

Communion with God the Son

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[0 : 0 0] In our evening services this month, we're doing a short study entitled Communion with God. And we're doing this because we want to think and learn more about the incredible privilege that we have as Christians, that we can actually know God. We can come close to him, participate with him, and enjoy his presence. I don't know what you all tend to think of when you think of God and of how you relate to him, but I know that for me, it's very easy to feel like God is out of reach or to think that even if we could reach him, he would want to take a step back and keep a distance from us. Communion with God is teaching us that if you are a Christian or if you become one, the idea of God keeping you at arm's length is complete and utter rubbish.

It's a four part series. Last week we looked at Communion with God the Father. This week we're looking at Communion with God the Son. Next week it will be Communion with God the Holy Spirit. And then the final sermon will bring it all together and look at Communion with God as one Father, Son and Spirit.

Each sermon is based on the passage that Graham read for us, Ephesians chapter one. So tonight, as we think about Communion with God the Son, we're going to look really at the first. We're going to be in the first half of the chapter mainly. But I'll just read again from verse seven. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his Grace.

As we said last week, Ephesians chapter one is like the Niagara Falls of theology. It just keeps pouring out a flood of astonishing truth. And central to all that theology is Jesus Christ. In fact, if you go through the whole chapter, you'll see that in nearly every verse, Jesus is mentioned either by name or by a pronoun. So I want to start this evening by just highlighting some of these truths about Jesus that Paul speaks of.

We don't have time to do for the whole chapter. So I'm just going to look at the section from verse three to verse 13. So we're going to pick out several things. I won't tell you how many because it'll probably frighten you all if I let it slip that this is a ten point sermon. So here is the passage I want to look at.

[2 : 4 0] The writing is a little bit small. Don't worry, I'm not going to read through it all. I just want to highlight the red bits as we go through it. Verse three, you can see that God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing. This is the first thing I want us to notice.

And of course, there's a huge amount we could say. What I want to just highlight is that at a basic level, this is reminding us that Jesus is the channel through which all of God's spiritual blessings are poured out. All the spiritual goodness and favor that God wants to bestow on humanity is given through Jesus. So if we keep that waterfall image in our minds that we had at the start, it's through Jesus that everything flows. He is that waterfall.

Which, of course, is why without Jesus, we are cut off from the stream of God's spiritual blessings. We might have material blessings, and loads of people have many material blessings who don't give Jesus a second thought. But spiritual blessings are given only through Jesus. He's the waterfall through whom it all flows. Second thing we see is that Paul tells us that we're chosen in him.

Christians are chosen in him before the foundation of the world. Here Paul is pushing our minds backwards, and we see that Jesus is at the core of God's plan from the very beginning, from before the foundation of the world. God's great plan to save sinners has Jesus at that foundation. It's all about him. And that's why when we look at how God's plan then subsequently works out over history or through as it's revealed in the pages of scripture, we should never be thinking that God is kind of figuring things out as he goes along.

It's not like that at all. Instead, everything in the Bible and in history is according to God's clear and definite plan. And at the heart of that plan is Jesus. So we can use that image of a foundation. You think of a foundation, of a building, of a house.

[4 : 56] It's the starting point from which everything else comes. And I don't know if you've ever seen a house foundation, but very often when you look at them, there's a series of small walls that are set out according to the shape of the house. They're called dwarf walls, and they're set out according to the plan of the building that's going to go above them. If you could imagine that, you could have a bird's eye view of God's Foundation, I think you could imagine those little dwarf walls spelling the name Jesus. I think that's a helpful image to highlight how central Jesus is to everything.

Number three, it says he predestined us for adoption through our sons, through Jesus Christ. I especially want to focus on the word adoption, which should, of course, immediately make us think of family. That's a key part of God's great goal to make an amazing family. And central to that family is Jesus. He's the one through whom people are brought into his family, and he's the elder brother of all those who become children of God.

So if you imagine a family meal at the dinner table, Jesus is bringing people into that room, into that household. He's giving them a seat at that table, he's welcoming them, and he is enjoying a brilliant time with them. He's warm, hospitable, loyal and kind.

Moving on, we see that in verse six, it says that God the Father is blessing us in the beloved. Now that is such a beautiful way to describe Jesus. He is the Father's beloved. So in all the ways in which God the Father accomplishes his plans through Jesus, Jesus isn't merely his servant or his Prophet, or his soldier, or even his champion. He's more than all of that, so much more.

He is the Father's beloved at every step, every moment. Jesus is God the Father's precious, treasured, beloved son. That's reminding us that Jesus is utterly unique. He's the one and only of the Father. From forever until forever, Jesus is his Father's joy and delight.

[7 : 36] So if you imagine the Father's love is the bright, warm sun that we've all been really enjoying this afternoon.

That love, that Sunshine is just beaming down onto Jesus.

Number five. Paul speaks of redemption through his this is now referring to the work that Jesus has done. So already we've seen why Jesus has come. It's because of God's plan, what Jesus accomplishes. He's building God's great family.

Who Jesus is the Father's beloved. Now we have how Jesus did it. And the answer is by shedding his blood. And of course, he did that on the cross. And through that, Jesus has secured redemption.

That means that people can be rescued out of slavery and brought into the family of God. The cross breaks the tyrannical power of sin. It clears the debt that sinners owe, and it brings freedom and new life to all who were enslaved to sin and to come to be cleansed by Jesus blood. It's reminding us that the blood of Jesus is incredibly powerful.

[9 : 00] But God forbid that at the same time, we must never forget that his blood is also incredibly precious. It's the blood of the beloved. God did not spare his own Son, but gave Him up for us all. And that blood brings healing and restoration. So you could almost think of the cross as a hospital, a place where healing and restoration takes place.

Okay, that was five. Number six. Paul says in verse nine that God has set forth his purpose in Christ. So that's pointed to the fact that not only is Jesus the means through which God's purposes are accomplished, he's also the means through which his purposes are made known. He's not just the great accomplisher.

He's also the great revealer of all that God wants to show us. In fact, it's in and through Jesus that God himself has seen. One of Jesus' disciples once said to him, Lord, show us the Father and it's enough for us. Jesus said to him, I've been with you so long and you still don't know me. Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

If you want to know what God is like, you look at Jesus. He is the great revealer of God. And when you do that, the amazing thing that you see is that God is a God who defends the poor, who reaches out for the suffering, who eats with people, who are failures, and who always stands up for what's right. It's Jesus who reveals that and he reveals all the other amazing purposes that God has. In many ways, it's like a great light bulb illuminating the character and purposes of God so that they can be seen.

Moving on, we see that it speaks Paul speaks of the fact that in him we have received an inheritance. So that word inheritance immediately speaks of future privileges. You can imagine inheriting a great fortune or a beautiful house. In Jesus, God is promising an amazing future full of privileges for his people. And I just wanted to pause there for a moment to point so that we can just I'm sure you noticed anyway, but to just highlight the fact that in just a few verses, Paul has gone right back to the eternal foundations of God's plan through the work and achievement of the cross.

[11 : 30] And now he's pointing forwards to the wonderful future that he's preparing. And where is it all centered? It's all centered on Jesus. It's in him that the inheritance is promised. Maybe if you imagine like a legal document declaring an inheritance, Jesus would be the name embossed on that document.

It's his name that will be on the header or the crest of the paper.

Verse twelve speaks of hope in Christ. Again, this is pointing towards the future, but that future makes a massive difference to the present. It's a great reminder that as Christians, we always have something to hold onto, no matter how difficult or disappointing or frustrating our circumstances might be. Now, Jesus is both the source and the object of our hope. So he's provided hope through all that the cross has achieved.

And at the center of that hope is a wonderful future with Him. And that is something that can be held onto. We've got lots of little children in the congregation. It was so lovely to see them this morning. But often you can think of a child toddling along and sometimes stumbling.

And if you imagine them struggling along and stumbling, but then think of an adult's hand holding on to the toddler, holding the toddler's hand, that hand takes them through and they can hold on to that. Two more. We're nearly there. Verse 13, it says that Christians are sealed in Him with the promised Holy Spirit. To see that, you've got to put the two bits together in verse 13.

[13 : 11] In Him you also miss out the middle bit were sealed with a promised Holy Spirit.

We look at this in more detail next week. Just now, I just want you to think in terms of a guarantee. Jesus confirms and seals all his promises through his Holy Spirit as a guarantee. It's a great confirmation that in Jesus everything is secure, everything is confirmed. So imagine like a stamp of ownership.

I don't know if you ever remember when I was we used to go to an office sometimes my father's office, and you'd get like a date stamp and you'd stamp every piece of paper you could find. It was always good fun, like that stamp that confirms ownership. When something is confirmed as yours, you can imagine that stamp to say that it's signed and sealed. Jesus confirms and seals Salvation with his Holy Spirit. And then the last thing, which is again in verse 13, it speaks of hearing the word of truth and believing in whom that word of truth the gospel is in through and about Jesus.

He's the one who communicates a lifegiving message. And through faith in Him, all people can receive all the blessings that God wants to bestow. And that message, of course, is a trustworthy, reliable, unchanging messages, like a great immovable rock that people can stand on as they place their trust and dependence on Jesus. So in just a few verses, that's ten massive truths about Jesus. But we can sum them all up in one word.

And that's the word mediator. Jesus is the mediator between humanity and God. That means he's the one through whom all God's purposes are accomplished. He's the one by whom all God's truth is revealed, and he's the one in whom all God's blessings are being poured out. So if you start reading Ephesians before you've even reached halfway through the first chapter, it is just a flood of stunning theology.

[15 : 38] But if you look at it, you can see that it is full of in him, through him, in Him language, it is all centered on Jesus Christ.

Now, you did very well to listen to all of that. That was a lot. I said ten points that was a bit cool on a warm summer evening, so don't worry if you couldn't bring it, keep it all in your minds. I'm going to summarize it all in a diagram. I could not leave you without one final diagram.

Now, I'm not the most imaginative chap in the world, but you may have noticed that for all ten of our points, I used an illustration. So we said that when we're talking about Jesus. Verse three reminded us that he's the great channel through which all God's spiritual blessing has been poured out so we can think of him as like a waterfall, just that channel through which it all comes. Verse four spoke about the foundation of God's plans, and that is built on Jesus. He's at the center of it all.

Adoption made us think of family Jesus sitting at the family table welcoming sinners to the meal, which of course, is what he did again and again in his own Ministry. Verse six said that Jesus was the beloved, so you can picture the Sunshine of God's love just pouring onto him.

Hospital Jesus at the cross is the hospital where healing can be found. So the green cross there makes us think of a hospital, a place of healing. We said in verse nine that Jesus is the great revealer of God's purposes. We use the illustration of a light bulb to think of him illuminating God's truth. Jesus is the secure of an inheritance.

[17 : 33] Imagine that's like a kind of inheritance confirmation document there on the screen. Verse twelve said that Jesus is the source of hope, the hand that we can hold onto that will never let go. Jesus is the confirmed of God's promises, that stamp that guarantees everything. And his gospel message is utterly trustworthy. It's like a rock that will never move.

Now, I would love to go into more detail on all of these things. We've only just touched on them. But what I hope more than anything that it highlights, and what I hope it helps us to do is to see just how massive Jesus is in Christian theology. You look at all that, and I hope that it shows you that Jesus is just epic.

And here is where we see something that every single human being has in common. There are many things that human beings have in common, but this is one particular thing that every single human being has in common, and it's this. Your view of Jesus is too small now for most of the population, that seems obvious. Many people barely have any view of Jesus. At best, he's maybe a wise teacher or a good example.

At worst, he's just a name from history or religion. But even if you are a devout, committed Christian for many years, even if you've spent a lifetime thinking about Jesus, reading the Bible, reading books, listening to sermons, and even if you gladly fall on your knees every day and say that Jesus is Lord, even then your view of Jesus is not big enough. Because the truth is, no matter how much we learn, no matter how far we stretch our minds, we are simply unable to grasp just how big and amazing and awesome Jesus is. And Paul talks about this later in the letter because he talks about Jesus' riches and he says they're unsearchable. And he talks about Jesus love, and he says it surpasses knowledge.

It's bigger and more awesome and more amazing than we can ever take in. And that's, of course, it's why Christian theology is just the coolest thing to learn, because there is always more and more amazing stuff to discover, no matter who you are. Your view of Jesus isn't big enough. Neither is mine.

[20 : 20] But the crucial question is this is your view of Jesus vital or fatal?

If you're a Christian, then yes, your view of Jesus will have a lot of growing to do with all the same like that. But you will know that even though it's small, it is vital. That's what makes us Christians. The fact that we trust in him as our source of life, and we know that nothing is more important but if you're not yet a Christian, if your view of Jesus is that he's not that vital, if you're pushing him away and saying, no, I don't want you and I don't need you, if you are thinking like that, then in the name of God, you have got to realize that that view of Jesus is fatal.

So there is our diagram, there's many of the amazing things that Jesus is. But where do we fit in? Well, I hope that we can all stand before that tooth and say, wow. And so I couldn't leave you a stick man either. So there you are.

There's the stick man. Passages like this show us that from eternity to eternity, at every step, Jesus is mediator, savior, brother, hero, teacher, healer, provider, protector. He is everything. And we stand before him and say, wow, we want to glorify him. That, of course, is man's chief end.

It's the number one reason we exist to glorify God. And it's in Jesus that that glory is revealed. And it's through Jesus that we stand before God in adoration, wonder and praise. So we stand before all that and we say, wow. And I could finish my sermon there, and I hope that it would leave you all in awe of Jesus.

[22 : 41] But I can't finish the sermon there because there's something even more amazing in this passage, Paul is reminding us that Christianity is all about Jesus, and that is amazing. But what is even more amazing is the fact that if you are a Christian, you don't just stand in awe before him. As a Christian, you are United to him. As Paul poured out these amazing truths about Jesus, at the same time, he constantly emphasizes that if you're a Christian or if you become one, then you are United to Jesus and you participate in all this amazing theology that Paul is talking about. And that's why if you look at it and ask the question, how many times are you mentioned in this passage?

That's the answer. Look at all the times he says.

Paul is highlighting the fact that if you are a Christian or if you become one, then by faith you are United to Jesus Christ. That means that you share in all that he's accomplished. You participate in all that he's doing. You belong with him at every moment. You're safe with Him forever more.

In other words, you have Communion with God the Son.

And that means that if you are a Christian, or if you become one, you're not actually standing down there in awe at all the amazing things that are true of Jesus. You're not down there. You are there right in the middle of it all, United to Jesus, utterly bound up with him and all that he has done. And the incredible truth that that reveals is that all these amazing truths about Jesus are all for you.

[24 : 59] So in Jesus, the waterfall of God's blessing has been poured out. Where has it been poured out onto you. You are the one standing underneath it. God just delights to pour his goodness and favor out upon you. If Jesus is the foundation, your name is on one of the bricks.

Your name is written there. That's why you actually fit into God's plans. In Christ, he chose you. Your name is on a foundation stone. Now, if you lack assurance, then think about that brick and the foundation of God's plan that has your name written on it.

You are unbreakably United to all the foundational solidness of Jesus. So if you dig, dig, dig, dig, dig, dig, dig, dig, dig, dig back into eternity into God's plans. You're there. Your name is there in Jesus. You have a seat at God's family table.

You are as much a part of God's family as Jesus is. You are as much a part of his family as Jesus is. Now, if you feel like an outsider in your life, please write that truth on your heart. You are irrevocably United to Jesus, the firstborn and eldest and awesomeest big brother in God's family. In Jesus, the beloved.

The Sunshine of the Father's love is beaming down on you as well. Now, this is maybe the hardest one of all to believe because it's so easy to feel unlovable. It's so easy to think that, yes, of course, the Father's love is pouring on Jesus. But I'm United to Him. But I'm kind of in the shade.

[26 : 51] I'll maybe be in the shadow, not two. It is not that the Sunshine or the Father's love has been poured on Jesus. And you just get to stand nearby and watch from a shady corner. Not too. You are United to Jesus.

So all the love that beams onto the eternal Son of God is beaming unto you as the adopted child of God. You're not in the shade of the Father's love. You are right in the middle, United to Jesus in Jesus through the hospital cross. You are being healed. So your mistakes, your regrets, your sins.

You think of all this stupid stuff that you've done in your life that you wish you had never done and you go up to God and say, what should I do about all this sin that I've mucked up? And he says, what is gone? Gone?

It's forgiven through the cross. You've been redeemed by his blood. And you say, well, what about all these bruises and scars and tears that remain? He says, I'll wipe them all away. And that's exactly what he's doing.

You are United to all the power of the cross in Jesus. The great purposes of God are being revealed to you. The whole work of Jesus, the mediator and the illuminator is to get to you. It's to show you something. As Jesus illuminates the truth about God, he's doing it so that you can know more and more of how precious you are to God and know more and more about all the blessings that he's going to pour out upon you in Jesus.

[28 : 41] The inheritance he secures is yours. So that document has your name on it. It's addressed to you. You are United to Jesus. The amazing future that God promises, that promises in Christ, is for everyone who is in Christ.

And that includes you as a Christian. So you think of everything that God is going to do in the future as he unites all things in Jesus, as he restores the universe into a nucleation, as he consummates his Kingdom for God. If you are a Christian, it is unthinkable and impossible for you to be left out of that in any way whatsoever. The inheritance is yours. In Jesus, you have hope.

That means that if we think of Jesus's strong hand, whose hand is he holding? Yours and Union with Christ means that his grasp is locked. Often we can easily think of hands holding and letting go. That's something that happens a lot in life. But when Jesus takes your hand, it's a one way movement.

He will never, ever let you go.

And that's a hope you can hold onto every single day. In Jesus, you are stamped with his guarantee so that stamp isn't on a piece of paper about you. That stamp is actually on you. You are his. You belong to Him.

- [30 : 13] You belong with Him. I want you to imagine that Jesus could shout one word about you for the whole world to hear. So imagine Jesus could have the opportunity where everyone was listening. Maybe everyone was watching on tele, whatever, or a massive gathering of the world's population somewhere. Just imagine that in your mind and Jesus says you can shout one word about you as a Christian.

What would he say? What would his one word be? Well, you might think on a good day. Well, he'd maybe shout forgiven or healed or believer or redeemed. Maybe he would say something like that on a bad day.

We would probably think Jesus would be tempted to shout something like disappointing or immature, wandering difficult.

I think if Jesus could shout out one word about you for the whole world to hear, he would cry out mine.

And in Jesus you have an immovable rock that you can stand on and rely on and depend on, and he will never, ever let you down.

- [31 : 30] Union with Christ means that all this amazing stuff about Jesus is also now amazing stuff about you.

If you are a Christian, or if you become one, you are not looking on from the side. You're right in the middle of all that God is doing through His Son, Jesus Christ. And that is why our chief end is not just glorifying God, it is also enjoying Him forever. Because all of that stuff is so good and there is so much for us to enjoy in Jesus.

Let me leave you with three things to think about. Number one, theology is the coolest thing ever. So keep learning, keep discovering, keep looking into more and more of what God has done and is doing for you because it is just amazing. Number two, all of this is going to come with you until tomorrow morning. So if you're a Christian, whether you're going to work or studying or having a day off or looking after family or meeting people or even if you're on your own all this never stops being true for 1 second.

So please enjoy it. Enjoy that waterfall of blessing. Enjoy that Sunshine of God's love. Enjoy the security of Jesus hand holding you. Enjoy it.

But tomorrow morning, please also display it. May our attitudes, our words and our behavior be a testimony to everyone we meet of how amazing Jesus is. And then, number three, if you're not yet a Christian or not sure I want you to look at that circle and I want you to see and know that there's room for you in there too and you just need to go for it. Pray to Jesus, say Lord, please save me. Please unite me to yourself and then don't wait for a Bolt of lightning because you don't need one.

- [34 : 05] Just crack on with following him for the rest of your life and in the end of it all we will be able to spend eternity together in heaven talking about how awesome it is to be United to Jesus as individuals and to be United together as brothers and sisters in him. And that is why partings in this life are only small things because we have a wonderful eternity to look forward to together through our amazing Union and Communion with our amazing Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Let's pray, Lord Jesus, we stand in awe before you at all that you've done but we also just rejoice in the fact that we don't just stand before you. We are United to you and this is where we realize that the riches of your Grace are unsearchable.

The depths of your love surpasses this knowledge and you are worthy of all our praise. Help us all to see these things more and more we pray in your name. Amen.