

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— ⁶and 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: