

Sunday, December 18, 2022 am

## **CLOSER TO GOD (37)**

### **Fellowship With One Another**

Last week, as we continue our study of drawing closer to God, we began addressing the subject of fellowship. We noted that the only way one will draw closer to God is by being in fellowship with Him. We discussed what the word fellowship means, noting both its secular and Biblical usage (we noted that while the word has a secular meaning, the New Testament usage of the word is always used in a spiritual context and thus limited). When we understand its Biblical usage, we ought to be careful how we use it in our vocabulary. We also noted some things that fellowship with God is based upon – Jesus Christ, obedience, loving God and one another, walking in the light, refraining from sinning and purifying ourselves even as He is pure. Today, we want to address fellowship with one another.

#### **I. Fellowship with one another**

- a. 1 John 1:3-7 –
  - a. We begin by noting that our fellowship with one another ought to be based upon mutual fellowship with God. (vs. 3).
  - b. And in vs. 7, where we note that when we “walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another...” It is my understanding that this can apply to BOTH our fellowship with God AND with each other.
  - c. I base this on the text (contextually, John has been addressing fellowship with God, but in this letter, he deals with our interaction with each other. The word for “one another” is found 7x in 1 & 2 John. Every other time it is tied to the expression, “Love one another”, thus there is a case to be made that 1 John 1:7 at least includes our fellowship with each other BASED on fellowship with God.
  - d. THUS, when we speak of Biblical fellowship what we mean is that we are jointly participating with others whom we believe are also in fellowship with God.
- b. Fellowship implies unity
  - a. By its very definition, fellowship implies a two-sided relationship. Thus it involves all parties being united.
  - b. The question we must ask is, WHAT is our source of unity?
    - i. Is it God’s word and our mutual application of His teachings.
    - ii. Is it based upon a man-made standard (where man defines WHAT ought to unify us, including compromise, divergent views, etc.)?
    - iii. TRUE fellowship MUST be based upon God’s word - Consider again 1 John 1:6-7 which notes WE are walking in the light as He is in the light. WE have emphasized the importance of keeping God’s word, even in our study of holiness. Remember Matthew 7:21-23 – it is about “doing His will”. 2 John 9-11 speaks of the doctrine of Christ and notes that if one does NOT bring the doctrine of Christ, do not receive Him (do NOT have fellowship with him). Why? Because he is teaching that which is contrary to God’s word.
  - c. Ephesians 4:1-6 calls for us to walk worthy of our calling, “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Notice the 7 “one” statements – there is to be UNITY on each of these!
  - d. Philippians 1:1-2 challenges us to be, “like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.” (United in the way we think, our disposition, agreement or harmony, and understanding). We have emphasized in times past the importance of unity.

- e. BUT it cannot COME at the cost of compromise. Compromise is undermining God's united message. Consider John 17:20-21 the prayer of Jesus for unity – to what degree ought we to seek unity?
- c. In **2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1**, we find an important principal related to fellowship with God and with others. Paul challenges these brethren to "not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers". By that he means, do not put yourself at a disadvantage with them.
  - a. He then gives them 5 examples, actually 5 different WORDS that describe this of this:
    - i. What *fellowship* (metoche) has light with darkness? The word fellowship here means partnership (not the word above defined). Indicates you are jointly partaking of something with another.
    - ii. What *communion* has light with darkness? This IS the word typically defined as fellowship. Indicates having something in common, mutual sharing, joint participation.
    - iii. What *accord* has Christ with Belial? Accord (sumphonesis) means harmony or agreement. Think of a symphony with all its parts.
    - iv. What *part* has a believer with an unbeliever. Part (meris) indicates a part as distinguished from the whole. (Think of the body in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, esp. vs. 27 where the word is found (members *individually*).
    - v. What *agreement* has the temple of God with idols? Agreement (synkatathesis) indicates approval or consensus.
  - b. NOTICE how these 5 examples described relationships that ought to NOT exist.
    - i. **1 John 2:15-17** John would note, we cannot love the world or the things that are in the world... if we love the world, the love of the father is not in us.
    - ii. **Galatians 5:17** notes that the ways of the flesh and the ways of the Spirit are contrary to one another.
  - c. **Vs. 16-18** describe the promise of the father to be with His people (in fellowship with them), BUT it hinges upon this, "*Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."* Notice that fellowship with God is based upon renouncing fellowship with the world and its ways.
  - d. 7:1, Paul concludes that we cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.
  - d. Ephesians 5:8-11, in another text, Paul notes that we are to walk as children of light, "*and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.*"
  - e. WE need to consider this when addressing who we may have fellowship with

## II. **With whom may we have fellowship?**

- a. The answer to that is straight forward – those who are in fellowship with God. 1 John 1:3-4 makes this clear.
- b. When we are determining who we ought to recognize as brethren we consider:
  - i. Whether they are walking in the light (1 John 1:5-7)
  - ii. Keeping His commandments – ALL of them! Psalm 119:63 says, "*I am a companion of all who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts.*" Psalm 15:1, 4 - *Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, ... In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the Lord; He who swears to his own hurt and does not change;*
  - iii. We seek those who are striving for the unity we previously addressed.
  - iv. We seek those who love us as God has commanded – cf. 1 John 4:20-21, 5:2-3.
  - v. Those who have joined together with us, BASED upon His standard, to work together. Our work and worship as His body are fellowship (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:16). The church is a body of believers in fellowship with one another. Acts 2:42, Ephesians 3:8-11 – Paul desired that

that all see “*what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ, to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church...*” Philippians 2:1 – together we fellowship in the Spirit; 1 Corinthians 1:9-10, we are called into the fellowship of His Son..., etc.

### III. **With whom may we NOT have fellowship?**

- a. When it comes to those in the world, the answer is obvious. Those who are doing things contrary to God’s word ought not be accepted. And that is the primary emphasis of Paul in the above texts.
- b. Consider: We have established fellowship with God – based upon walking in the light. NOTE that God does NOT have fellowship with everyone who professes fellowship with Him (Matthew 7:21-23, 1 John 1:5-6). SO, why should we conclude that we can have fellowship with one who does NOT have fellowship with God, even IF he claims to be a follower of God. Again remember 1 John 1:3-4. Ephesians 5:11 charges us to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.
- c. But is it possible that some who profess to be brethren ought not to be fellowshiped? Consider the following:
  - i. If one is practicing sin or error, we ought to not have fellowship with them – 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 1 Corinthians 5:1-6, 1 John 1:6-7 speaks of those walking in darkness. NOTE 1 Corinthians 9:21 where Paul is describing the lengths he went to, to win others. He says, *to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law;* NOTICE, he was NOT willing to compromise or associate with ungodly practices REGARDLESS of who engaged in them.
  - ii. If one is teaching error, we ought to not have fellowship with them - 2 John 9-11, 1 Timothy 6:3-5. Galatians 2:1-5 – Paul did not yield, even for an hour to those teaching and demanding false practices (namely – Gentile circumcision).
  - iii. If one refuses to repent of his sins – either actions or doctrine – we ought not have fellowship with him. If fellowship exists, that needs to change - Matthew 18:15-17
  - iv. If one is causing division or trouble – first, in so doing he is practicing error (unless he is trying to correct those in error). Consider Diotrephes 3 John 9-10 – a self-willed troublemaker who wanted to run the church and removed faithful brethren. Such are walking disorderly – Romans 16:17-18 – and are to be noted.
  - v. If one has been withdrawn from, we ought to not have fellowship with them – the whole premise of withdrawing is to break fellowship with them with the hopes that they will come back – 1 Corinthians 5:1-6, then 9-11.
- d. CONSIDER also 1 Timothy 5:22 where Paul warns Timothy, *Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people’s sins; keep yourself pure.*
  - i. The word “share” is fellowship. The warning is to NOT take part in it.
  - ii. We MUST realize that when we ignore the sins of another, we bear guilt – consider again 2 John 10-11, *If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.*
  - iii. You can also apply that to 1 Corinthians 5 where they ignored the man in a sinful relationship. Heed the warning to the church – a little leaven will leaven the whole lump.
  - iv. We also see that in Revelation 2:14-15 with the church in Pergamos that compromised the truth by allowing false doctrine in their midst;
  - v. and Revelation 2:20-21 with the church in Thyatira that not only tolerated immorality, but they allowed it to be taught (doctrinal and moral error).

And thus we can see fellowship with one another. It needs to be based on fellowship with God first, and to the best of our judgment, that needs to determine whether or not we have fellowship with one another. It is

NOT a question of whether or not we CAN have fellowship with others (based on the worldly definition), but the question is: Does God approve of our fellowship?