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Christian Companionship

"I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts," Psalm 119:63.

A study based upon a sermon preached at the morning meeting in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church, 2nd September 1990, by Rev Ivan Foster.

This section of the psalm (verses 57-64) is headed by the Hebrew letter 'Cheth'. It refers to a 'fence' or 'an allotted portion'. Job 1:8-10 illustrates this. "And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land," Job 1:8-10. The word 'hedge' is translated 'fenced' in Job 10:11.

This section of Psalm 119 begins with a strong affirmation by the Psalmist of his fidelity to God. He proclaims that God was his portion, verse 57. "CHETH. Thou art my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words," verse 57.

He asserts that his feet follow the testimonies of God. "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies," verse 59.

His obedience had been unhesitating. "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments," verse 60.

Even when he was the victim of robbers and pressed by afflictions he had not forgotten God's law. "The bands of the wicked have robbed me: but I have not forgotten thy law," verse 61.

The fifth proof of his allegiance to the LORD is stated in verse 63 which is our text. "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts."

His companionship gave proof of his loyalty to God. It still does, dear Christian. My old grandmother used to say: "Show me your companions and I will tell you who you are!" Those words were often quoted to me by my mother. Consider first of all from our text,

I. THE PSALMIST'S ASSOCIATES

"Them that fear thee", & "Them that keep thy precepts." The psalmist stayed inside the fenced off and allotted portion given him by God when looking for friends. That is an important lesson for us all to learn, especially the young. We cannot walk with God and keep His commandments while keeping company with the evildoers! "Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God," Psalm 119:115.

There is here in our text a two-fold description of the true child of God.

1. Them that fear God. All men, at times, have a fear of God but all such fear is not of the same character.
 - a. There is the slavish fear of the unconverted. "Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine," Matthew 25:24-25.

Such was the fear in Adam's heart when he hid from God, Genesis 3:10. "And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." Such a fear is one in which the one feared is hated and to escape from him is the highest desire. Obedience to him is by compulsion and constraint. This comes from a wrong view of God supplied by man's own depraved and rebellious heart.
 - b. There is the fear of the devil. James 2:19. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils



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also believe, and tremble.” The word ‘tremble’ means to “to shudder, to be struck with extreme fear, to be horrified.” That is not the fear of a believer!

c. There is the fear of the son. This is the fear that is in the heart of the true believer. “And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me,” Jeremiah 32:40. This fear is a grace given by God to His true children. This ‘fear’ come from a right view of God. “Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O LORD; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee,” Jeremiah 10:6-7.

It makes the Christian duly careful and diligent in the matters of eternity. “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” Philippians 2:12. “And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear,” I Peter 1:17.

Here is our second description of the true child of God in our text:

2. Them that keep God’s precepts. Fear of God and obedience go together. They are to be found in the character of all of God’s great men and women. “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil,” Job 1:1. “And Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly,” 1 Kings 18:3. “That I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many,” Nehemiah 7:2.

It keeps us back from sin and propels us forward in obedience. “And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not,” Exodus 20:20. Such a fear preserved Joseph in temptation. “There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” Genesis 39:9.

Such a fear will:

- a. Make us sincere. “Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God,” Colossians 3:22.
- b. Make us truly happy. “Praise ye the LORD. Blessed (happy) is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments,” Psalm 112:1. “Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied,” Acts 9:31.
- c. Make us civil and considerate. “And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God, Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning. Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling-block before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD. . . . Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD,” Leviticus 19:13, 14, 19.

II. THE NATURE OF THIS ASSOCIATION

“I am a companion of all them” The word ‘companion’ means ‘knit together’ or ‘united’. How expressive is this little word “knit”! The dictionary tells us it means : ‘Interlocking loops of wool or other yarn with



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knitting needles or on a machine.' The Psalmist was 'interlocked' with certain people in his companionship.

What does your companionship tell of your spirituality? With whom are you 'knit together'?

Notice that there is no respect of persons here. Many believe that it is David who is here speaking and others believe it is Daniel who is the author of this Psalm. Either way, one was a great King and a great prophet while the other was a great statesman and a great prophet. Be it David or Daniel, neither distinguished between the saints. He was the companion of all. How in keeping was this attitude with what James wrote in his epistle. "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors," James 2:1-9.

There is no snobbery with grace!

To be the companion of the saints of God we must . .

1. Profess the same faith. There is only one faith. "To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour," Titus 1:4. "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all," Ephesians 4:1-6.
2. Assemble together with them for public worship. "And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them," Acts 4:23. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching," Hebrews 10:25. "When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday," Psalm 42:4. "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD," Psalm 122:1.
3. Promote their good. "In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not," Psalm 15:4. "For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established," Romans 1:11. See also 12:10 & 13. "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you," 2 Corinthians 2:4. "For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ," Colossians 2:1-2.
4. Identify with them in their sufferings. "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep," Romans 12:15. "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring



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substance," Hebrews 10:32-34.

Thus the true believer:

- Manifests his new nature. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God," 1 John 4:7.
- Manifests a proper gratitude to Christ – "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth," 1 John 3:16-18.
- Such a society was the mark of the apostolic church. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common," Acts 4:32. God give to us just such a spirit here in Kilskeery!

III. A RIGHT SPIRIT WILL DETER UNGODLY COMPANIONSHIP

- "Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?" Psalm 139:21.
- "In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not," Psalm 15:4.
- "And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD," 2 Chronicles 19:2.
- "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars," Revelation 2:2.

We are to love the sinner but hate his sin. "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." Jude 1:21-23.