

Communion with God the Holy Spirit

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Date: 20 June 2021

Preacher: Jon Watson

[0 : 0 0] Now we're three weeks into our short series called Communion with God. And two weeks ago we looked at Communion with God the Father.

Last week we looked at Communion with God the Son and so tonight we're going to look at Communion with God the Holy Spirit. And we're going to try and begin to answer this question, how do I have Communion with the Holy Spirit?

Now if I were a betting man, I would bet that none of you woke up this morning asking that question, right? The burning question on your minds probably isn't, in what way do I have Communion with God the Holy Spirit?

But we do ask these questions, how do I really know I'm saved? Why does God feel so distant and uninterested?

Why does God seem so silent? If Christianity is true and I think it is, why does it feel so unreal to me, so disconnected from my reality?

[1 : 0 6] Could I ever feel really alive to God? What lies below all of those questions that I think if we're honest as Christians most of us are asking some of those.

What lies below those questions is a longing for Communion with the Holy Spirit. Now after Jesus rose from the dead, His disciples, His closest friends, asked the same sorts of questions internally.

So Jesus said, all right, I've got to go back to the Father now. I'm going to, you know, it's the Ascension, I'm going to leave and go to the Father. The disciples knew that having the resurrected Christ here in person was like having a feast in front of you.

And they were afraid that if He left, they would starve. But Jesus said, hey, it's actually to your advantage that I go. And they were like, come on Jesus, why would it be better for you to not be here?

And He said, because if I go, I'll send to you my Holy Spirit. I will send my Spirit to you. You see, God is Trinity, right? He's three persons in one God.

[2 : 1 9] I'm not going to explain that. I'm just telling you what I know from the Bible, right? That's just what we believe. God is Trinity. So when Jesus, God the Son, was with them in the flesh, He made known to them God the Father.

So when they had the Son, they had the Father. And when He sends His Spirit, God the Holy Spirit, to live in us, the Spirit makes the Father and the Son known to us.

So if we have the Spirit, we have the Father and the Son as well. That's why it's to our advantage that Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father, so that we could have the Spirit dwell in us.

That's why communion with the Holy Spirit is so important. So with that in mind, we're going to look at what Paul has to say about communion with the Spirit in Ephesians chapter 1, particularly in verses 13 and 14, which will come up on the slide now.

And as we read this again, I just want you to focus on two words that we're going to pull apart a little bit. The first is the word were, and the second is the word is.

[3 : 33] Okay? Were and is. So in Him, that's Jesus, in Jesus, you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of His glory.

Do you see the were and the is? The were is about halfway through verse 13, is, is right at the beginning of verse 14. So were is past tense, right? Is is present tense.

So we're going to focus on that and ask what the Spirit did for us, past tense as Christians, and what the Spirit is doing for us, present tense.

And here's, I want to give you kind of a theme sentence for the sermon so that you know where we're going. The feast of heaven's delights are yours in Christ, and the Holy Spirit will be a foretaste of that feast now, if you'll have Him.

So number one, what the Spirit did for us past tense. So it says that when we heard and when we believed, we were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

[4 : 56] That's how it all starts, for every Christian. We hear the gospel and we believe in Jesus. That's it. And Paul is saying that as we hear and as we believe, God is at work at a deeper level.

From our perspective, we hear and believe. From God's perspective, He seals us with the Holy Spirit. In other words, when God seals us with His Spirit, He sends His Spirit personally, because He is a person, to us, and says, this person belongs to me. I will see them through to the end.

As we hear the gospel, the Holy Spirit is the one who opens our ears to see and opens our ears to hear. You don't see with ears.

Opens our ears to hear the truth, to really hear the truth, because we would never really hear it otherwise. How many people do you know who have come to Christ, who grew up in the church, come to Christ later in life and said, I just wish someone had just told me the gospel?

They probably heard it a thousand times, but it takes the Holy Spirit to make you hear. And as we believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit is the one, so believe is just another form of the word faith, right?

[6 : 20] Or trust. The Holy Spirit is the one that gives us a living faith, so that we can completely against our fallen sinful tendencies, so that we can put all of our trust and hope in Jesus alone.

We would never believe in Jesus otherwise. In other words, without the Holy Spirit, we would be just like the ones who crucified Jesus. We wouldn't see Him for who He is, and we just wouldn't want what He has to offer.

So when we heard the gospel and put our trust in Jesus, this is the theological language we put on this, God the Holy Spirit unites us to Christ.

So what did the Spirit do for us? Well, He made us Christians. He did it. He united us to Christ through our hearing and through our believing.

You know, Jesus died for your sins, if I did my math right, something like 1,988 years ago. It's an historical event, right? So in verse 7, Paul says that Jesus purchased your redemption and forgiveness.

[7 : 33] Redemption and forgiveness is what you get from Jesus. And let's not rush past those words. And those two words is all your freedom and all your joy.

Because of redemption, you belong to God. You're freed from slavery to sin. And because of forgiveness, you can now receive His pleasure instead of His wrath.

And Jesus purchased all that for you 1,988-ish years ago. But when you heard the gospel and when you believed in Jesus, if you're a Christian, in that moment the Holy Spirit applied that purchase to you.

He made you come alive to Christ. That's why we can say, going back to that theme sentence, that the Feast of Heaven's Delights are yours in Christ.

It's because the Spirit of God unites us to Jesus and applies to us all His benefits.

[8 : 41] Last week, in his excellent and encouraging sermon, Thomas said, if Jesus could shout one word about you to the whole world, he would cry out, mine.

That's what it means that the Spirit is our seal. A seal has to do with ownership. The seal is a mark of ownership and authority on something in Paul's day.

The Spirit is sent to live in us as a living seal so that God is like laying His hand on us and saying, you're mine, you're in Christ, I will see you through to the end.

The Feast of Heaven's Delights are yours in Christ, and it's the Holy Spirit who seats you at that banquet table, as it were.

So that's what the Spirit did for us when we became Christians. So what the Spirit is doing for us is our next point. We've dealt with that word, were, and now we're going to deal with the word is in verse 14.

[9 : 54] Back up there, you'll see the verse. So the Holy Spirit, verse 14, is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of His glory.

The Holy Spirit is, right now, present tense, the guarantee of our inheritance. He doesn't give us guarantees about our inheritance, he is the guarantee.

But before we get to guarantee, we need to deal with inheritance because it's not very meaningful to know that you have a guarantee of something unless you know what that something is. So let's just talk about that for a minute.

When we are united to Christ, our name gets written on this document, if you will. We get connected to the cosmic inheritance.

The way that Paul uses this word, inheritance, it reaches deep, deep way back into the Old Testament. It's got rich roots and it brings to mind, and would have brought to mind probably for its first readers, passages like this in Psalm 33, a blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage or inheritance.

[11 : 17] Deuteronomy 420, but the Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own inheritance as you are this day.

Okay, the point is this, when we belong to God, God belongs to us. If we are God's inheritance, and God is our inheritance, we get God.

Thomas showed us last Sunday that this inheritance, this glorious blessing, this rich lavish language that Ephesians is full of, it's all centered on Jesus Christ.

All of it comes down to Christ. For instance, earlier in Ephesians 1, Paul says that God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places is centered in Christ, the person of Jesus. That is our inheritance. It's Christ.

[12 : 20] We get God. We belong to him, and he belongs to us, we are his, and he is his ours. And when all things in heaven and on earth are united in Christ, at the end of time, we will have all of Christ.

He is our blessing, and he is our inheritance. And that happens when heaven and earth meet, when we come into our inheritance, sin and suffering will be gone, completely done away with.

We will have pure, perfect, unbroken companionship with God. The rays of God's eternal love will beam down on you forever, completely undisturbed by the clouds of sin and doubt.

Can you even imagine that? It would be like getting married in that honeymoon phase, never going away, only intensifying forever. We will never feel alone again, never feel isolated, never feel unloved, never feel unnoticed.

When we have Christ, fully and finally, we'll have love, freedom and intimacy, unbroken, unfettered and unfading.

[13 : 41] That is the feast of heaven's delights, and that's what it means to have Christ as our inheritance. It's everything that our hearts actually long for.

It's the desires below all of our desires. We can sum it up with the phrase, perfect union with Christ.

Perfect union. Now, all of those amazing truths should make our hearts sing, but they don't always, do they?

It's easy to know that you're in Christ, if you're a Christian, but to feel disconnected from that reality. Because the Christian life doesn't always feel like a victory lap, right?

Sometimes it feels more like wading through a bog or trekking through a long, dry desert. God can feel distant and remote.

[14 : 42] Many of us will know that we're forgiven in Jesus, but we don't feel forgiven. We know we're forgiven, but we feel dirty. We feel ashamed. We feel guilty.

You might agree with all the truths of the Bible. Yes, God loves me, yes, he's done great things, but if we're really honest, we might say, but I don't feel affection for God, or at least not very often, or not very warmly.

That's more like the normal Christian experience. If you're united to Christ, if you're saved, it just doesn't follow that you will always feel that to be true.

That's why the word guarantee is so important. So we've talked about the inheritance. Now let's go back to the fact that the Holy Spirit is Himself the guarantee of our inheritance.

Right now, that's who He is. That's what He's doing this very... What is the Holy Spirit doing right now? He's being your guarantee of that glorious future.

[15 : 46] And what does that mean? Now, if you visit any pawnbroker in Edinburgh, I don't know if you call them pawnshops, we call them pawnshops in the state.

If you go to a pawnshop, there's one item that you will find. I just guarantee it, in every pawnshop that you visit. And that's engagement rings. Right? Engagement rings.

Engagements are broken. It's sad, but it's true. When a man gives a woman an engagement ring, it's just a token.

It's not a guarantee, it's a token. It says, I plan to marry you, but it's not the marriage. It's not even a part of the marriage, it's just a token.

And the word that Paul uses for the word guarantee, the Greek word, is nothing like an engagement ring. Actually, the word guarantee means something way cooler. It's a down payment.

[16 : 45] A down payment. If you want to buy a house, you can't just go to the seller of the house and say, I'll definitely pay you the money for this house. And then you get the house keys.

That's not how that works. You have to give him a down payment. You have to take some of the portion of the actual price of the house and give it to that person early, right, before they receive the fullness of that portion.

It's more than just a promise, it's what used to be called an earnest. Here's why this matters so much. God will bring heaven down to earth so that we can have perfect union with Christ.

Love, freedom, companionship, unbroken, unfettered, unfading. And the Holy Spirit is himself a down payment of that inheritance.

Not a verbal token like, yes, one day this will happen. He's a portion of the full price right now, present tense. The Spirit is the first installment.

[17 : 53] He brings heaven into your reality, your experience, here and now. And when I'm cooking a nice dinner, I enjoy to cook.

My kids enjoy helping, but they also enjoy kind of, you know, getting bits of food as we prepare. And so often when I'm cooking, you know, one of the kids like William will come in and ask for a taste.

And when I give him a morsel of that simmering meat, he can enjoy it as a first installment of the meal to come.

Our Father is preparing an eternal feast for us. And we can actually go to him in the name of Jesus and ask for a taste.

Can ask him for a morsel, and the Holy Spirit himself is the foretaste of that feast. When we get the Spirit, we have the Father and the Son as well.

[18 : 56] The Feast of Heaven's Delights are yours in Christ. And the Holy Spirit will be a foretaste of that feast now, if you'll have him. So how, how is the Spirit a foretaste of this perfect union?

Well, here's just a smorgasbord, a sampling of seven foretastes of our inheritance that we have, all Christians can have now in this life by the Spirit.

Okay? Seven, they'll be fast. One, every time we have victory over a temptation, any temptation, we say no, we turn to Jesus, it's the Holy Spirit.

It's the Holy Spirit in you, opening the eyes of our heart to behold the far greater value of Christ over the thing that we wanted instead, over that sin.

Two, every time we have the slightest inclination toward the things of God, just the slightest. While we live on this side of the resurrection, it's like we're always trying to overcome an allergy to God.

[20 : 00] You get near to him and you look, you know, oh, I don't feel great, you need to back up, right? We have this, this flesh as Paul calls it. But when we're actually inclined toward him, even a little, when we want God, that's a small taste of that glorious day when we'll be completely rid of sin and perfectly united to Christ.

Number three, every time we get the gospel, like really get the gospel at the heart level, you're listening to a sermon, you're reading the Bible, you're praying, you're listening to a song, whatever.

And something about it just clicks. And a little part of you just feels like you come alive a little bit more. That is the Holy Spirit, opening the eyes of your heart to a small glimpse of the beauty that you'll be gazing at for all of eternity.

Four, every time we have any desire for God. Any desire, even when we just have the desire for desire, you know what I mean?

Like, if I'm honest, I don't want God, but I want to want God. Even that is from the Holy Spirit. Number five, every time we put into action the nearest faith, just the smallest faith.

[21 : 14] It's not that the Spirit only delivers big faith to you. You know, if you can step out and your, this generation's George Mueller and you just step out in faith and do radical things. That person doesn't have more of the Holy Spirit than you do.

Even the nearest faith is from the Spirit. Number six, every time we take any comfort in the promises of God, there are a lot of promises in Christ that are yours in the Bible.

Tons of them. And if you're ever reading the Bible and one of them just grips your heart, just a little, and you feel a little relieved, you might feel incredibly relieved, like a weight has been taken off your shoulders.

That is the Holy Spirit. Every time we feel any joy, this is number seven, any joy in Christ, that's the Holy Spirit too. When we delight in Jesus, that's the Spirit communing with you, showing you God.

Remember when, so you know, John the Baptist and Jesus were cousins, right? And so when Elizabeth, John the Baptist's mother, was pregnant with John, and Mary, Jesus' mother was pregnant with Jesus, and Mary came near Elizabeth, the Holy Spirit made John the Baptist leap for joy in the womb of Elizabeth.

[22 : 37] That's what he does. When Jesus draws near, he makes our hearts come alive, and we leap for joy. The truth is, if you are in Christ, you, it's not like you need to get communion with the Holy Spirit.

This isn't 12 steps on how to commune with the Holy Spirit. The truth is, if you're a Christian, you have communion with the Holy Spirit right now. In every spiritual impulse, every inclination toward God, and knowing that can change everything.

I don't mean all of your circumstances, right? Knowledge doesn't change circumstances, but knowledge changes our experience of a circumstance. So knowing the truth that we have communion with the Holy Spirit, and every spiritual impulse and inclination toward God, it won't shake the ground we kneel on, but it can make your heart erupt.

A daily quiet time, just reading your Bible a little bit every day, and the light of that communion with the Spirit becomes a sermon preached to you from the eternal Word of God.

A simple prayer said in your bedroom, in light of that communion of the Holy Spirit becomes a word spoken by you in the ear of the King of the universe.

[23 : 58] Your bedroom's like the throne room, and he listens to you. When you just acknowledge a temptation to sin, and you just say, nope, I'd rather have Jesus, it's an earth-shattering miracle.

The same power that raised Jesus from the dead in that moment is coursing through you by the power of the Holy Spirit. Wow.

That's just reading your Bible, praying, and trying not to sin. In other words, the ordinary Christian life is a miracle of the presence of God.

It's a miracle of communion. If that seems like romantic or a little bit unreal to you, like, yeah, that's poetic, but that's not been my experience.

I invite you to just try this. Next time you go to read your Bible, next time you go to pray, take like 15 seconds, and just reflect first on the presence of the Holy Spirit.

[25 : 06] Remind yourself the cost, like the price that Jesus paid for him to be with you. Remind yourself that this isn't just, you know, he's not just your friendly neighborhood Holy Spirit.

This is like the spirit who hovered over the primordial waters in creation in Genesis 1 is with you right now, and he wants to show Christ to you.

That 10 seconds of reflection on that, practice it. I think it'll change a lot of things for you. It has for me.

In closing, no one is twisting the Holy Spirit's arm to bring you these four tastes of heaven. The Holy Spirit is not reluctant to glorify Jesus in your heart.

Paul says in verse 17 of our chapter that he's the spirit of wisdom and revelation. The Holy Spirit loves to reveal Christ to us, and he loves to show us the riches of the love of God.

[26 : 13] It's just who he is. What I'm saying is that the Spirit is willing to make you come alive to Christ, even right now. Are you?

Will you have him? We can't invite the Spirit to make us come alive to Christ while clinging to our sins instead of our Savior.

We can't ask the Spirit to make us come alive to heaven's joys while choosing every time earth's joys instead. We can't ask the Spirit to minister to us and not listen when he does.

Let me leave you with the words that we started with. The Feast of Heaven's Delights are yours in Christ, and the Holy Spirit will be a foretaste of that feast now if you'll have him.

Let's pray. God the Father, we praise you as Creator and Sustainer of the universe.

[27 : 26] We thank you for being the source of our blessing, for loving us, for choosing us. Lord Jesus, we praise you as our Savior and as our King, and we acknowledge that you are the blessed one that we sung about when we sang Psalm 1 to you and we reflected on Psalm 1.

You are the sphere of all that blessing, and we get to be united to you and become co-inheritors with you. That's amazing.

Holy Spirit, we praise you and love you for your companionship and your nearness, for your comforts, for showing us Jesus the beloved.

We ask for more. Help us to be open to you, to not grieve you, and we ask that you would show us Christ, more of Christ, for His glory and our joy.

Amen.