

Let The Bible Speak Series

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The Fellowship of The Saints

In Acts 2:42 we read "And they continued steadfast in the apostles doctrine, the fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayers. The word fellowship (Koinonia) is found a number of times in the N.T., however it is not always translated by the same English word. Its basic meaning is "a joint participation" "a sharing or having in common"

Phil. 1:5 "For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now."

Phil. 4:15-16 "Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated (shared) with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent once and again for my necessities."

Rom. 15:26 "It pleased the brethren to make a certain **contribution**."

2Cor. 9:13 "Your liberal distribution...."

1Cor. 10:16 "The cup of blessing which we bless is it not the **communion**..."

Gal. 6:6 "Let him that is taught in the word **communicate** unto him that teacheth in all good things.

From these verses we can see that the word means a sharing in common, mutual interest, mutual activity or a partnership with each other in the blessings of the gospel. The members of the Jerusalem Church continued steadfastly in this fellowship.

When they withdrew from the "untoward generation" they did not become hermits, but they were intimate with each other; they were together. There can be no healthy Christian life in isolation

Romans 14:7 "for none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself."

I. Fellowship Is Illustrated in the Unity of the Body.

- a. Underlying all joint action is an antecedently formed relationship that makes fellowship possible.
- b. There is perfect fellowship and harmony in the physical body. Every member works in harmony with every other member, and every member has a function to perform.
- c. The church is the body of Christ (1Cor.12:27) "Now you are the body of Christ and members individually. When there are factions and divisions in the church the fellowship of that church has been destroyed. Hence Christian fellowship is that spiritual partnership that links together all who have been baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Into this grand union all true believers enter. It is this relationship that makes fellowship possible. All selfish and secular distinctions prevailing in society have been removed. Gal. 3:28 "neither Jew nor Greek, bond or free..."

II. In What Are Christians Not To Have Fellowship?

A. Not with devils (demons) 1Cor. 10:20 "But I say that the things which the gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils, and not to God and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils." The Christians were not to participate in the pagan, idolatrous feasts in which these idols were worshipped. They were not to drink cup of devils or partake of the table of devils. They could, but Paul forbid them doing so. That is the meaning of "ye cannot."

B. We are not to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Eph. 5:1-12 esp. v. 11. The word "reprove" means to expose. "Sin must be exposed. One is not being nice to a wicked man by

endeavoring to make him feel what a fine fellow he is. The cancerous tumor of sin must be removed. It is not really an act of love to smooth things over, as if the terrible evil of the sons of disobedience is really not so bad." Hendricksen

C. Not to be Unequally Yoked 2Cor. 6:14 "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness and what communion hath light with darkness?" No Christian had any business making alliances of any kind with pagans. They were not to place themselves in a situation where it might be thought that they were joined in thought or action with the unbeliever in his/her sin.

Christianity and paganism are antithetical, as diverse as righteousness and wickedness, or light and darkness.

D. No fellowship in Error 2Jno.9-11 "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son."

We cannot have fellowship with false teachers. Doctrine of Christ refers to what Christ taught himself and through the apostles whom he inspired.

"The person who either neglects to teach any part of the doctrine of Christ, or who teaches what is not the doctrine of Christ is culpable, and does not acknowledge God." Macknight. To argue that the "doctrine of Christ" means only the "doctrine about Christ" is wrong. If this be true then everyone who acknowledges Christ would have to be accepted whether he had obeyed the gospel or not.

III. In What Are Christians To Have Fellowship?

A. In Worship--In Christian worship we have ties that bind us to Christ and to one another. The word communion is but a combination of two words "common" and "union" Notice 1Cor. 10:16-17 The cup of blessing...is it not a communion of the blood of Christ. In partaking of the cup of blessing we show our attachment to Christ and to one another. We partake in common of the benefits of the blood by all drinking or jointly sharing in the fruit of the vine. "The cup of blessing in the Lord's Supper, for which we bless God and which we drink, is it not the symbol of our joint participation of the blessings procured by the blood of Christ?" Macknight. The loaf... is it not the communion of the body of Christ. Since we all partake of it, it is the means by which we all share alike in the benefits which are imparted by means of his body. "The loaf which we break and eat, is it not the symbol of our joint participation of the benefits belonging to the body or church of Christ..." "because there is one loaf in the Lord's supper we the many disciples of Christ are thereby shown to be one society, whose principles, practices, and hopes are the same for to declare this, we all participate of that one loaf." Macknight.

B. In The Work of the Church--(1) We are laborers--Mt.20:1 "For the kingdom of heaven is like landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard."

(2) We are laborers together--Rom. 12:4-5 "For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we being many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another." (3) We are laborers together with God. 1Cor.3:9 "For we are laborers together with God; ye are God's husbandry, ye are Gods building. We labor together for:

1. the advance of the gospel

2. Support of Gospel preachers Phil. 4:15 "ye sent once and again to my necessities..."

When we contribute on Lord's day, we are sharing in the preaching of the Gospel, wherever the preacher goes, we are a part of it.

3. Building up of the church

4. Edifying of the body in love, each member supplies Eph. 4:16 "from whom the whole body joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

C. In Suffering--there is such a mutual feeling of sympathy between the members of our physical body

that when an injury is sustained by any one member, it is felt throughout the entire body. The same should be true of the church. When one of our members is sick--lonely--in distress--falls to sin--suffers the loss of a loved one etc. the rest of us feel the loss and jointly share with this suffering saint. 1Cor.12:26 "And whether one member suffer, all members suffer with it or one member be honored all members rejoice with it."

Story of Geese flying in a V when one is injured or sick one or two leave the flock to be with the injured goose.

4. In Joys--Is there one among us that is happy? Then we should not be envious of him, but rejoice with him. If honor is bestowed upon one member, do we rejoice with him?

If another star outshines ours, do we delight in its radiance? When we have a brother among us with ten talents and we have only one, do we congratulate ourselves on having such a man of usefulness in our midst to help us promote the kingdom or do we depreciate him as much as we can?

5. In Association, as Joint Heirs--We are to have fellowship in our conversation, in conversing with one another, and in associating one with another in the work of the Lord.

Malachi the prophet gave this report of the people of Israel in his day, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one with another." Mal. 3:16 These words were spoken during the darkest days of Israel's history. Not even the wonders of Egypt, or the Red Sea, or the wilderness, or the captivity in Babylon had completely eradicated their idolatry. The priests had lost their sense of fear and reverence for God according to Mal. 1:6-8 and 3:8-9. Still there was a remnant of people who had received great strength in speaking "often one to another" and they "thought upon his name" Here is the real essence of Christian fellowship so far as association is concerned. Drinking coffee, eating together, having recreational fun together are never referred in the scriptures as "Christian fellowship." They are in fact not. Nothing, however, is more edifying and strengthening to our faith today than for Christians to converse together about the Lord's work; yet I fear that now we more often speak against one another than to one another.

We need more Christian fellowship. How can Christians come to really love one another when they do not know one another? How can they know one another without associating with one another in the Lord's work?

I need the prayers of those I love, while traveling over life's rugged way

That I may true and faithful be, and live for Jesus every day

I want my friends to pray for me, to bear my tempted soul above, and intercede with God for me, I need the prayers of those I love.

I need the prayers of those I love, to help me in each trying hour

To bear my tempted soul to Him, that He may keep me by His power.

I want my friends to pray for me, to bear my tempted soul above,
and intercede with God for me, I need the prayers of those I love.

The fellowship of the saints provides a wonderful relationship which all Christians can enjoy.

Close: It has been good to have you with us on our broadcast today. If you would like a free copy of the lesson you have just listened to, just write me at the address you will see on your screen in just a moment and I will be happy to send it to you without cost or obligation. Just ask for the sermon titled "The Fellowship of the Saints." If you would like to enroll in our free home bible study course you can do so by requesting the first lesson which we will gladly send to you as soon as you let us know. Thanks again for tuning in. We hope to have you with us again next Sunday morning at the same time. Until then, may God richly bless everyone.