

Pauline Theology – Lesson 13

Communion of the Saints

Thesis: Because God's people have communion with Christ, they necessarily have communion with one another. This communion exists now with all saints; both in the church militant and the church triumphant.

Communion and Assembly

- One of the primary words in the Bible (Hebrew & Greek) to describe what God's people are is "assembly" (Heb: *qāhāl*, Gk: *ekklēsia*).
- When God "assembles" His people, there is something very specific going on.
 - The most helpful background from the Hebrew Scriptures is the gathering of the "assembly" at Mount Sinai in Exodus 19.
 - "God's "assembly" includes all his 'holy ones': angelic hosts as well as earthly saints. At Mount Sinai God was present with thousands of his angels as he assembled his people at his feet (Dt. 33:2-3; Ps. 68:17)." – Clowney, *The Church* (p 31)
 - The teaching of the book of Hebrews is very helpful along these lines:
 - Sinai prefigured God's more permanent dwelling (Jerusalem) where God's assembly would gather in the future.
 - Jerusalem prefigured the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22) ("The earthly city was a shadow of the heavenly reality." – Clowney).
 - "Sinai burned with physical fire; heaven burns with the fire of God's own presence (Heb. 12:18, 29)." – Clowney
 - When Jesus ascended into heaven he entered the true holy place, heaven itself (Heb. 9:24ff).
 - He did so as a high priest. He ministered in the true holy place as a high priest (with His own blood).
 - What does this mean? » We can approach the heavenly assembly. We can approach God himself.
 - "To worship in that assembly is to gather in God's *ekklēsia*. We assemble here on earth (Heb 10:25) because we assemble there, where Jesus is." – Clowney

Colossians 1:12 – ¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

- Being in the assembly means we "share in the inheritance of the saints in light."
 - We share in the inheritance that all the saints who have gone before us have entered into.

Colossians 3:1–4 – ¹If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and *your life is hidden with Christ in God.* ⁴When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

- Your life is already hidden with Christ in God »»» in heaven, where the assembly of God is found.

Christ is the Head of His Body as A Heavenly Assembly

Colossians 1:18 – ¹⁸And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

Ephesians 1:3, 2:5–6 (ESV) – ³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶*and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,*

Philippians 3:20 (ESV) – ²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

Galatians 4:25–26 (ESV) – ²⁵Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.

“When the Corinthian Christians come together in assembly (1 Cor. 11:18; 14:26, 28), they join with ‘all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ (1 Cor. 1:2).” – Clowney

1 Corinthians 11:18; 14:26, 28 (ESV) –¹⁸For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, ²⁶What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. ²⁸But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God.

1 Corinthians 1:2 (ESV) – ²To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together *with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,* both their Lord and ours: