

## FELLOWSHIP AND OUR RELATIONSHIP TO BRETHREN

### Phil 1:1-7

#### INTRODUCTION:

- A. Brief review of fellowship and its definition
  - 1. Its emphasis in scripture is restricted
  - 2. The basis of fellowship in the spiritual realm is our relationship to God
  - 3. Fellowship is more than a relationship - it is an active partnership
  - 4. Man's fellowship and relationship with God are conditional
  - 5. Men who do not participate cannot be partners
  - 6. Actions in our partnership involve our worship, work and purity of life
  - 7. Weakness in the partnership can be traced to the weak partner and that is not God
- B. Our study so far has been concentrated in the area of a man and his God. However, now we must turn our study to the fellowship that man has with others who are Christians
- C. Passages already cited prove the existence of this fellowship
  - 1. Gal 2:9; 6:6; Phil 1:5; 4:15; Acts 2:42,44; 2Cor 8:4-9:14; Rom 15:26 and others
  - 2. Fellowship with each other is empty if not in fellowship with God. And God will not be a partner in anything which he has forbidden, or that he has not authorized.

#### DISCUSSION:

##### I. MUST THERE BE LIMITATIONS IN OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER MEN?

- A. The activities of the wicked are forbidden for our participation
  - 1. 2Cor 6:14-18; Eph 5:13-16 - Contrast verses 3,7 and 11 with verses 1,2, 8-10 and 14-16
  - 2. Brethren sometime become involved as well as aliens
- B. Aliens do not have the right relationship to make fellowship meaningful
  - 1. Consider again such passages as 1Cor 1:9; 2Thess 2:14; Col 1:12,13; Acts 26:18 and 1Jhn 1:5-7
  - 2. Those who have not responded to the call have not entered the right relationship for fellowship with them to be meaningful.

##### II. BRETHREN CAN FORFEIT THE RIGHT TO FELLOWSHIP EVEN THOUGH THE RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WAS ESTABLISHED.

- A. Logic demands that we have the ability to do so.
  - 1. Fellowship is a joint sharing or partaking
  - 2. If one refuses to share or partake he necessarily controls his end of the fellowship
- B. Scripture shows we have the right to do so
  - 1. Fellowship may be offered, withheld, refused or given

- 2. Passages that illustrate: 1Cor 5:1-13; 2Thess 3:6-15; Tit 3:10; Rom 16:17; Gal 6:6; Phil 1:5; 4:15; 2Cor 8:4-9:14
  - 3. Note the context of Gal 2:9; Acts 9:26; 15:36-41
  - C. However, there is a sense in which we have no control over fellowship with Christians.
    - 1. This is true in the sense that fellowship involves; a relationship or a commonness of association 1Cor 1:9; Rom 11:17
    - 2. We share a common Lord; we are "part" of one family, our responsibilities have much in common
    - 3. As it relates to our relationship, fellowship is as extensive as the grace of God, and embraces all who are saved from sin
  - D. The sense that we are emphasizing now is the sense in which we do have control and that control must be exercised with all the knowledge and wisdom that we can possibly bring into every situation.
  - E. In fact, even though it is limited and local, this fellowship is required to some extent
    - 1. There can be no collective action without some form of joint-participation
    - 2. Every activity of the worship and work of the local church involves it
    - 3. The plan of God includes such collective activity and it is for our own good.
    - 4. The best specific of this concerted participation is the use of the church treasury. Every giver is committed to the action involved in the use of the resources which he helped to provide. One who does not give, and who tries to control the use of what others have given, acts without reason or right by the very nature of the case.
- ##### III. UPON WHAT BASIS SHOULD ACTIVE PARTICIPATION WITH ANOTHER BE CONTINUED?
- A. The right relationship must have been established 1Cor 1:9; 2Thess 2:14; Col 1:12,13 Therefore we are in the light
  - B. We must then walk by faith (faithfully), in the light
    - 1. 2Cor 5:7; Rom 10:17; 1Jhn 1:5-7; Eph 5:8
    - 2. Eph 4:1-16
      - a. Walk worthy of our calling v 1
      - b. With humility and love v. 2
      - c. Working to keep unity v. 3
      - d. Platform set forth vs. 4-6
      - e. Temporary provisions given vs. 7-12
      - f. Stability and maturity possible by the faith vs. 13-16
  - C. Human judgment is certainly involved in this matter
    - 1. We will err at times as to who we should fellowship Rom 6:16-18

- a. Obedience is from the heart - we can't look at heart
- b. Claims to obedience may be made and not be valid
2. We will err at times as to whom the right hand of fellowship should be extended or not
3. No man or group of men can sit in judgment to excommunicate another from his relationship to God or his fellowship with God.
4. However, we can and sometimes must determine whom we will or will not fellowship in our work for God.

CONCLUSION:

- A. Our fellowship with one another is almost exclusively determined by our action. The exception being the sense in which all are in fellowship with one another because they are in fellowship with God.
- B. If this fellowship with brethren is limited to some degree and we can determine who we will or will not fellowship, then there must be some method to determine "who."
- C. Our next lesson will consider "How" shall we determine or "shall" we "try" to determine?

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