

What happens in drunkenness is that you really become so used to the drunken state and to the crudeness to perception that comes with the drunken state that you fail to perceive any beauty in the world around you. Everything becomes kind of coarsened. And even those of us who have had a little experience with other excesses know that that's always true. When you indulge in an excess of some kind you lose some other sensitive ability that you have in your personality. And that happens most obviously with alcohol and I think it happened with many of us in drugs.

We found that our sensitivities became coarsened and our ability to perceive some of the joy in nature, or the joy in ordinary friendships, or the joy in some of the finer satisfaction that God has provided disappeared and we were incapable for years of appreciating those things again. Now, that's what has happened with us as human beings in regard to communion with God.

There is a part of us that is fitted and designed to commune with our maker and that part has kind of died because most of us, from when we were born, have spent all our time communing with other things and other people as substitutes for him. And so most of us are pretty dead in our spirits and it's our spirit that communes with God. And it's really a bit like the situation with Richard Burton [an alcoholic actor]. I think one of his friends said that his liver must be about the size of a nickel now, it's so destroyed by the alcohol.

And it's the same with our spirits. Our spirits grow smaller, and smaller, and smaller, and smaller until they hardly exist at all. And it's as if you have a radio receiver with no aerial at all to receive the signals. It doesn't matter how much you try or how much you turn up the volume, the instrument no longer has the capability of receiving what it was meant to receive. And that's the same with our spirits, loved ones. Most of us when we're born into this world are born with spirits that are shrunk to almost nothingness except for one part of them that remains the most active and that is our conscience.

But apart from a conscience which tends from birth on to get smaller and smaller itself as society helps us to rationalize the sense of right and wrong we are born with, so our spirits almost disappear completely from our real life. And our life is utterly occupied by our souls -- that is our mind, and our emotions, and our wills, and our bodies -- and so most of us walk around with spirits that are virtually non-existent. Now, what is needed of course to have any intercourse with God is that our spirits have to be renewed.

I don't think medicine can do anything with a liver. We have heart transplants, and we have kidney transplants, but I don't think we can transplant a liver. And you can imagine a man like Richard Burton, the state he is in now. I mean, unless you could miraculously create a new liver, unless you could somehow send a power into him to regenerate his liver he will never be able to appreciate the life that God has given him again.

Now, it's the same with us. Our spirits are so shrunk that unless God himself is able to do a miracle, they cannot be regenerated or renewed. Now, what we've been talking about here for the past few Sundays, you can see the importance of especially, by this illustration. That unless your

spirit is born again, unless it's renewed, unless it's regenerated you'll never have communion with God. And so there are all kinds of loved ones from the spiritualists through to the psychics, through the eastern religion practitioners who claim to have interaction or intercourse with God and with the spirit world but they really don't. Most of it is psychic experience, or if anything it's communion with the evil spirit world but not with God himself. That can only take place if your own spirit is regenerated.

Now of course, the problem with regenerating your spirit is that if your spirit is simply regenerated by God and you continue to live the way you have been living, then the whole thing will happen all over again. In other words, if you continue to live off people, and off things, and off the world instead of off God, your spirit will again be left inactive and it will shrink again and it will die completely. The Father knows that there's no sense in rejuvenating your spirit unless somehow he can turn around the whole direction of your personality and that's what we talked about last Sunday, you remember.

The essential part about the New Birth is in our part; from our human point of view, it is a conversion, it is a turning around. And unless we turn around God cannot and will not rejuvenate our spirits. And if you say to me, "Well, how can I turn this personality around?" You cannot yourself. If God had not put us into his son Jesus and turned us around, you and I could do nothing. From when we were babies we were used to the praises of men. From when we were children we were used to believing that we were more secure the more toys we had and the more things we possessed. We thought that happiness was a sunshiny day and the right kind of toys to play with.

We cannot turn that personality around. Unless God has done a miracle in Jesus we cannot turn it around. And of course, that's what we share and have shared for years, that that's what God did in Jesus. He put us all into his son and he turned us around, and he changed our personalities. And if we are willing to be turned around in this life then he will rejuvenate our spirits.

And so that, loved ones, is the New Birth and unless you experience New Birth you'll experience no communion with God at all. Now, that's the kind of thing that we've shared again, and again, and just for the sake of those who may be here for the first time, I'll summarize it very easily. That our personalities are presented in scripture as spirit inside, soul around our spirits, and body around our souls, and that our spirit is meant to commune with God's Holy Spirit.

And then you see the way we were meant to operate. The Holy Spirit was meant to come in through communion, tell us by intuition what God wanted us to do, our conscience would constrain our will to obey this and our will then would direct our mind to understand it, and our emotions to express the joy of our communion with God out through our bodies to the world. That is the way we were meant to operate.

But from when we were little children we've operated the other way. We've operated with the green arrows [pointing to diagram]. We've operated looking to the world for our security, to people for our significance, and to things and circumstances for our happiness. And we've concentrated on getting joy, and on using our mind to manipulate the things in the world so that we would come out on top. Our will has hardly been existent at all. It has been utterly dominated by our mind and emotions --which in turn have been dominated by our bodies and so our will has obeyed rather than directed.

It has been commanded rather than commanded. And of course the result was that our spirits died

because they were utterly unused. And what happened on Calvary was God blotted all of that old personality out. Our old self was crucified with Christ so that this body of sin -- sin is independence of God and dependence on the world -- might be "rendered inoperative" as it says in the Greek translation -- and we might no longer be enslaved to sin, so that we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:6)

And of course what has to happen is that whole process has to be reversed. It can only be reversed if it has happened in Jesus. And so the New Birth is when we say, "What you did in Jesus to us we accept." And that makes our spirits alive and makes communion with God possible.

Now loved ones, that's the truth that we find in 1 Corinthians if you would like to look at it. 1 Corinthians 2:9, "But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen,' see the eye of the body, 'Nor ear heard, nor the heart of man,' because the heart of man unregenerated is his soul, 'Nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him, God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit.'" So loved ones, God communes with us and gives us everything he has of himself through our spirits.

Do you see that the Bible says it's either or? And old Kierkegaard said that too [theologian Søren Kierkegaard 1813–1855]. It's either or; it's either this or it's this. It's either the world or it's the Holy Spirit. If you want to have communion with God then you have to stop depending on your communion with the world. But it's either or and we've lost that whole radical truth in our western Christianity. We like to persuade each other that it can be syncretism, that it can be worshipping God, and a little bit of communion with him, and a little bit of communion with our spirits, and a little bit of communion with people.

It can't, loved ones, it's either or. Either you look to God completely for all that you need and your spirit comes alive, or you look to the world for all that you need and your spirit dies. And why many of us have trouble with communion with God is that we initially started to look to God but we didn't see that we had to continue to look to him alone and so we have begun to dilute our commitment to him.

Now Jesus has emphasized that it cannot be. And maybe you'd like to look at some of his words. Matthew 6:24, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." You can't look to the world for a sense of your significance, or your happiness, or your security, and look to God at the same time. You can't. God will not share the throne of your life with the world. And when you look to the world and to people for your importance you dilute your attitude to God and you begin to lose the sense of communion with him.

Now loved ones it comes out again in an Old Testament verse in Jeremiah. And these are all verses that we've all known for years but they're not popular in these days. Jeremiah 29:13, "You will seek me and find me; when you seek me with all your heart." I think some of us still have trouble with communion with God because we're not seeking him with all our hearts. We seek him a little in the evening when we need some help but we don't go to him all the time. We go at times to the world

and at times to other people.

Thomas a' Kempis is strong on his teaching that we should not seek consolation from human beings. Do you see even in that, even in that we begin to dilute our commitment to God. When something hard happens to us we go to a friend hoping that they will comfort us and we encourage each other to think, "Oh that is good, you should do that." And just because it is not great obvious sin we think, "Well, it's all right." But loved ones, it's seeking consolation from the world. Even if it's the good world it's seeking consolation from the world. If we had gone to God in that moment our communion with him would have deepened.

And so do you see that it is a question of whether you live an inward/outward life or an outward/inward life and that's it, really. Whether you live from the inside out getting all that you need from God or whether you live from the outside in getting what you need from man, and from circumstances, and from things. And if you live that way your communion life is always going to be unsatisfactory. In fact, I would question if it's real communion that you're having. I would wonder if it's not a kind of psychological experience or a psychic experience such as C.S. Lewis described where you're constantly following the mental track that is left in your memory of some communion you once had with God.

But once you begin looking to the world, and to circumstances, and to people for what you should get from your Father, your communion life begins to fade. I could give you proof of that. When are your best times of communion with God? None of us have any problem with answering that, none of us. It's always when you're forsaken by everything else, isn't it? It's always when the bottom drops out of your world. It's when all hope in circumstances goes. It's when all hope of anybody being able to help you goes. Those are the precious times with your Creator.

Now loved ones, isn't it proof that you can only have real communion with God when you stop looking to the outside. Now, that's why the next verses in Corinthians run as they do loved ones so maybe you'd look at them. 1 Corinthians 2:14, "The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned." Now, I hope if we have time to comment on the gifts of the Spirit of God but would you just notice that this verse is saying that the unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God.

The unspiritual man can't receive from God. He, in other words, cannot take part in that Holy Communion, that Jacob's ladder that is stretched between heaven and earth. He can't have any interaction with his God, the unspiritual man. Except that I'd point out to you the word that is used for "unspiritual". Those of you who know Greek will recognize it, it is "psukikos" and it becomes in English "psy" and the "K" in Anglo-Saxon became "ch" and became "psyche" and then we added "logic" to it and it's the "psychological".

In other words, the person who is still operating in the old way their souls used to, from the outside in, will not be able to receive the gifts of the Spirit of God. That's called the soulish person. You see, what happens is that our souls are meant to work outwards directed by our spirits and under the rule of our spirits. But, as fallen men our souls have come under the domination of our bodies and our souls in turn have utterly dominated and squashed our spirits until they hardly exist so that our souls are used to working the wrong way round.

In other words, when we were created by God it was natural for us to come into a situation where the

Philistines were round us -- thousands of Philistines and soldiers. And our souls would be so governed by our spirits that we would see only the chariots of angels and the powers of God. And our souls would be dictated to by our spirits and our minds and emotions would receive their information from our spirits, and we should see around us the chariots and the angels of God and we would have no fear of what we see with our eyes and hear with our ears.

That's the way our souls used to operate. But as fallen men and woman who have been used to living dependent on the world, and people, and circumstances, our souls have for years been operating the other way so that our souls receive their information from our ears, and our eyes, and our sense of touch, our five senses. So that we find ourselves again, and again in the same situation as Peter, he was alright while Jesus said, "Come." So he got out of the boat and he stepped on the water and walked towards Jesus. And while his spirit was fixed on Jesus his soul was fed by that information, his mind and emotions said, "Jesus made this water. He told you to step upon it and if he told you to step upon it he will enable it to bear your weight."

So his mind and emotions were fed with that information and his will was dictated to by that information and his will directed his feet to step on the water. But the moment his soul turned around and it began to receive the information from his eyes and he saw the water, and his ears heard the noise of the waves, and his feet felt the wetness, as soon as his soul began to receive the information from the outside in, he lost everything and he began to sink.

Now loved ones, if you live that way you will not enjoy communion with God. If your soul is continually filled by the outside things that are coming in, you will never experience communion with God. That's where Thomas a' Kempis' comment comes in you see, "When you're receiving consolation from other people," that's from the outside in, "You will not go to your Lord for consolation and you therefore will receive no consolation from him."

Whatever you go to the outside world for you do not need to get from God and so you will not go to him and you will not seek him with a whole heart and therefore you will not find him. And of course, the tragedy with so many of us children of God is that we started depending on God for everything but we've been deceived; deceived I think is the better word in regard to soulishness. Carnality is rebellion but soulishness is deception, we've been deceived into thinking, "Well yes, but you should get something from the body, shouldn't you." And we kind of feel, "Well, yes there must be some reason for the existence of the body. Yes, I mean the church it must exist for some reason and they do say, 'Be kind to the widows.' So maybe that's it, maybe we are supposed to get some things from the body."

And it's not long before we sink into a psychological reinforcement society where we are getting everything we need from our fellow saints as we call them and we are not going to God for our life and our spiritual life begins to sink. It's interesting, some of us have had that experience in Fish Enterprises, it's our businesses that we operate here on the ground floor in the restaurants and in the manufacturing. Many loved ones, come into Fish and they're used in their secular job to having a good Quiet Time. They need it because they're going into an atmosphere that is often very hostile to God and so they have a good healthy spiritual Quiet Time with God each day.

But then they come into Fish and they say what we all said when we went to seminary. They say, "Well, these are Christians that I'm working with now. It's going to be heaven every day. It's going to be beautiful. We're going to sing hymns all day, and wash a few dishes now and again, and make a few plaques. But really it will be just one long time of fellowship together." And they

come in and subtly they let their defenses down against Satan because they ease off on their own Quiet Time, and their prayer time, and their communion with God, and they begin to depend on the other loved ones in Fish to feed them with life from Jesus, and they begin to depend on them more and more for that food. And you can guess the result, the result is tragic.

How many people go to seminary and lose all the spiritual life they have? How many people come into work with other Christians or come into a strong body of Christ and what is supposed to be a gift to them so that they can minister more fully to the world becomes the very death nail of their spiritual life because their soul works inwardly.

Now loved ones, it's soulishness then that this verse is talking about. It's not really the unspiritual man, it's the soulish man. Or, the Bible talks about the natural man because the man that is not born of the spirit works the same way, he works from the outside in. Now, if I could just share with you a way in which that steals away from you the gifts of the Spirit of God. Maybe you'd look at 2 Corinthians 5:16-17, "From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come."

Now that verse 16A runs, "From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view." Or, I believe the King James Version says, "We know no man after the flesh." That is, in the old days before we were born of God we used to look at a person and size them up from a psychological view point. We used to observe their actions, and their behavior, and we examined the kind of heart we had when we produced those actions and behavior and we concluded this was their problem. "Yes, they behaved exactly as I did so their problem is like mine, an inferiority complex, so I know how to deal with them." That's regarding a person from a human point of view.

Or, you remember even maybe when we were younger, I'm sure none of us do it now, but you remember in churches we would go in and we would look out for the attractive guy, or the attractive girl, or the one who looked really with it and we would be drawn to that kind of person, naturally. For their good of course, we would be drawn to them. That's regarding a person from a human point of view. That's the way the world operates.

Now you see, Paul is saying, "From now on we regard no one from a human point of view." That is we look at them in the spirit and we see them as God's Spirit is showing them to us and the spirit dictates what our mind and emotions have as an attitude towards them. Our minds and emotions do not just react to them as they used to, notching off, and picking off the little marks that we recognize as being like our own. But the spirit directs our mind and emotions in an original way to see in them what Jesus sees.

Now, that's God plan. But when you don't operate that way you do not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God. Now, look at these gifts, 1 Corinthians 12. I can only give you some instances loved ones because it would take several hours to go through each gift. But, 1 Corinthians 12:8, "To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit." Now, the utterance of knowledge is discernment of a person's true state and true need through the direct revelation of the Holy Spirit to you. See, it's not mind reading -- that's a psychic imitation and counterfeit -- but this is a discernment of a person's true state before God.

In other words, the Father sees the person as they really are, sees what their need is and either tells you the need or directs you what you should say to meet that need. That's the gift of the Spirit of God. Now, when your soul works in a soulish way, that is when your soul works backwards, you look at a person and you try to mix in a little psychology with it and you say, "Yeah, well they're obviously very desperate for love and I know that that means that they probably had trouble in their upbringing. Probably, their mother didn't love them sufficiently, or their father and so what they need is more love." And then you try to go to God and get some guidance from him.

You'll not receive any because you're working soulishly. You're trying to feed some soulish information from your mind and your memory of the precedents that have been listed in the psychology books and you're trying to use that to minister to the person's spirit. As deep as that will go is their psychological part, their soul, it will never touch their spirit. But you're beginning to know them after the flesh or soulishly. The soulish man cannot receive the gifts of the Spirit of God. You will not receive the gift of knowledge in that situation.

Now there are other examples of that kind of thing loved ones, if you'd like to go to it. If you look at Verse 8, "To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom." Truth is one thing; wisdom is how to apply truth. Do you understand that? There are many truths in the world but wisdom is the ability to apply the right truth at the right time. Now, if a person comes to you for advice and you begin to tackle them from your past experiences, or from all you've read about in the counseling books, and you begin to try to discern what their problem is and you say, "Ah, yes that's the difficulty. They're having a career problem. And obviously, when you have difficulty with career problems if you can't apply the SAT test [a college aptitude test] right there you ought to at least find out what their interests are and what way their life has been going in the past."

As soon as you begin to depend on that for ministering to those people, you will cut yourself out from receiving the gifts of the spirit of God. So it's one thing, loved ones, to use your soul to gather information -- but if you then think that that soul of yours can manipulate that information so that you can give the person the right answer, you'll never receive the gifts of the Spirit of God. So if you live soulishly you will lack communion with God. If you live depending on other people for the things that you should receive from God you will lack communion with him.

Now I just wanted to give those two examples of the gifts of the Spirit of God but maybe we could concentrate a little on soulishness itself. It's interesting that on four different occasions Jesus talks about soulishness. In fact, he talks not only about "psuche" as if it were the soul but he talks about "psuche" as if it was a soul life. And it may interest you to know every time Jesus says, "Whosoever would save his life will lose it", the word he uses is "psuche".

So he's saying, "If you try to save your soul life you'll lose it. But if you're willing to lose your soul life -- that is, not to use your soul as the chief means of your own happiness, and of your own ministry -- then you'll actually save it." And you remember, there's another verse in the New Testament that says, "In patience possess your souls." We're actually meant, you see, to possess our souls. We're actually meant to be able to use our souls by our spirits. So we're meant to possess our souls.

But it's interesting, when you allow your souls to dominate in that way, you lose it, it becomes your master. One easy example of it of course, would be conformity to this world, "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." When people concentrate on the soul life they end up trying to be like everybody else and they actually lose the

individuality that they hope to achieve. So it's very interesting, I don't want to hit all the men with beards here or all the motorcyclists, but it's interesting that when the world wants to gain it's individuality it loses it because they're all trying to gain it in the same way at the same time. So when you try to save your soul you actually lose it. But if you're willing to lose your soul you actually save it.

Now loved ones, let's look just very briefly at some of these. Matthew 16:23, is one of those instances when Jesus talks about soul life and you see it in Verse 24 and 25. The word actually occurs, "Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.'" That's the daily cross. "For whoever would save his life," and the word is "psuche". "Whoever would save his soul life will lose it, and whoever loses his soul life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul life? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul life?"

Now, why did Jesus say that? Oh, because of the incident immediately before it. Verse 21, "From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, 'God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you.' But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men.'"

We all would think, "Oh, Peter was just being loving to Jesus. He just didn't want Jesus to suffer." But do you see that Jesus saw any concern for his own safety as a work of Satan and so he told Peter to get behind him because he was being Satan to him at that moment. And soul life is self concern. Whenever we get concerned about our own safety, or our own futures, or our own happiness, even if they seem kind of innocent concerns, if you become preoccupied with yourself in any way, or with your own concern, then you'll lose your sense of communion with God.

The soulish man cannot receive the gifts of the Spirit of God. So loved ones, if you think of that at times, if things happen to you and you begin to allow them to preoccupy your mind, you lose all sense of communion with God. So it's important when little tragedies come along -- either in circumstances, or in finances, or in personal relationships -- it's important when they come along that you see that God has allowed Satan to bring them to you to strengthen your spirit. And it's important that you look away from them and continue to look to God.

But, if you allow yourself to become overly preoccupied with them you'll lose all sense of peace and communion with God. Now if you say to me, "Oh, but shouldn't we examine those things and take steps?" Yes, but then you should forget them. Sure, you should use the mind and the wisdom that God has given you in a financial situation to size it up, take steps to put it right -- but then forget it. But if you allow it to continue to dwell in your mind, and you continue to be preoccupied with that self concern, you lose all sense of communion with God.

It's the same in man woman relationships or personal relationships. If some relationship goes wrong, sure you should write the letter of apology or whatever is needed. Certainly, you should take whatever steps to set the thing right. Then, you should forget it. If you don't forget it, if you allow yourself to become more and more concerned with that thing, it's self concern, it's a preoccupation with your own safety, and you lose all sense of communion with God.

And if you say to me, "But brother, sometimes I feel the steps I've taken won't bring the necessary



result about.” That you leave in God’s hands. The world can do nothing but continue to worry and fret about it but we can say, “Lord, we’ve done the best we can and we’ve put it now in your hands.” And get back on to an even keel of your life. But loved ones, excessive self concern will steal from you any communion with God. So watch it -- you are not here to become rich, and healthy and popular. You’re not, you’re not.

If those things come, good; if they don’t, that isn’t why you’re here. You’re here to express the image of your Creator as fully as possible throughout your life and he has promised that he will add all other things on to you if you do that. But the moment you sink back, you see what it is loved ones, it’s a sinking back to these things, it’s a sinking back to depending on the world for your significance, and your security, and your happiness. And once you become concerned with that, you lose all sense of communion with God.

Now, there are several other instances. I’ll just take one more, loved ones, because the time is moving. Matthew 10:37, and this is a tricky one and that’s why I’d love us to just look at it for a moment. And you see the actual word occurs in verse 39, that we’ve been talking about, “He who finds his life,” that is the soul life “psuche”, “Will lose it, and he who loses his soul life for my sake will find it.” Now, what is Jesus talking about? Well, verse 37, “He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” It’s human love.

Instead of looking to God we were brought up to depend on our parents’ approval. Instead of looking to God for strength and encouragement in difficulties we were encouraged to look to our friends and to our peers. Indeed, instead of looking to God for a sense of what we’re here to do, or our identity, or our importance, we have been encouraged through the whole miserable curve grading system to look to our peers and to compare ourselves to our peers and in that way to establish our own sense of significance. So we have been brought up in the whole school of human love. Now loved ones, that’s soulish.

That is the soul working from the outside in. It’s the soul trying to get from other people, and from other friends, and from other significant human beings a sense of our own importance and our own significance. It’s trying to get from human love what we’re meant to get from God’s love alone. Now, as soon as you do that you lose the need for God’s love. You lose the need for his love. You dilute that so that you don’t go to him and seek him with all your heart.

Now if you say to me, “But isn’t it good to be able to receive love from others? If you can’t receive love from others don’t you see that you will fail to bless them and you will fail to be like Jesus? Jesus received love from Mary, and from Martha, and from the disciples.” And certainly we are meant to receive love from others and we are meant to be able to receive it graciously -- but as an optional extra. As an optional extra that does not irritate us when we don’t get it. As an optional extra that is an added blessing that God showers upon us but not as some necessity that when we miss it we get irritable, or impatient, or resentful.

So yes, we’re meant to be able to receive love from each other but that’s not human love. Human love is love that we depend upon for our very existence, comfort that we expect from other people, encouragement that we regard it as a right to receive from our roommate, or our husband, or our wife, or our brothers and sisters in Jesus. That is human love. And the interesting thing is that not only of course does it bring real resentment from you if you don’t get it, not only does it put a tremendous sense of demand on other people so that they do not feel a restfulness in your

fellowship, but it most of all prevents you receiving the love that God has in his heart ready to give you.

Loved ones, there is one who loves us with a pure heart and that is our dear Father and he loves us with all his being, and he loves us with all of the blood of his own dear Son, and he loves us with all the gifts of trees and flowers that he's given us. And there is no love like his, there is no love as pure as his and as unselfish as his, and as disinterested as his. And he loves each one of us here in this room and he wants to begin to express that love to us.

Do you know why so many of us have trouble with the Song of Solomon? Because we make do with each other's love and we've never learned to receive God's love. We've never been desperate enough for it to receive it. So when we read the Song of Solomon it just seems sexy. We don't sense in it the gentleness, and the kindness, and the desperate hunger you remember that C. S. Lewis talks about. The hunger that is in a sense happiness, even in its hunger. Even as you feel the hunger, the satisfaction is in the midst of the hunger -- but we have little experience of that ecstasy of God's love that is described in the Song of Solomon.

Why? Because we're always trying to suck love from everybody around us and so we never go to God in desperation yearning and hungering for his love. And only when we begin to do that do we begin to rise into those levels of prayer that the Saints talk about. But loved ones, the soulish man cannot receive that and cannot have that kind of communion with God. And so you know, each one of us here tonight, we all know fine well where we look to other people for love. I look at the poor wives and I think about us big baby husbands that we are and we are terrible.

But, you ladies, don't you do the same thing? I mean, you look so often to us maybe for security or protection. And if you say, "Oh, aren't we supposed to?" No, you're not. You're supposed to look to God. God is enough for you. And if you say, "Oh, well won't my husband give me it?" Yes, he will -- that's the great thing -- so it's a surprise, you're surprised by joy. Suddenly, "Ah, isn't that lovely." And so the littlest thing they do for you, you're delighted with it and so of course that's a delight to them so what does it do? Well, the old psychology works and they do more -- but not because you manipulated them, just because it's a byproduct from a loved one who gets all that they need from God.

But look at yourselves, look at ourselves, look at all of us. Think how dependent we are on other people for a little bit of praise, a little tidbit of approval. And it is so childish and most of all, it's diluting, diluting our spirits so that our communion with God is not hungry for love and we never have any sense of God's love because we make do with human love.

So loved ones, when I share with you to see that we should not be dependent upon people, it's because there is a greater than people here. There is a greater than the temple here among us. There is a greater than the dearest human being we know here, there is a dearer One than the most precious human love we've ever experienced and he will love us with a love that puts all else into the darkness.

And oh I remember old Stanley Jones had a phrase, and we used to joke at home my wife and I about it, but it is good and he says, "Put out the candles, the sun is up." And that's it. Put out the candles, the sun is up. Every other love, every other artificial light is nothing when the sun rises. It has no glory, it has no sensitivity compared with the glory and sensitivity of the sun.

And so it is for each one of us here tonight. We're meant to experience the love of God and we'll only experience that when we turn from all other loves. And then so many of us say, "Oh, but won't we love?" Oh yeah, when you're filled with God's love you'll love with a love that nobody else has ever experienced before. It will be an outgoing love that is so full of tenderness, and sensitivity, and kindness, and a freedom of selfishness that your husband, your wife, your mum, your dad, your children will not recognize you and that's God's will.

So I'd just pray that it may help you in your communion with God to begin to take the moments that God brings to you to turn your soul around. Now, he'll give you a moment tomorrow. They come as hardships we call them, and as trials. You go into the office tomorrow and some job that you've spent days on somebody will criticize. And that is God giving you an opportunity to die to man's approval and man's love. You'll go home tonight and somebody should make the hot chocolate and they don't and it's just terrible, there you have to make your own. And God will allow you to see that you've to look to him alone for every comfort, and for every encouragement, and to stop demanding from your friends.

So God will begin to work on your soul life. And please, recognize it when it comes and know that Satan will trip you up a few times. He will. You'll be lying there in the midst of your own self pity and resentment and then a little angel from God will come down and say, "Do you know what this was?" And you'll think, "Ah." But be patient, and bit-by-bit, God's Spirit will bring your soul into a position where it is working the right way round from the inside out.

Let us pray. Dear Father, we catch a glimpse of the princes and princesses we are meant to be. Thank you. We are the king's children and the king will give us all the love we need so that we'll have plenty left over for everybody else. So Lord we pray now that you will begin to work your will in us, the great transformation that you worked on Calvary and that you'll turn us around, turn our souls around Lord, so that we're no longer sponges soaking up everything from all around us but we become fountains, fountains of living water who receive from the very depths of our being the living water that comes from your love.

And Lord we would pray that you'd fill the world with it starting with us here tonight. That we may be givers not getters, blessers and not receivers. We thank you Lord that as we give, and give, and give again so you will give, and give to us. And the more we give away the more you will give. And Lord thank you, thank you for such a great plan. We ask you to bring us into it this very night.

Now the grace of our Lord Jesus, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us now and throughout the days of this week. Amen.