

# FELLOWSHIP

Roy E. Cogdill

The word "fellowship" in our English translations most often is a translation of the Greek word "Koinonia." This word is defined by scholars as meaning "communion, fellowship, sharing in common (from koinos, common)", is translated "communion" in I Cor. 10:16; Philemon 6, R. V., "fellowship", for A. V., "communication"; it is most frequently translated "fellowship"; (b) that which is the outcome of fellowship, a contribution, e. g., Rom. 15:26; II Cor. 8:4.

"Metochē" in the Greek is translated "fellowship" in II Cor. 6:14. The word seems to have a more restricted sense than "Koinonia" --- W. E. Vine's Epository Dictionary of New Testament Words.

A careful study of this word as it is used in the New Testament would be enlightening to those who want to learn and certainly would teach us better than to use the word as it is commonly used by many religious people today.

We need first of all to be interested in fellowship with God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. The Christian is said to have fellowship with all three. The Apostle John tells us that the Gospel was revealed by the Apostles in order that we might have fellowship with them and that fellowship is with God and Christ. He also tells us that fellowship is through the Gospel. (I John 1:3)

In I Cor. 1:9, Paul tells us that as Christians we have been called by the Father into the fellowship of His Son. Then in Philippians, chapter 2, verse 1, Paul says, "If there be therefore any consolation of Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my

joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."

So in the saved relationship which Christians enjoy in the body of Christ, they have fellowship with all three persons of the Godhead. Fellowship, communion and companionship with deity is a wonderful provision of grace and mercy. We should value it so highly that we would seek after it diligently and forfeit it for nothing that this world has to offer.

Let us consider though, how that fellowship may be enjoyed and what its demands are of us. John tells us that this fellowship can be enjoyed only through the Gospel. Communion and companionship with God is possible only because God has offered it through His divine revelation. In mercy and grace He has provided the means of man's reconciliation. Man was alienated from God by his sin. (Isaiah 59:1-2) All have sinned and fallen short of His glory. (Romans 3:23) All responsible persons are alienated from God - spiritually dead in trespasses and sins - because they have sinned. For this reason and in this state they are under the sentence of spiritual death - eternal separation from God. (Romans 5:12) Jesus said, "If ye die in your sins, where I am you cannot come." (John 8:21) Paul said, "The wages of sin is death." (Rom. 6:23)

Reconciliation has been provided through Christ and His death upon the cross. (Eph. 2:11-16) That reconciliation (making friends again) cost the blood of the Son of God. (It has been provided in the body of Christ, which is His church.) It is offered unto men through the Gospel - the word of reconciliation revealed by the Holy Spirit through the Apostles, (Rom. 1

5:18-20)

Only in this saved state as Children of God, can men enjoy fellowship with God. When men reject the Gospel and walk in their own wisdom, there is no fellowship with God. When they walk in the wickedness of the world, there can be no fellowship with God for God will not receive them into His presence. God is perfectly holy and cannot countenance anything unholy in His sight.

In very plain and positive language, we read this in I John 1:6-7: "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin." When we claim to have fellowship with God then, while we walk in "darkness" spiritually, we are liars. We cannot misunderstand this plain declaration.

But what does it mean to "walk in darkness"? In the scriptures "darkness" represents two conditions spiritually: ungodliness and sin, and ignorance or disregard of the truth. The term "darkness" is used to designate evil works. (Romans 13:12; Eph. 5:11) When men practice sin - walk in sin - they cannot have fellowship with God. For instance, when a man and woman live in adultery, they forfeit, by their illicit relationship with one another, all fellowship with God. Sometimes we hear men say that one cannot live in adultery, but only commits the sin when he contracts an unscriptural marriage. Such people have not read some plain statements of scripture or else have rejected what they teach. Paul said, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which thing's sake cometh the wrath of God on the children of disobedience: in the which ye also once walked some time, when ye lived in them." (Col. 3:5-7) When men walk (live) in sin - continue to engage in the practice of it, they cut themselves off from fellowship with God.

In the passage cited above (Eph. 5:11) Paul said, "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh Saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: . . . And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." God will have no fellowship with those who do not walk circumspectly before Him and in accordance with His righteousness as revealed in His Word.

In these days when men are casting the standard of God's righteousness aside and professing to be wise enough to determine for themselves what is right and wrong, those who are interested in fellow-

ship with God and with Jesus Christ His Son must constantly keep in mind that they must dwell (walk) daily in the light of God's will - the glorious light of the Gospel of Christ. If fellowship with God here, and the hope of dwelling with Him in the eternal tabernacles after while, means as much to us as it should, we will gladly and readily put off those things from our lives and characters that are offensive to Him and put on those garments of righteousness that will adorn us in His sight and make us acceptable to Him.

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## FELLOWSHIP - NO. II.

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In order to be fellow laborers with God (I Cor. 3:9) we must walk in "the light". John says, If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (I John 1:6-7)

We have suggested that darkness, in the scriptures, represents evil and error. There can be no fellowship between "righteousness and unrighteousness." (II Cor. 6:14) Children of God, if they are to continue to enjoy communion and companionship with God, must walk as "children of the light" and "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." (Eph 5:8-11) This passage defines what the "unfruitful works of darkness" are, verses 3-5.

"Light" in the New Testament represents the will of God, as it is made known in His revelation. Jesus said, "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." (John 12:35-36) Again the Apostle John wrote, "In the beginning was God. . . . . In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." (John 1:1-9) Hence, we know

that the Lord is the true light from the Father and through Him was the righteousness of God made known to men. The light - all light spiritually - emanates from the Father.

Paul tells us that this light from the Father was made to shine in the face of Jesus Christ. In Him, the "mystery of godliness manifested in the flesh", who was the "brightness of His glory and the express image of His person", was demonstrated the righteousness of God. The "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" was made to shine forth out of darkness. (II Cor. 4:3-7)

This "light of the glory of God" Jesus was made to shine forth in His divine revelation, the Gospel of Christ. Paul talks about "the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God" which God would have to "shine in our hearts." So it is through the Gospel of Christ that this light is available to the world. If we would walk in the light and be in fellowship with God, it must be that we must walk in harmony with the Gospel of Christ. When men walk contrary to the Gospel of Christ, no matter how sincere and honest, they do not have fellowship with God. This is an inevitable conclusion.

This treasure, "the glorious light of the Gospel of Christ", was couched in "earthen vessels" or the Apostles of Christ. They were expended and perhaps all died as martyrs that this light might be made to shine forth in our lives and hearts. The Apostle John tells us, "That which we have been and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus

Christ." (I John 1:3) The same apostle said, "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (I John 2:4) Knowing God is not mere acquaintance. It is practical knowledge, that knowledge which enables a man to decide rightly and to act honorably and capably in all circumstances and situations. This knowledge of God a man cannot have, except through a knowledge and practice of truth in his life.

Satan is most interested in deceiving our hearts so that the "light of the glorious gospel of Christ" should not shine therein. For this very reason, he sees to it that our hearts are veiled with prejudice, handles the Word of God deceitfully, walks in craftiness, beguiles us from the simplicity of the Gospel, and causes us to distrust the Word of God and place our trust in human wisdom. Paul said, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not." (II Cor. 4:3-4) False teachers who would keep us in error and misguide us are servants of Satan. He is transformed into an angel of righteousness" in order to beguile and mislead mankind.

The doctrines and commandments of men are no part of the "light of the glorious gospel of Christ" but are contrary to it. They contradict each other and all of them contradict the truth of God. They make void the commandments of God. (Matt. 15:7-9) They are therefore darkness. We cannot walk in the doctrines of man and put our confidence in the ways of man and at the same time have fellowship with God. "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, the Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men." (I Cor. 3:19-21) Paul declares, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." (I Cor. 14:37)

Peter tells us that the apostles had a "more sure word of prophecy" in the Gospel revealed through them by the Holy Spirit and that men do well to "take heed thereunto as unto a light in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." (II Peter 1:19) Revelation is in New Testament Scriptures. The mystery hidden in the mind of God through ages past has been revealed by the Holy Spirit through the apostles. (Eph. 3:3-5)

David sang, "The entrance of thy words giveth light." (Psalms 119:130) "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psalms 119:105) "For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?" (Psalms 56:13) Isaiah cried unto the house of Jacob, "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." (Isaiah 2:5)

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils; ye

cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils." (I Cor. 10:20-21) One cannot have fellowship in false worship and acceptably worship God. When one participates in false worship, he loses fellowship with God and there are no circumstances or attitude that will excuse or make it acceptable.

On the same point we read, "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (II Cor. 6:14-18)

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## FELLOWSHIP

Roy E. Cogdill

Fellowship requires participation. It carries the idea of joint participation or each one taking part to the extent of his ability or opportunity. We have learned that one cannot have fellowship with God except through the Gospel. Fellowship with God is impossible except as we walk in the "light of the glorious gospel of Christ." (II Cor. 4:3-7) Those who walk in the darkness of evil and error have no fellowship with God. (I John 1:3-7)

All of this clearly indicates that our lives, worship, and service to God must be brought into harmony with God's will as it is revealed in the Gospel. It is not enough to be right in the way we live. We must be right in what we believe and in our religion also. This point has never been learned by many people. They have the attitude that if one lives a decent life, guilty of no flagrant violation of God's moral law, and professes some kind of religion, he is bound to have fellowship with God, if he is sincere in such profession. This is not so!

We must know the truth to be made free. (John 8:32) We must believe the truth to escape condemnation. (II Thess. 2:11-12) We must love the truth to be saved. (II Thess. 2:10) We must walk in obedience to the truth if we would be in fellowship with God. (I John 2:4; I Peter 1:22; Hebrews 5:7-9)

God places a curse upon those who go beyond - outside - His Word. His anathema has been pronounced against any man or even an angel from Heaven, who preaches any other gospel. (Gal. 1:6-11) Those who will not abide in the doctrine of Christ and go beyond or transgress it, cannot have fellowship with God or Christ. (II John vs. 9-11) These and many other pas-

sages teach positively that a man not only cannot teach error and have fellowship with God, but he cannot even practice error and enjoy that fellowship.

X When men participate in false worship they have fellowship with the Devil. He is the author of error. It does not come from God. (I Cor. 10:20-21) When we have fellowship with Satan, we do not and cannot have fellowship with God. One cannot even support or fellowship false teachers without partaking of their evil works and becoming an accessory with them. (II John vs. 9-11)

The doctrines and commandments of men make religion vain. To fellowship them by using human innovations in our worship, being members of religious organizations which men have founded, or giving support or even encouragement to human doctrines and creeds, means to lose fellowship with God.

Tolerance in the realm of human opinion and judgment is one thing, but to tolerate evil (Eph. 5:11) or error (II Cor. 6:14-18) is another. Paul refused to give way to false brethren so that the truth of the Gospel might continue with the Galatians. (Gal. 2:4-5) Jude exhorts that we are to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude verse 3) Peter warns, "But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that brought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their lascivious doings; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." (2 Pet. 2:1-2) He follows this warning with a number of examples of God condemning those who didn't heed and obey His Word. In

these examples we have God on record as never tolerating those who rebel at His will: (1) Angels were cast down into hell; (2) The world in Noah's day destroyed by the flood; (3) Sodom and Gomorrah were wiped out of existence for what men now want to recognize legally as a way of life; (4) Balaam, who loved the hire of wrong doing so much he would not take God at His Word.

False teachers are now and have always been the same. They have no scruples. They make merchandise of the souls of men in order to have their way. They walk after the flesh, despise authority, are daring, self-willed, having hearts exercised in covetousness. They "utter great swelling words of vanity and entice in the lusts of the flesh, by lasciviousness, those who are just escaping from them that live in error; promising them liberty, while they themselves are bond servants of corruption." (II Peter 2:18-19) But "in their destroying they shall surely be destroyed." So will all who listen to them. God has no mercy to bestow upon those who deal lightly with His Word.

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## FELLOWSHIP (IV)

ROY E. COGDILL

In previous articles we have seen that it is impossible to have fellowship with God and walk in darkness. We have learned that darkness represents evil and error - sin in our lives, and error in teaching, faith, and practice in our efforts to worship and serve God. (I John 1:6-7)

We have also learned that the only way we can enjoy fellowship with God is through the Gospel. It is through the Gospel that we are called into this fellowship and to continue in it, we must continue to walk in harmony with the Gospel or as it directs. I cannot enjoy God's acceptance and approval and therefore have fellowship with Him when I believe, teach or have fellowship with those who teach doctrines that are contrary to God's Word. I must walk in accordance with the truth, if I am to enjoy fellowship with God.

Paul wrote to Timothy, "These things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth." (I Timothy 6:2-5) Again the same writer to the same young preacher said, "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do." (I Tim. 1:3-6)

In the Roman letter, chapter 16, verses 17 and 18, Paul wrote this by the Holy Spirit, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." This teaches not only that those who teach false doctrines cannot have fellowship with God but also that those who fellowship them in their false teaching are also alienated from God. False teachers are to be "marked" or branded and avoided (not fellowshiped).

On the same matter John wrote, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (II John verses 9-11) When I give encouragement to the man who teaches contrary to the doctrine of Christ, I become a partaker with him in his evil works. It is evil works to teach error and it is likewise evil works to support, sustain, encourage, or in any manner have fellowship with a teacher of error.

If God condemns a man who goes contrary to His Word, how is it possible for me to encourage and fellowship him when he does so and still have favor and fellowship with God? The fact is that it is impossible to do so. The idea then, that I can be big

hearted, tolerant, broad minded, and sweet dispositioned enough to put my arms around the teacher of error and fellowship him in his error, and at the same time have fellowship with God, is false completely. There is no compromise to make in matters of faith, if we are to stand with God and be recognized by Him.

Sometimes it becomes hard for us to refuse friends of long standing that go off after error and accept the doctrines and commandments of men rather than abiding in the doctrine of Christ. We allow our sympathy, affection, or esteem to get the better of us and we refuse to draw the line of fellowship, when truth has been violated and error is being taught. But when we do, we cannot have the approval of God and walk with Him. He does not and cannot countenance the doctrines and commandments of men. (Matt. 15: 6-9) Paul admonishes the Colossians, "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." (Col. 2:6-8) God is to be regarded, not men, The Word of God is the source of our faith and not the wisdom of men. Our faith should stand in the wisdom of God and not in the wisdom of men. (1 Cor. 2:1-5)

God's Word must prevail in our hearts and lives. It only, must be our standard. "Thy word is truth." (John 17:17) "He that saith, I know him and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him: but whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected. Hereby we know that we are in him; he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked." (I John 2:4-6) We must not separate ourselves from the doctrines and commandments of God but we must turn away from those who teach false doctrines - the doctrines and commandments of men - if we would have fellowship with God. Supporting all of this there are two other plain passages of scripture. "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." (I Cor. 14:37-38) "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." (II Thess. 3: 6)

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May the spirit of Him whose love is eternal  
Be within you to refresh you,  
Above you to bless you,  
Around you to protect you,  
Beneath you to bear you up,  
Before you to lead you on,  
One God, Infinite and Eternal, world without end.

## "MODERN FELLOWSHIP"

ROY E. COGDILL

Several years ago when this writer lived in San Antonio, Texas, and worked with the West Avenue Church there were two or three of the "liberal" churches of that city that became seriously concerned about the young people having an opportunity to meet other young people who were Christians so that they could become acquainted, maybe fall in love, and marry a companion who was a Christian. They accordingly began to arrange gatherings of young people from the various churches in the city on Sunday evening for a social hour. The young people from one church would call the young people from the other churches and invite them over to their building on Sunday evening for the worship service and, of course, for the "Youth Fellowship" following the service. This was to be held in the church parlors and would include entertainment and refreshments.

When one of the elders of one of these churches was questioned about the matter, he sought to justify it by pointing out that we want our young people to marry Christians and in order to do that they must fall in love with Christians and that it is possible only when they can get acquainted with other young people who are Christians. He considered it the obligation of the church to furnish this opportunity for furthering their acquaintance and thus the churches were arranging these get-togethers. It was called to his attention then that it was much later for the old maids and old bachelors, the widows and widowers in the churches than it was for the young people and therefore, if the church was to make such "courtship" arrangements for any, it should be so for all

and that the net result would be turning the church into a marriage bureau - a sort of a "lonely hearts club" - to promote matrimony between marriageable people.

We knew then that such an arrangement would eventually be thought of by these liberal socializers in the churches and that it would be worked out. Now we have seen it done! Give consideration to the following letter:

May 10, 1966

Dear Mr. ....

There will be a "Get Acquainted" social for single Christians at the South Gate Church of Christ. You are invited.

The group consists of single Christians, from the age of 23 years up, who are interested in and endeavoring to meet with other single Christians.

Do come. We know you will enjoy the informal get-together.

SINGLE CHRISTIANS  
ADULT CLUB

Time: Eight P.M.

Address: 9707 California Ave.

Old maids, old bachelors, widows and widowers, all over 23 who are not married and want to get married. A "lonely hearts" project indeed! And the function of the church! Now, dear friend, if you have not read anything of such a function performed by the church of the Lord, in the New Testament, do not be

dismayed for "we do a lot of things in the church today for which we have no authority in the New Testament." (So they say) And, furthermore, "we have no pattern for the work of the church in the New Testament." You see, God designed the church and Jesus Christ built it, but they left it without any pattern to follow in its work, so we are free to use the church to do about anything that we want to do even in the so-called churches of Christ.

Of course, these brethren are "johnnies-come-lately" in this sort of activity for denominational churches have been carrying on this kind of work for a long time. In fact, when I lived in Dallas, Texas, many years ago, the First Christian Church where Dr. Graham Frank preached, located in downtown Dallas, promoted this sort of thing through a "Bible Class" arrangement. They had a class in which there were only marriageable adults. This class had a regular monthly gathering for social purposes and if you were eligible to marry, if you would enroll in the class, they would guarantee you a date for their socials. Of course, in those socials they not only feasted, but they danced too. We would guarantee that it will not be long until the liberal socializer in the churches of Christ, in their "Single Christian Adult Club" will be dancing too. They had just as well.

They either do not know at South Gate Church of Christ (?) that such is not the function of the church or they do not care and are doing it anyhow. Such is a miserable prostitution of the Lord's Church and these "church of Christ's" need to learn better or paint out the name of the Lord's Church and call it what it is instead of what it was, maybe at one time. Those who lend their fellowship to such activity are just as guilty as those who participate.

So in addition to the other societies that have been built by brethren to do their edification, evangelism, benevolence, and other work that God has given the church to accomplish, you can add "THE SINGLE CHRISTIAN ADULT CLUB" as a society to function in the realm of social activities as a matrimonial agency to do the work of the church. After all, did not Paul say, "I will therefore that the younger women marry." (1 Tim. 5:14) Can this not be applied to the church instead of individuals as well as James 1:27? The church is even mentioned in verse 16 and this proves that it is talking about the church. This is the kind of reasoning that they engage in. Brother Guy N. Woods uses this type of profound logic to prove that James 1:27 applies to the church instead of Christian individuals for he finds the church assembly mentioned in James 2:1.

Such sophistry is either ignorance or a willful wresting of the Word of God but it is the best that those who are determined to make the church what they want it to be can do to justify their practices. What will be next? Well, don't be surprised.

All such activity is included in the concept that the average liberal church member has of "fellowship". They make "fellowship" include banqueting, partying, socializing, and just about anything else that they want to do. They believe that the Lord's

money can be used to provide facilities for such activities. We affirm that such activity is a prostitution of the Lord's Church and a misappropriation of the Lord's money. To try to engage in such activity in the name of the Lord and as the work of His Church is digression of the most blatant kind and a shame and disgrace to those who profess to be Christians.

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## THE BIBLE MEANING OF FELLOWSHIP

ROY E. COGDILL

The very best way to determine what a word means in the Bible is to learn how it is used. The people of God are to be as distinct in their language as they are in their lives as far as separation from the world is concerned. The employment of Bible words to sectarian ideas or the adoption of the language of Ashdod to serve any purpose is always reprehensible and destructive of the truth and the purposes of God.

Paul enjoined Timothy to "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." (II Tim. 1:13) Sometimes people who do not know and properly regard the truth are guilty of violating this injunction by employing Bible expressions to set forth sectarian ideas and also by trying to describe Bible ideas in sectarian language. Paul brands all such misuse of scriptural terms and ideas as "vain jangling" or "foolish talking" of which some were guilty "desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." (I Tim. 1:6-7) This means an abandonment of "godly edifying which is in faith." (I Tim. 1:4)

Again, Paul exhorted young men to "in all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned." (Titus 2:7-8)

In all of this and many other passages that teach the same thing, we find emphasis placed upon "sound (healthful) speech", the "pattern of sound (healthful) words" in order that injury may not be done to the truth of God. The words of God were dictated or selected by the Holy Spirit. (I Cor. 2:13) But today among brethren, in the pulpit and out, in schools where the Bible is taught, and in the Bible classes of the local churches, in our literature and in general conversation have departed from the idea of "saying Bible things in Bible words" and "strange words" are on every tongue. This is nowhere demonstrated any more clearly than in the use of the term "fellowship".

Today, the term fellowship is made to include and describe activity that is no part of the service of the Lord, the work of the church, or citizenship in the Kingdom of God. It commonly is now used even by professed Christians to include: banqueting, partying, playing, entertaining, recreation, camping, courting, and nearly everything else under heaven. In last week's bulletin we printed a letter from the "Single Christians Adult Club" of the South Gate Church of Christ, announcing a "Get Acquainted" social for single Christians at the South Gate Church of Christ. Solomon said, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord." (Prov. 18:22) We suppose this justifies, in the minds of the

South Gate Church, such activity as a good work".

This is no "farther out" however, than "youth fellowships" which are quite common among brethren all over the country. We have actually developed such a perverted and carnal conception of "fellowship" in the church that we include almost every conceivable kind of activity. There is seemingly no thought given to the fact that the usage of the term in the scripture never included such activity or a distant cousin to it. To talk about fellowship among Christians in the church in such a way, is an outright misuse of a Bible term and conveys a false and unscriptural idea.

What does the Bible idea of fellowship include?

We list the usage in the scriptures for your consideration and in the hope that we will strike out the unscriptural usage of the term as well as the unscriptural practices that are so commonly justified today by its use as a part of the activity of the Kingdom of God.

1. Communion and companionship with God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. I John 1:6-7. I Cor. 1:9. Phil. 3:10.
2. Having partnership in preaching the Gospel by helping to support the preacher. Phil. 4:15. Gal. 6:6. Phil. 1:5.
3. Distributing to the necessity of the saints. Romans 12:13; 15:26-27. II Cor. 8:4; 9:13. Heb. 13:16.
4. Communion in worship with the body and blood of the Lord in the observance of the Lord's Supper. I Cor. 10:16.
5. Partnership in the worship and work God has ordained for Christians to accomplish in the church. Acts 2:42. II Cor. 8:23.
6. Partnership in financing the work of the Lord. I Cor. 16:1-4. Acts 2:42. I Tim. 6:18.
7. Sharing in suffering. II Cor. 1:6-7. Phil. 3:10.
8. The care, relationship, and harmony that exists among the members of the church one with another. I Cor. 12:18-27.

This is the sum total of even the idea of fellowship among the members of the Body of Christ. Why can't we learn to leave all extraneous, unscriptural ideas of Christian fellowship out of our minds, speech and practice in the Kingdom of God? When we fail, we pervert the church and prostitute it to serve our own purposes, divert and misappropriate the resources of the Lord's Church to carnal and human purposes, profane the work and worship of the Lord, convey unscriptural ideas and doctrines by the unscriptural language we use. When we talk about fellowship in the church, let us mean only what the scriptures include in the use of the term.

Of course, the English meaning of the term could include joint participation in anything, good or bad, scriptural or unscriptural, authorized or unauthorized, pleasing to God or not. Even the scriptures teach that we can have fellowship with the Devil, the unfruitful works of darkness, and with error and false teachers. But such fellowship is not Christian fellowship in the Kingdom of God. (II Tim. 5:22. II John 11)

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# What Is the Meaning of Fellowship?

Roy E. Cogdill, Orlando, Florida 32804

Since so much is being said and written on the subject of "fellowship," it seems good to examine the use of this word in the scriptures so we may see what its true significance is and what scriptural fellowship embraces, as well as how it is manifested.



Roy Cogdill

"Koinon" in the New Testament can properly be defined as "sharing something with someone." It denotes a partnership in work or legally, such as Peter shared with James and John in the fishing business (Luke 5:10).

→ It is used to express a common relationship or nature. Jesus, in order to destroy the power of Satan over mankind, shared with man "flesh and blood" that He might deliver man through His death and destroy the power of Satan over him (Heb. 2:14).

We become "partakers" (sharers) of the divine nature through the precious promises of God and the provisions of His grace (2 Peter 1:4).

The Gentiles became "partakers" of the "root and fatness" (the full nature) of the olive tree when they were "grafted" in as branches and shared such fulness with the Jews (Rom. 11:17).

→ We are enabled to enjoy "fellowship" with the Apostles and with God and Christ through the Gospel revealed (I John 1:3).

Through this Gospel we have been called by God into the "fellowship" of His Son (I Cor. 1:9). This participation with Christ is as a member of His body, which is the church, into which we are baptized under the direction of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:13). As members of His body we participate with

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Him and the benefits of His blood, subject to His authority and in the doing of His will (I Cor. 12:11-14). He is the head of that body, over all things to it, and gives to its members life and strength (Eph. 4:15-16). In that relationship Christians enjoy the bounty of His grace (Eph. 1:23).

This participation in Christ and fellowship with Him is made a reality when through faith our lives are identified with His and we become fellow-laborers with Him. Personal participation with Christ is made possible in Christian worship at the Lord's Table in His Kingdom in the observance of the Lord's Supper. Paul makes a very explicit and impressive argument on this in the tenth chapter of First Corinthians.

The argument runs like this: (1) In Jewish worship the altar where God's name was recorded represented and meant the presence of God to the Jews. Those who ate of the Jewish sacrifices became "partakers" of the altar, which meant to them "participation with God" because the altar was His, His name was recorded upon it, and it represented His presence (I Cor. 10:18).

(2) Paul points out that in like manner in the assembly of the saints, even two or three in His name (Matt. 18:20), when the bread and wine are taken in commemoration of His death there is "communion" (fellowship) with the Christ, with His body and His blood, and therefore participation or sharing with Christ, personally (I Cor. 10:16).

(3) In such observance of the Lord's Supper there is common union with Christ upon the part of Christians and therefore (fellowship) common union upon the part of Christians with each other in this worship. Partaking of the one loaf, in commemoration of the one body Christ gave as a sacrifice, affords and expresses union and fellowship with Christ and unites those who thus participate with Christ in fellowship one with another in the body of Christ (I Cor. 10:17).

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(4) He follows with the conclusion that since this is true (union with Christ and with one another in the Lord's Supper), so also participation in false worship unauthorized by Christ, but in harmony with the will of the Devil, meant union with Satan and those who serve him (I Cor. 10:20).

(5) The argument concludes with the fact that those who participate in this false worship serve Satan rather than God and as a result cannot be identified with or participate with Christ (I Cor. 10:21).

This very plain teaching unmistakably condemns those who think they can fellowship religious error, participate in it and encourage it, or bid God's speed to those who take part in it's practice and promotion and yet have "fellowship" with Christ.

—35 W. Par Ave.

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