

Titus 3:6 — “Contemplating the Work of the Triune God in Your Salvation & Responding with Heartfelt Communion & Joy with Him!”

“Each of the three Persons in the blessed Trinity is concerned with our salvation: With the Father it is predestination; with the Son propitiation; with the Spirit regeneration. The Father chose us; the Son died for us; the Spirit quickens us. The Father was concerned about us; the Son shed His blood for us; the Spirit performs His work within us. What the One did was eternal, what the Other did was external, what the Spirit does is internal.” (AW Pink, *Sovereignty of God*)

“Let us believe that no sinful soul could be saved without the work of all three Persons in the blessed Trinity, and let us rejoice that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who co-operated to make man, do always co-operate to save him. Here let us pause. We may receive practically what we cannot explain theoretically.” (JC Ryle)

We worship ONE GOD -- in Three Persons. Each Person of the Godhead is co-equal, co-eternal, co-powerful.

✓ There is one only and true God, but in the unity of the Godhead there are three coeternal and coequal Persons, the same in substance but distinct in subsistence. (BB Warfield)

✓ Calvinists believe that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are united in the work of redeeming lost mankind. We do not believe that they act against one another or even on one another, but with one another in our salvation. (Richard Phillips)

THESIS — This text presents before us *Each Member of the Godhead* and His particular work/role in our Salvation. Let’s gaze upon God so that it’ll lead us to closer *communion* with and *joyfulness* in Him.

Gaze & marvel at...

1. **The washing of the SPIRIT**
2. **The wealth of the FATHER**
3. **The worth of Jesus CHRIST**

I. GAZE & MARVEL AT THE WASHING OF THE SPIRIT (5-6a)

1. The Spirit saves to make us holy [sanctification]
2. The Spirit saves to give us life [regeneration]
3. The Spirit saves to wash us entirely [purification]
4. The Spirit saves to change our nature [transformation]

II. GAZE & MARVEL AT THE WEALTH OF THE FATHER (6b)

1. The Father planned eternally

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2. The Father saves lavishly
3. The Father loves particularly

III. GAZE & MARVEL AT THE WORTH OF JESUS CHRIST (6c)

*The bride eyes not her garments, But her dear Bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory But on my King of grace;
Not at the crown He giveth, But on His pierced hand;
The Lamb is all the glory Of Immanuel's land.*

-- Samuel Rutherford

1. The Son is mediator
2. The Son is Savior
3. The Son is exclusive

A little *intimate* knowledge *OF* God is *WORTH MORE* than a lot of *accurate* knowledge *ABOUT* God.

Why? Here are 4 reasons to contemplate God; to gaze & marvel at Him.

- ❖ Study the work of God in salvation to **OBEY HIM** (Titus 3)
- ❖ Study the work of God in salvation to **PRAISE HIM** (Eph 1)
- ❖ Study the work of God in salvation to **COMFORT YOU** (Heb 9.14)
- ❖ Study the work of God in salvation to **STAND FIRM & THANK HIM** (2 Thess 2)

We contemplate & commune with God... how? Here are a few ideas. Try them...

‘He that hath communion with God is in heaven while he is on earth . . . this is the gate of paradise and puts us into the suburbs of heaven.’ (David Clarkson)

‘I am going to him whom my soul has loved, or rather who has loved me with an everlasting love, – which is the whole ground of my consolation.’ (John Owen’s dying words)

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In the doctrine of the Trinity we feel the heartbeat of God’s entire revelation for the redemption of humanity. Though foreshadowed in the Old Testament, it only comes to light fully in Christ. Religion can be satisfied with nothing less than God himself. Now in Christ God himself comes out to us, and in the Holy Spirit he communicates himself to us. The work of re-creation is trinitarian through and through...

Re-creation is one divine work from beginning to end, yet it can be described in terms of three agents: it is fully accomplished by the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the communion of the Holy Spirit. A Christian’s faith life, accordingly, points back to three generative principles. . . . Our salvation, both in this life and in the life to come, is bound up with the doctrine of the Trinity. (Herman Bavinck)

Communion with the triune God is sweeter yet more profound than human friendship or any human relationship. (John Owen)

ALL CREATURES OF OUR GOD AND KING

All creatures of our God and King	All the redeemed washed by His blood
Lift up your voice and with us sing	Come and rejoice in His great love
O praise Him! Alleluia!	O praise Him! Alleluia!
Thou, burning sun with golden beam	Christ has defeated every sin
Thou, silver moon with softer gleam	Cast all your burdens now on Him
O praise Him! O praise Him!	O praise Him! O praise Him!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!	Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Let all things their Creator bless	He shall return in pow’r to reign
And worship Him in humbleness	Heaven and earth will join to say
O praise Him! Alleluia!	O praise Him! Alleluia!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son	Then who shall fall on bended knee?
And praise the Spirit, Three-in-One	All creatures of our God and King
O praise Him! O praise Him!	O praise Him! O praise Him!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!	Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

PRAISE GOD FROM WHOM ALL BLESSINGS FLOW

Praise God from whom all blessings flow	Let our Redeemer’s name be sung
In heaven above and earth below	Through every land, by every tongue
Praise God the Father and the Son	Eternal are Your mercies, Lord
Praise God the Spirit, three-in-one	Eternal truth attends Your Word
From all that dwell beneath the skies	Your praise will sound from shore to shore
Let the Creator’s praise arise	Till suns shall rise and set no more

John Owen: Communion with God, article by Ian Hamilton

The day before John Owen departed to be with Christ (23 August, 1683), he dictated his last letter to a friend: ‘I am going to him whom my soul has loved, or rather who has loved me with an everlasting love, – which is the whole ground of my consolation.’ The following day William Payne brought him news that his *Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ*,¹ was now ready for printing. Owen replied, ‘I am glad to hear it; but, O brother Payne! the long wished-for day is come at last, in which I shall see that glory in another manner than I have ever done, or was capable of doing, in this world’. These death-bed expressions of Owen’s piety confirm a truth that was, in effect, the pulsebeat of Puritan piety in general – communion with God was ‘the very heart of Puritan theology and religion.’ Whatever else Puritanism was, its animating heart was cultivated fellowship with the Triune God.

No subject more exposes the poverty of our lives before God than communion with God. We feel, or we should feel, totally out of our depth. However highly other Christians might esteem you, you know only too well how weakly, how inconstantly, how poorly, how coldly your heart engages in communion with God. Like Paul you desire ‘to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings’ (*Phil.* 3:10), but O how often that desire is weakened by the sluggishness of the flesh, the diversions of the devil, and the enticements of a dying world. And yet, is not the believer’s truest longing for communion with his Saviour? Even as regenerate men and women, we are spiritual enigmas!

I would like us to reflect a little on the biblical teaching that defines for us the fact, the shape, and the nature of the believer’s communion with God. Fellowship with God, living, personal, mind-engaging, heart-affecting fellowship, is held out to us as the consummating fruit of the gospel. Our Lord Jesus defined eternal life as knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he had sent (*John* 17:3), a knowing that is intimate as well as intellectual, personal as well as cerebral, profoundly spiritual as well as deeply theological. It is this fellowship or communion that John is referring to in 1 John 1:3. There are a number of things we should consider briefly in this verse:

First, there is such a thing as fellowship with God. It is not an ‘enthusiastic fancy’. It is not something reserved for the especially enlightened. It is the birthright of every believer. The gospel initiates every believer, by the new birth, into ‘fellowship with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ’. This was a prospect the Lord Jesus promised to his disciples. In *John* 14:23, he speaks of his Father and himself coming, by the Spirit’s new covenant presence, to make their home in the lives of his people. It is this intimate, homely picture that is mirrored in the risen Lord’s words to the church in Laodicea: ‘Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me’ (*Rev.* 3:20). Owen comments on this verse in his treatise on *Communion With God*:

Certainly this is fellowship, or I know not what is. Christ will sup with believers: he refreshes himself with his won graces to them, by his Spirit bestowed on them. The Lord Christ is exceedingly delighted in tasting of the sweet fruits of the Spirit in the saints.

It is striking, as well as deeply humbling, to hear Owen again and again highlight the Saviour’s delight in his communion with his people. We are so accustomed in this shallow, man-centred age to start with ourselves as we contemplate communion with our holy and gracious God. If we are truly to savour communion with God, we must learn that the initiative in this grace lies with God. As in all true theology, ‘from him and through him and to him are all things, to him be the glory’ (*Rom.* 11:36).

Second, What is this fellowship or communion with God? John Owen gives us this definition:

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Our communion . . . with God consisteth in his communication of himself unto us, with our return unto him of that which he requireth and accepteth, flowing from that union which in Jesus Christ we have with him.

The basis and foundation of communion with God is union with Christ. By God’s grace, believers have been vitally united to the Saviour, married to him who is the Lover of our souls, our covenant King. As in all unions, there is a ‘mutual communication’, a ‘giving and a receiving, after a most holy and spiritual manner.’ In communion, God gives himself to his people, and they give to him what he requires and accepts – our love, trust, obedience and faithfulness. In this most glorious of all unions, where our Maker is our Husband, he looks for and longs for the returns of love.

First, Communion with the Father is supremely in love (cf. *1 John* 4:8; *2 Cor.* 13:14; *Rom.* 5:5. In all these and other texts, it is the Father’s love that is highlighted: so Owen writes,

Eye the Father as love; look not on him as an always lowering father, but as one most kind and tender. Let us look on him by faith, as one that hath had thoughts of kindness towards us from everlasting.⁹

Christians must therefore meditate on this distinguishing, free, unchangeable love. For Owen, communion with the Father in love required two things: that we ‘receive’ his love and that we ‘make suitable returns unto him’.¹⁰ The Father’s love is received ‘by faith’, through Christ. ‘The soul being thus, by faith through Christ, and by him brought into the bosom of God, into a comfortable persuasion and spiritual perception and sense of his love, there reposes and rests itself.’¹¹ But there is more. ‘God loves, that he may be beloved.’¹² So, we are to make ‘returns’ of love to the Father.

Second, communion with the Son is supremely in grace. We have communion with Christ as ‘Mediator’¹⁷, and as Mediator he meets us ‘in GRACE’.¹⁸ Owen highlights a number of biblical texts to make his point: *John* 1:14, 16, 17; *1 Corinthians* 1:9; *2 Corinthians* 13:14; *2 Thessalonians* 3:17-18; *Song of Solomon* 5:10. So he writes, ‘This, then, is that which we are peculiarly to eye in the Lord Jesus, to receive it from him, even grace, gospel-grace.’¹⁹

Third, communion with the Holy Spirit is supremely in comfort. It is the special ministry of the Spirit to bring to us the great and gracious promises and blessings of the gospel, to shed abroad God’s love in our hearts and to glorify Christ. Says Owen, ‘The soul is never more raised with the love of God than when by the Spirit taken into intimate communion with him in the discharge of this duty.’³¹ He continues, the Spirit’s ministry as the Comforter focuses on

his bringing the promises of Christ to remembrance, glorifying him in our hearts, shedding abroad the love of God in us, witnessing with us as to our spiritual estate and condition, sealing us to the day of redemption . . . confirming our adoption, and being present with us in our supplications. Here is the wisdom of faith, – to find out and meet with the Comforter in all these things; not to lose their sweetness, by lying in the dark [as] to their author, nor coming short of the returns which are required of us.³²

What should our response then be to this ‘communion of the Spirit’? Owen tells us first that we must not ‘grieve him, in respect to his person dwelling in us’ (cf. *Eph.* 4:30); secondly, we must not ‘quench the Spirit’ (*1 Thess.* 5:19); thirdly, we must not be like the Jews who ‘resisted the Holy Ghost’ in the ministry of Stephen (*Acts* 7:51-52). ‘Now, the Holy Ghost is said to be resisted in the contempt of the preaching of the word, because the gift of preaching of it is from him.’³³ More positively, we are to respond to the communion of the Spirit in ‘faith’ – ‘faith closeth with him in the truth revealed . . . worships him, serves him, waits for him, prayeth to him, praiseth him’.

Ian Hamilton (commenting on John Owen)