

## FELLOWSHIP - WHAT IS IT?

1John 1:1-10

### INTRODUCTION:

- A. This subject has caused quite a lot of problems in the church the last few years in many areas of the country.
- B. This has not been because the teaching of the New Testament is unclear on the subject, but because the subject, is by men, limited to man; that is, no consideration is given to the scriptural aspect of this - that scriptural fellowship one with another is because the two have fellowship with God and fellowship with God is dependent on our walking in the light and that light is God's word 1Jhn.1:3,6,7; 2Cor 4:4
- C. This lesson will begin a series of lessons on this subject. Just how many lessons, I do not know, but probably eight to ten. I will try to discuss the subject from all different aspects as thoroughly as my ability will allow.
- D. This material is very vital in respect to many problems that arise in the work and worship of a local congregation. It is available in printed form if desired.

### DISCUSSION:

#### I. THE VERY NATURE OF THE TITLE OF THIS LESSON NECESSITATES THAT SOMETHING IN THE FORM OF A DEFINITION BE SET FORTH.

- A. There are several Greek words which our word "*fellowship*" translates. They are: *KOINOS*, *KOINONIA*, *KOINONEO*, *KOINONOS*, and *METOCHE*.
  1. The root word for this group of words is the adjective *KOINOS*. This root word is by itself used twelve times in the New Testament. It means "common, belonging equally to several," Acts 2:42; Acts 4:32 (Kittel, Vol.3, p.796)
  2. *KOINONIA* (an abstract noun) is used twenty times in the New Testament and is defined, "fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse;" (Thayer p.352--) denotes "participation, fellowship, esp. with a close bond. It expresses a two sided relation. Emphasis may be on either the giving or the receiving. It thus means; 1. 'participation, impartation, fellowship,' (Kittel, Vol.3, p.798)
  3. *KOINONEO* This verb is used eight times in the New Testament. "a. to come into communion or fellowship, to become a sharer, be made a partner---- b. to enter into fellowship, join one's self as an associate, make one's self a sharer or partner." (Thayer, p.351,352).
  4. *KOINONOS* (a concrete noun) is used ten times in the New Testament, and is defined as "a. a partner, associate, comrade, companion; 2Cor.8:23." (Thayer p.352). "Companion, partner, sharer." (Arndt-Gingrich, p.440).
  5. *METOCHE* This noun is used only one time (2Cor.6:14) in New Testament and is defined , "a sharing, communion, fellowship." (Thayer p.407).
- B. It is evident then, that such words as share, sharer, sharing, to share; a part, partaker, partaking, to partake; will cover the entire field of meaning of such terms. Expressions like common, communion, communicate, communication, distribute, distribution, fellowship, etc. are but various ways of expressing the same idea, and often in language that leaves much to be desired in revealing the meaning to the average reader of our day.
- C. Much greater stress should be placed on the activity inherent in these terms, and less on the state of being, or relationship. "The important thing is, that these words (belonging to the *KOIN* family) - refer primarily, though not invariably, to participation in something rather than to association with others; and there is often a genitive (a grammatical case, marking typically a relationship of possessor or source, like our word "of"), to indicate that in which one participates or shares." A. R. George, Communion With God In The New Testament, p.23, as quoted by Harry Pickup, Jr. in the 1972 Florida College Lectureship.

#### II. WHAT USAGE IS MADE IN THE SCRIPTURE OF THESE VARIOUS TERMS? (Note the extreme breadth of possibility this could encompass.)

- A. In a very broad and general sense.
  1. In a business sense. James and John were "partners" with Simon Lk 5:10
  2. In a fleshly state. Children have partaken of flesh and blood so Jesus also took part in the same. Both families of words used interchangeably Heb 2:14
  3. This broad general sense is not the basic use of the word in Scripture, but is the exception rather than the rule. We have seen a tendency to reverse this usage in recent years among brethren.

- B. A specific use is involved - the fellowship we have because we are Christians.
  - 1. This partnership is of a dual nature.
    - a. "Vertical" fellowship - between the Christian and God
    - b. "Horizontal" fellowship - between Christians
  - 2. This partnership excludes certain other conflicting partnerships 2Cor.6:14-18; Eph.5:6-16. This is a crucial point in this study and will be developed in depth later on in this series.
- C. This sharing is practical - an everyday sharing in the walk with each other in serving the Lord which we have "in common."
  - 1. Gal.2:9 "the right hand of fellowship" was given
  - 2. Gal.6:6 the taught are to communicate to him that teacheth
  - 3. Phil.1:5 "fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now." (note: there is more than just money involved)
  - 4. Phil.4:15 "no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving but ye only." included support for preaching from the common fund.
  - 5. Acts 2:42,44; 2Cor.8:4-9:14; Rom.15:26 illustrate practicality of the concept

### III. THE BASIS FOR FELLOWSHIP

- A. The right relationship must be established. Note the deceptive possibilities involved here, as well as sincere actions of the uninformed.
  - 1. The deliberate pretender or hypocrite
  - 2. The sincere, but uninformed person, who actually thinks he is a Christian
- B. Note the relationship discussed in 1Jhn.1:3-7 in connections with Col.1:12,13 and Acts 26:18 also 1Cor.1:9
  - 1. There is a fellowship that must be
  - 2. There is a fellowship that may be
  - 3. There is a fellowship that must not be Eph.5:11
- C. Some observations
  - 1. God and the individual alone can have knowledge of the fact of the fellowship of a man with his God, and even that knowledge is somewhat limited on the part of the man!
  - 2. Fellowship among men is a very weak effort to respect fellowship between man and his God, and to implement its meaning and usefulness among us as a congregation of people
    - a. Fellowship with men not meaningful until fellowship with God established
    - b. If fellowship among men breaks fellowship with God then the fellowship among men is certainly an empty and meaningless sharing.
- D. Who has this relationship? (that is, fellowship between God and man)
  - 1. Go back to 1Jhn.1:3-7 and note the term **WALK**
  - 2. Those who are called into this sharing by the Gospel 2Thes.2:14
  - 3. The plan of salvation must be involved in the "experience" of everyone who is a partaker. This and this alone can establish the right relationship.

### IV. IS THIS FELLOWSHIP NOTHING MORE THAN A RELATIONSHIP?

- A. Be reminded of the emphasis to be placed upon participation
  - 1. I have relatives (hence a relationship is established) that I do not participate with in anything.
  - 2. I may be a child of God (relationship established) and not be a participant in the work that is mine.
- B. Brethren can deprive themselves of the right to fellowship, even though the relationship was established.
- C. When this happens they need not expect to share in the inheritance that has been promised.

### CONCLUSION:

- A. It is very important that we understand the primary scriptural concept of fellowship, which is sharing in the blessings and privileges of the gospel of Christ which God made possible
- B. We must understand that until our relationship to God has been established there can be no fellowship in the real sense of the word as used in scripture.
- C. However, it is equally important that we understand that fellowship is more than just establishing a relationship, it is a working partnership.

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