

**Living By The Spirit**  
**The Communion of the Spirit**  
**John 14:15-26**

In studies 1—4 of this series, we have seen our need of the Spirit's ministry—first, to raise us from death to live to God, second, for knowing Christ, third, for living in God's eternal plan, and then, for victory over the world, flesh and devil. Now, we are again in need of the Spirit because he is the one who teaches and equips us to live in communion rather than autonomously.

The Holy Spirit not only conveys life from heaven but recreates us as persons who now live in the way of giving and receiving—from and to God, and then from and to other persons.

Communion is not a word in general use. 'Fellowship', 'participation' or 'sharing' (other translations of *koinonia*) are better understood but perhaps less enjoyed by many than they would like.

- It is easy to opt for a lifestyle in which we 'bounce off' each other rather than commune.
- All of the 'com' or 'con' words, such as 'communicate', 'conversation', 'connect' and even 'commerce' suggest that behind the activity is some degree of mutual understanding, appreciation, reliance and feeling.
- Communion underlies all of these—a union of spirits.
- For us, communion flows from God the Holy Spirit.
- It also flows on in human relationships, but empowered now with its eternal origins.

So, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit will be with us all (2 Cor. 13:14)!

- We know God because of *grace* revealed in Christ; we see that this kindness is the *love* of God for us; and this is borne home to us (not primarily as a cerebral process or emotional experience but) by the personal coming of God the Holy Spirit to live within us.
  - Anyone who is 'joined to the Lord, becomes one spirit with him' (1 Cor. 6:17).
  - The genitive, 'communion of the Holy Spirit' can mean that the Holy Spirit creates this result in us or that he himself is the Spirit of communion with Father and Son. What we know of the Spirit suggests we should incorporate both ideas.
- In contrast, '...what fellowship is there between righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?' (2 Cor. 6:14f).

This communion of the Holy Spirit is given to all Christians.

- Paul appeals to the Philippians to live in love by asking '...if there is any encouragement (Gr. *paraklesis*) in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation (*koinonia*) in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy...' (Phil. 2:1).
- The list suggests that these are different ways of describing what it means that they received the gift of the Holy Spirit when they believed.
- Paul appeals to this eternal visitation because otherwise we sinners descend into 'rivalry and conceit' rather than become people who will 'in humility count others more significant' than ourselves (Phil. 2:3).
- It is the communion of the Holy Spirit—his "with-ness" and his communicating all of the blessings of the gospel that gives us a place to stand outside of our own ego with its mix of fears and ambitions.

Jesus introduces us to this communion of the Holy Spirit under the image of mutual indwelling (John 14:15-26). (Note the link between *parakletos* and *koinonia* in Philippians 2:1.)

- The disciples are distressed by the coming absence of Jesus. He is their 'go to' person. 'To whom else can we go. You have the words of eternal life' (John 6:68).
- Another Comforter will come (v. 16), meaning the Spirit will be their 'go to' person in the way Jesus has been. He will not have an historical cut off point but be with them *forever*.
- They will know the *truth* through him (v. 17)— the truth Jesus has claimed to be (v. 6).
- The Spirit will not just be with them—in *Jesus* as the man of the Spirit, but in *them* (v. 17).
  - Jesus has earlier pointed to this indwelling by saying that rivers will flow from all who believe in him (7:38-39).
- By the Spirit, and in no other way, Jesus will be with them (v. 18).
  - The world won't be able to see this because, to them, he will be absent.
  - He won't be absent to those who receive the Spirit—believers will 'see' Christ—a seeing dynamic enough to be life giving (v. 19).
- By the Spirit's coming to dwell in us (signifying that we are now the temple of God), we know Christ is *in* the Father, we are *in* him (and so with him in the Father), and he is *in* us!
- If this sounds too intense, Jesus breaks it down.
  - We love Christ—disciples know this well enough and have followed Jesus (v. 21).
  - The Father loves those who love his Son.
  - The Son loves those who love him and he reveals himself—as lovers do!
  - 'In' is a love word. We can choose to live by seeing and meeting the need of another.
  - The world can't make sense of Christians—they live by an unseen presence (v. 22).
  - In summary, it all starts with Jesus Christ who elicits our love. We express this in trusting obedience and the Father and Son come to live with us (vv. 23-24).
  - Everyone who believes in Christ is given authority to be called a child of God' (John 1:12). This is not a mere status but a known and warm relationship.
- While Jesus is still present he prepares us for his absence by telling us that the Spirit will come (v. 26).
  - All we need to know about faith and life—*all things*, and all we need to remember about his physical presence among us—*all that I have said to you*, will be communicated by the new Comforter—by authority of the Father and in the name of the Son (v. 26).
  - Repeating his earlier words (v. 1), he says we should not be troubled—we will have his peace—won on the cross, declared in his resurrection, and now conveyed to us by God's personal presence (v. 27).
- This pastoral word to the apostles discloses to us all, the mystery of God's own life as a community of persons. What is revealed in Jesus Christ discloses something eternal.
  - The Father is in the Son and Son in the Father. They are in a relationship of mutual giving and receiving.
  - The Spirit communicates this reality to us, by being *in* us.
  - So God is love, and finally, communion is just that—love.

We know the truth of living in communion.

- By the Holy Spirit, we are able to call Christ Lord (1 Cor. 12:3).
- By the Holy Spirit, we are able to cry out to God as our Father (Rom. 8:15-16).
  - This is not a cry of tranquility but of crisis; the word (Gr. *krazo*) can express the screams of a demoniac (Mark 9:26) or the dereliction of a dying Christ (Matt. 27:50). Our need to know the Father is urgent.
- This cry comes from us (Rom. 8:12-21), but also from the Spirit (Gal. 4:6).
- Our prayers, like Christ's, are to be 'in the Spirit' (Rom. 8:26; 15:30; Eph. 6:18; Jude 20).

We are not to grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30).

- This does not suggest the Holy Spirit is sensitive! Rather, he is respectful of our responsibility to want his ministry to us and in us.
- We cannot open ourselves to God and remain isolated. God opens his heart to us and calls us to open up both an inlet to his love, and an outlet to others.