit and the Church cannot be independent of each other. The Spirit needs the Church, and the Church needs the Spirit. They are partners; both necessary, and each dependent upon the other. The success of both is according to the measure of "the supply of the Spirit" through the Church to the world. Power is not in organization, neither is it in wealth or learning. It is still true that this work is not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord.

Why, then, is the Church bewildered in the day of confusion, and powerless in the presence of both her adversaries and her opportunities? The answer is found in the terms of communion. Conditions exist that make the partnership ineffective. There is "a law of the Spirit" by which His communion is made operative. The laws are few and simple, but they are imperative. He cannot work if they are ignored. Communion must rest on common ground. Its basis is a common bond of union; communion is the outcome of union. In this fellowship the bond is Christ. Where Christ is glorified the Spirit comes to abide, reveal, direct, and work. Through Him we enter into living union with our Lord, for the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of God, and by Him we find the unity which brings identity of interest and community of possession. That is why faith and prayer count for so much in the work of the Spirit. Nothing else really matters. These are the things that make possible the fellowship of the Spirit. He asks for nothing more than unreserved consecration to Christ, unclouded simplicity of the open heart, and exultant faith in His grace and power. By these the Churches live and prevail through the fellowship of the Spirit.

The Fellowship of the Spirit in the Believer

The Apostolic Benediction prays: "The communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all." All the blessings of communion are for each believer. There is nothing promised to the Church that does not belong to its humblest member. The Spirit of God is not the monopoly of any particular class. There is nothing done by a minister that may not be done by anyone to whom the Holy Spirit is given. Let that be quite clear. Everyone can say: The Holy Ghost comes into partnership with me. He is my Helper, my Witness, my Teacher, my Guide, my Strength. For all the will of God we each have the Spirit with all His resources of wisdom and power. All things are possible to the soul strengthened with His might and led in His wisdom. If these things be true, wherein lies the explanation of our weakness and reproach? Where is the note of certainty in our testimony? Where is the prevailing power of prayer? Where is the power that overturns strongholds and casts out devils?

The communion of the Spirit is with us. He seeks partnership with us. His resources are inexhaustible, and His power invincible, but! but! but! There are reserves, conditions, interests; barriers that hinder, grieve, and quench the Spirit. He is held up by the barriers of unbelief, and prayerless living, worldly ambition, stupid vanity, and inflated pride. He longs for our fellowship. For the sake of Christ and the Kingdom of Grace, He longs to be admitted to confidence and co-operation. He wants a central place in our hearts, and to be admitted to the life of the soul. He comes to co-operate, and co-operation waits for confidence and consent. Where there is "agreement" there is power. Service becomes mighty in this fellowship. All the conditions of power are met in "the supply of the Spirit." Personality is quickened and sanctified. Sympathy is deepened and enlightened, and in sympathy are the discernment that understands and the appeal that woos and wins. Weakness becomes strength when the Spirit of Might comes upon us. Ordinary men become wonderful when clothed with the Spirit of Power.

Weakness is a reproach when such might is at our service. Defeat is dishonor when the partnership of God is rejected. With the communion of the Holy Ghost at our command, what manner of men we ought to be! With such a partnership what mighty works we ought to do! There are no limits to His power. There are

no reserves in His communion. There is no respect of persons with Him. Why do we set boundaries to His work, limit His activities, and refuse His appeal? He brings all, let us give all. "The Spirit which He has planted within us jealously longs for our love." He seeks to enter into communion with us in all our life, and in return He will lead us into the communion of all that He has and is. Sign the deed today, and there will come the joy and power of the Holy Spirit of God who is the Spirit of Christ. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all."

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