

FELLOWSHIP AND OUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD

Gal 4:1-7

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Review meaning of fellowship and its usage in the Bible. 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.
- B. 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.
- C. Go over the basis for this fellowship in 1Jhn 1:3-7
- D. Fellowship is more than just a relationship
- E. In dealing with fellowship and our relationship to God, re-emphasize the basis for this fellowship and note again such passages as 1Cor 1:9; 2Thess 2:14; Col 1:12,13; Acts 26:18 and 1Jhn 1:5-7

DISCUSSION:

I. CAN THIS RELATIONSHIP TO GOD BE BROKEN? (Yes but only by God)

- A. The adoption was an act of God in response to our "application" for sonship
 1. Remember the arguments we have made about "joining the church"
 2. We are adopted by God Rom 8:15,23; 9:4; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5
- B. We qualified ourselves, but God adopted. We qualify for salvation, but pardon is an act of God
- C. Since God performed the act of adoption, thereby establishing the relationship, He alone can disown (unadopt) us
 1. Illustrate: Parents adopt a child - no one else can disinherit the child but the parents themselves. The child cannot "unadopt" himself (imperfect illustration). In many states an adopted child cannot be disinherited. The law demands that part of the inheritance be his even if he should prefer not to be thought of as their son. He can refuse the inheritance, you can think he ought not to have it; but the sonship is permanent
 2. Birth is also used in the scriptures as an illustration Jhn 3:3,5
 3. Consider also the expression in 1Cor 12:14ff using the terms body and members.
 4. Many other figures could be cited, but there can be little doubt that one who is a Christian sustains a relationship to God that OTHER MEN cannot sever. The fact that I do or do not fellowship you has not one thing to do with whether I have this relationship to God
 5. Some may say: "well you are teaching once saved always saved." Not so, but I am teaching once a child of God always a child of God. But that is not to say that God recognizes me as a faithful child!
- D. Many passages give evidence that God will disown and disinherit some who have received the adoption
 1. Take heed lest ye fall 1Cor 10:12; Ye are fallen from grace Gal 5:4
 2. Note the address to "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." Heb 3:1; 4:1,11
 3. Save a soul from death Jas 5:19,20; Dog to his own vomit, sow to mire 2Pet 2:18-20
- E. At what point does this occur
 1. Christ will judge Matt 25:32ff; Rom 14:10; 2Cor 5:10; Jhn 5:22; Acts 10:42; Acts 17:31; Rom 2:16; 2Tim 4:1
 2. Word is the basis for this judgment Rom 2:2; Jhn 12:48
 3. A source of much of our problem is concentrated right here! We confuse "discipline" with "excommunication."

II. CAN OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD BE BROKEN? (yes but only by man)

- A. Before you challenge this statement listen to 1Jhn 1:5-7
 - 1. If we walk in the light, we have fellowship
 - 2. If we do not walk in the light we do not have fellowship
- B. Who will affirm that God will "withdraw" from me as the one who takes the initiative.
- C. The right hand of fellowship is perpetually extended by God to his children. God wants no one to be lost 2Pet 3:9

III. WHAT IS OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD?

- A. It covers every area of our service to God
 - 1. It involves our worship to God
 - a. Prayer - I talk to God and God listens
 - b. Study - God talks to me and I listen
 - c. Singing - We praise God and God receives the praise and is glorified
 - d. Lord's supper - We remember God's gift of Jesus and his suffering for us (God gave - we remember the gift)
 - e. Giving - We make a sacrificial gift and God accepts the gift
 - 2. Work - We are workers together (partners) with God 1Cor 3:9; 2Cor 6:1
 - 3. Purity of life - The result is one of association to a great degree, but there is an active participation in shunning evil and doing good on the part of God and man
- B. God will not fellowship us in any action that is unauthorized (In actuality we broke the fellowship and not God because of our unauthorized action)
 - 1. I had a signed "lease agreement", the man who signed it broke the agreement by violating the terms of the agreement.
 - 2. I could also break that agreement by violating its terms, but God does not violate the terms of His agreement with us.
- C. Persistent walking in darkness will result in severance of our relationship (strictly speaking we still are God's child, but God no longer looks upon us as his child.)

IV. HOW DO I HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD?

- A. When one is born again and does not feed on the word, does he grow? obviously not 1Pet 2:1ff; Heb 5:12-14; 2Pet 3:18
- B. A life of active spiritual growth is demanded for fellowship with God, and fellowship with God will inevitably mean a joyful maturing with God. The Lord is drawing men to Him but not those who have no element within them to be attracted by his magnet Jhn 6:44,45
- C. Any weakness that exist is on my part - to come to any other conclusion is to make a charge against my partner, God.

CONCLUSION:

- A. What then is the difference in "fellowship" and "relationship"?
 - 1. Relationship is primarily a state of being which exists because of blood ties, legal ties, or spiritual ties.
 - 2. Fellowship is primarily an act of sharing and participation. It involves action on our part to maintain it. We are the only fallible partner, God is infallible. Therefore any lack of sharing is on our part and not God's.
- B. We tend to think only of the "blessing" of fellowship and place no emphasis, or at least, very little emphasis on the obligation of fellowship
- C. When I discontinue my participation, I cannot be a participant. How can I be a sharer when I am not sharing? Fellowship is a two way street between God and man
- D. Relationship is established by God when I meet God's terms - Fellowship is maintained by man when man continues to participate with God in God's work in God's way Jhn 8:31.

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