

## HOW OR SHOULD WE DETERMINE WHO TO FELLOWSHIP? 2Thess 3:6-15

### INTRODUCTION:

- A. Do we have a responsibility to try to determine who we will fellowship and who we will not fellowship?
- B. Does the Scripture give us the right to make these decisions and if it does, does it furnish us with a way through which the determination can be made?

### DISCUSSION:

#### I. WE MUST TRY - WE HAVE NO CHOICE

- A. It must be possible and we must have a responsibility or else the instructions in the scriptures would be in vain
  - 1. Notice such passages as 2Thess 3:6-15
  - 2. Along with what the Lord said in Lk 6:46
- B. However, every time we sin the tie of fellowship is not necessarily severed between brethren.
  - 1. Notice 1Cor 1:1-9 and the reproof of the entire book
  - 2. But after the reproof, what then? See Rev 2:4,5; 2Cor 7:11,12

#### II. WHEN CAN WE SAY: "YOU ARE NOT IN FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND THEREFORE NOT WITH ME?"

- A. We must remember our human fallibility, and that we are not excommunicators
- B. However, the scripture does give us some specifics as they regard fellowship
  - 1. Immorality Gal 5:19-21; 1Cor 5:9-13; 6:9,10; Eph 5:3-16
  - 2. False doctrine 2Jhn 9-11; Rom 16:17; Tit 3:10
  - 3. Contentiousness (strife) Gal 5:19-21; 1Cor 3:3; 11:16
  - 4. Disorderliness 2Thess 3:1-15
  - 5. Personal wrongs with a rebellious spirit Matt 18:15-17
  - 6. We must not fellowship that which is evil nor what we believe to be evil Rom 14:23; but rather reprove them Eph 5:11
- C. Each individual has certain rights or responsibilities
  - 1. To live the truth as I see it, and try to teach it to others
  - 2. To refuse to practice what is expedient, but not required if it will hinder others 1Cor 8:1-13; Rom 14:1-23 also 1Cor 6:12; 10:23 ("expedient": be better for, bring together, be good, (be) profit(-able for) (Strongs) fit or suitable for the purpose; proper under the circumstances (Webster)
  - 3. To withhold fellowship from you in what is right (expedient) and even required, if it will encourage and indorse your other practices that are in error. This can involve the mind of you and/or me, and /or another.
  - 4. I must do what is required, but I am not required to do it with you. I am at liberty to withhold my fellowship if I deem that necessary, or for that matter move my membership to another congregation if NECESSARY.

- D. We have confused fellowship and endorsement and disfellowship and disapproval

#### III. WHAT IS REQUIRED FOR FELLOWSHIP TO BE LOGICALLY POSSIBLE AND PRACTICAL?

- A. Desire and opportunity first of all
- B. Respect and loyalty in the authority of Scripture. Any other basis is useless, But we hear:
  - 1. "Where there is no authority, or we do not need authority"  
See Col 3:17
  - 2. "Where there is no pattern" or "Examples do not bind"
  - 3. "There is no wrong way to do what is right"
- C. Everything that we cannot establish authority for must be abandoned at once! We may disagree on whether it is found and still have fellowship, but if you say it doesn't need to be found then you are wasting your time and mine, because we are on an entirely different wave length
- D. No "expedient" should be driven as a wedge between brethren. No expedient, opinion or matter of judgment can be required
- E. Studious and prayerful effort must be maintained to arrive at TRUTH. Union (even fellowship) in Bible ignorance is not fellowship in LIGHT. Also this study must be fair to both sides of a controversy.
- F. In this effort to arrive at TRUTH the right attitude must be displayed by everyone.
  - 1. Each side of a controversy usually has both right and wrong
  - 2. There will necessarily be constant areas of searching, testing (even controversy)) for proper growth
  - 3. Note 1Pet 2:17 (Love the brotherhood)

#### IV. AN INDIVIDUAL CAN HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH EVERY CHILD OF GOD WHO IS EARNESTLY TRYING TO PLEASE GOD AS LONG AS HE DOES NOT:

- A. Teach error in doing so; Practice error in doing so; Endorse or encourage error in doing so; or Violate my own conscience in doing so.
- B. Also when such brethren have not falsely (or justifiably) marked and branded me and withdrawn themselves from me.
- C. Remember the first requisite for fellowship was desire and opportunity

### CONCLUSION:

- A. Certainly, again, we urge caution and prayerful consideration be used in this matter of withdrawing of our fellowship.
- B. In our next lesson on fellowship, I plan to talk about fellowship and church discipline.

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