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CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

"Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." I John I:3.

We can hardly conceive of a human life without some kind of fellowship. Robinson Crusoe, on a lonely island, shut off from all human companionship, found a welcome fellowship with his dog, his parrot, and his tame goats. To a man isolated as he was such a fellowship no doubt proved a comfort and a blessing.

But for a man to turn his back on all human companionship and deliberately choose such a fellowship would brand him abnormal if not insane. I have but little respect for the man's opinion who said, "The more I see of men the better I like dogs." Men do have lots of serious faults that dogs do not have. But men also have many divine qualities that dogs can not have. A dog cannot take the place of a man or woman as a friend. When I am in trouble or pain, and want counsel, consolation, or sympathy, I had rather have the companionship of a good man or woman than anything this world affords. When I am prosperous and happy, with some good thing to share, I had rather share it with some friend than enjoy it alone. Human fellowship is as necessary to a wholesome happy life as the food we eat. We need a living fellowship for every mood of the human heart. The men and women who get the most out of human fellowship are always the ones who live the richest and fullest lives.

Even when have had enough of company and long for

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solitude we are not always without human fellowship. How many of such hours we spend with good books, great poems, or delightful music. In these there is a human fellowship of the noblest kind.

Everyone, except perhaps a very few abnormal persons called hermits, find some kind of fellowship a necessity. There is a fellowship of the wicked and depraved. The drunkard his cronies, the thief his pal, and the lewd man his mistress. You can tell the kind of person we are by the fellowship we hold.

But to be enduring and to give the maximum of happiness a fellowship must be built around a noble objective. A fellowship built around a whiskey bottle, a deck of cards, or a lewd man or woman is easily broken. At its best it can give only a hollow empty pleasure, and that for only a brief time. In every such fellowship there comes a time of disillusionment that shatters every hope and makes the heart sick with disappointment.

I would not attempt to say what kind of punishment God has for the wicked in the world to come. But I cannot conceive of a greater than this, to put all the wicked together and leave them there. The one thing we definitely about hell is, there will be no good people there. Men who have spent a few years in prison can tell us what it is like to be shut out from the society of all good men. Yet there are a few good men in prison. To spend eternity where there is not one kind face, not one soft gentle voice, not one sympathetic smile, would, I think, be the greatest

punishment that could be put on a man.

John says, "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Does this mean that the Christian religion is anti-social? Can a good man withdraw from all fellowship with men and enjoy a delightful fellowship with God? Some must have believed they could. They have thought that God made man for pious holy meditation, that such a worship of men was more pleasing to God than any deed of kindness, mercy, and love. But such a religion has been a disappointment every time it has been tried. The Christian religion is the friendliest religion ever given to men. As soon as it loses its friendly spirit it loses its holiness and power. You cannot be holy any longer than you are a friend to man; even though you pray till you have corns on your knees and sing hymns from morning till night.

The fellowship of Christ is the strongest and most enduring on earth. The reason for this is obvious, it is built around the noblest objective. It is hardest to divide and will stand more strain than any other. The Masons, the Elks, the Knights of Columbus, and many other organizations have a strong fellowship. But none of these will stand the strain that the fellowship of Christ endures every day. These societies are full of mercy and kindness to friends, but the fellowship of Christ always has its arms stretched in pity and mercy to its bitterest enemies. Most of the alms of the church go to men and women who have used it harshly. It is seldom that we have the opportunity to help a man who has been a friend to the church. It seems

that God takes care of most of these, anyway you seldom see one asking for help.

Then what is the fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ? The Bible says Enoch walked with God, that Abraham was the friend of God, that Moses talked with God. We know that Jesus Christ spent much time in communion with the Father. From these great examples we gather there is a real fellowship between the creature and his Maker. The reality of such a fellowship is often challenged in this cynical age. To question the reality of such a fellowship is to question the judgement and the firm conviction of the noblest minds that ever lived in this world. Nearly all the greatest spirits of every age have believed implicitly in such a fellowship. The most heroic lives of the race have been built around such a hope.

But our fellowship with God is very closely related to our fellowship with men. At the time John Wesley began his ministry religion and morality in England was at a very low ebb. An old saint said to the young preacher, "Mr. Wesley, you must find other Christians and join your religion with theirs or it will die. If you cannot find other Christians you must find sinners and convert them to Christ. A lone religion is dead or dying." With this advice as the guiding star of his life John Wesley became the great evangelist of the eighteenth century. Half of all worship is public worship. All public worship is a failure without a strong tie binding the hearts of the worshipers. Every great revival has been marked by a strong affection between

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members of its society. There can be no real public worship
between members who do not devotedly love each other.

Even a man's private devotions cannot rise higher than
his love for men and women. The prayers of a selfish man or
woman, whether public or private, are always a failure.