

Bible Fellowship

16 May 2004

Introduction:

Many today seek unity and fellowship through a system of faith only. Carl Ketcherside's Mission Messenger touted Philippians 3:9 as the grounds for one's unity and fellowship no matter what denominational background you may be a part of (cf. Mission Messenger; 1975 Vo. 37, no. 4). A recent flyer to the church building reads, "Race to Unity." The web site for the "Race to Unity" movement quotes from John 17:21 and applies the verse to racial divisions among church members saying, "This marks the 100th year anniversary of the short-lived (13 years) Church community (Azusa Street Revival), where Blacks and Whites, and those with different denominational affiliations worshipped together, unrestrained by racism and animosity" (www.racetounity.com). Our lesson today will examine the idea of Bible unity and fellowship.

I. Defining Fellowship:

- A. A multitude of definitions will be examined below; however, one must see that the reoccurring thought brought out in these definitions is "**share**."
- B. Fellowship = "the condition of being together or of **sharing** similar interests or experiences, as do members of a profession, religion, or nationality; companionship" (AHD 496).

II. Biblical fellowship among Christians includes eight basic areas:

- Humanity (flesh and blood) (Heb. 2:14).
- The Godhead (I Cor. 1:9; II Cor. 13:14; Phil. 2:1; I Jn. 1:3,6).
- Salvation (the grace of God) (Rom. 11:17; 15:27; I Cor. 1:9; 9:23; Phil. 1:7; I Jn. 1:3ff).
- Brethren (Unity in truth) (Acts 2:42; I Cor. 10:16; Gal. 2:9; I Jn. 1:3-7).
- Suffering of Jesus (Phil. 3:10; I Pet. 4:13; II Tim. 3:12).
- Caring for needy saints (Rom. 12:13; 15:26; II Cor. 8:4).
- Supporting Gospel preachers (Gal. 6:6; Phil. 1:5; 4:15).
- Sin (II Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:11; I Tim. 5:22; Rev. 18:4).

III. Consider these definitions of Christian fellowship as used in the above eight areas:

- A. **Salvation (I Cor. 1:9; 10:16; I Jn. 1:3-7) (Koinonia):**
 1. "To obtain fellowship in the dignity and blessings of the Son of God" (Thayer 352).
 2. "**Association**, communion, fellowship, close relationship; fellowship with his son" (AG 438-439).
 3. "Fellowship, **partnership, participation**, communion" (Moulton 235).
 4. Communion, **association**, partnership, fellowship" (LS 440-441).
- B. **(Romans 15:27) Koinoneo**
 1. "Share, have a **share**...in spiritual blessings" (AG 438).
- C. **(Romans 11:17; I Cor. 9:23; Phil. 1:7; Rev. 1:9) (sugkoinoneo)**
 1. "Participant with others in; **joint partner** of the thing...with whom one is partaker of a thing" (Thayer 593).
 2. "**Sharers** in the same grace" (AG 774).
 3. "One who **partakes jointly**; a coparticipant; a sharer (Moulton 380).
- D. **(Heb. 3:1; 6:4) Metochos (407)**
 1. "Sharing in, **partaking** of, with genitive of the thing" (Thayer 407).

E. (Col. 1:12) *Meris* (*merizos, merie*) (400)

1. “To make one fit to obtain a **share** in a thing” (Thayer 400).

The **highlighted** words indicate that a group of people are sharing together as partners in a common salvation.

- **The suffering of Jesus**

A. (Phil. 3:10) *Koinonia*

1. “Fellowship, **association**, community, communion, **joint participation**, intercourse... the share which one has in anything, participation; with genitive of the thing in which he shares” (Thayer 352).
2. “Fellowship, **partnership**” (Moulton 235).

B. (I Pet. 4:13) *Koinoneo*

1. “To be **associated** in, to become a sharer in” (Moulton 235).

To have fellowship in the **suffering of Jesus** is to be associated, partner, and joint participant with others in the area of suffering (II Tim. 3:12).

- **Caring for needy saints monetarily**

A. (II Cor. 8:4; Romans 15:26) *koinonia*

1. “The **share** which one has in anything, participation; with genitive of the thing in which he shares” (Thayer 352).
2. “Fellowship, **partnership**...contribution in aid” (Moulton 235).
3. “Taking part in the relief of the saints (AG 438-439).

B. (Romans 12:13) *koinoneo*

1. “To come into communion or fellowship, to become a **sharer**, be made a partner...so to make another’s necessities one’s own as to relieve them” (Thayer 351-352).
2. “To **associate** one’s self with by sympathy and assistance, to communicate with in the way of aid and relief” (Moulton 235).
3. “**Participation in something** can reach such a degree that one claims a part in it for oneself, take and interest in, share” (AG 438).

Those who have much are to share, be a partner with, associate, and participate in helping brethren in need.

- **Supporting gospel preachers and teachers monetarily**

A. (Gal. 6:6; Phil. 4:15) *koinoneo*

1. “To come into communion or fellowship, to become a **sharer**, be made a **partner**...so to make another’s necessities one’s own as to relieve them” (Thayer 351-352).
2. “To **associate** one’s self with by sympathy and assistance, to communicate with in the way of aid and relief” (Moulton 235).
3. “**Participation** in something can reach such a degree that one claims a part in it for oneself, take and interest in, share” (AG 438).

Christians are to share, be a partner with, associate, and participate in providing monetary funds for gospel preachers.

- **Fellowship with God, Jesus and Holy Spirit**

- A. God (I Jn. 1:3, 6).

- B. Jesus (I Cor. 1:9).

- C. Holy Spirit (II Cor. 13:14).

- **Fellowship with other brethren in Christ**

- A. (Acts 2:42; I Cor. 10:16a,b; Gal. 2:9; Phil. 1:5; I Jn. 1:3-7) *koinonia*

- 1. “Used of the intimate **bond** of fellowship which unites Christians” (Thayer 352).

- 2. “**Association**, communion, fellowship, close relationship; with Christian brethren...fellowship, brotherly **unity**...give someone the right hand of fellowship; society, brotherhood as a closely knit majority, naturally belonging together” (AG 438-439).

- B. (Phile. 17; Heb. 10:33) *koinonos*

- 1. “A fellow **partner**” (Moulton 235).

- C. Notice that the above fellowship is based on a stand for truth (Cf. the passages named above).

Christians are associated, united as partners, in a bond with each other as saints.

- **Humanity (flesh and blood) (Heb. 2:14).**

- **Sin**

- A. (II Cor. 6:14) *Koinonia*

- 1. “What does darkness have to do with light?” (AG 438-439).

- B. (I Tim. 5:22; II Jn. 11) *Koinoneo*

- 1. “To enter into fellowship, join one’s self as an **associate**, make one’s self a **sharer** or partner” (Thayer 351-352).

- 2. “To become implicated in, be a party to” (Moulton 235).

- C. (Eph. 5:11; Rev. 18:4) *Sugkoinoneo*

- 1. “To become a **partaker together with others**, or to have fellowship with a thing” (Thayer 593).

- 2. “To mix one’s self up in a thing, to involve one’s self, be an accomplice in” (Moulton 235).

- 3. “**Participate** in with someone, be connected with something...in the sense of actually taking part” (AG 774).

IV. **God’s Desire for Saint’s to have Unity and Fellowship**

- A. Jesus prayed for unity (Jn. 17:17-23).

- B. Paul preached unity among baptized believers (Rom. 15:5-6; I Cor. 1:10).

V. **The Basis for Christian Unity and Fellowship**

- A. Truth (Jn. 17:17ff).

- B. A common respect toward truth results in:

- 1. Obedience / Baptism (Gal. 3:26-27).

- 2. Added to the Lord’s church (Acts 2:42).

- 3. Sanctification (Jn. 17:19).

- 4. Being “in the Father and Son” (Jn. 17:21).

- 5. Remaining in the Father and Son (I Jn. 2:4-5).

- 6. A united front against error (Gal. 1:6).
- 7. A driven purpose to test all teaching (I Jn. 4:1, 6).

VI. Attitude and Actions regarding Truth determine my state of Fellowship with God and Brethren:

- A. Consider I Jn. 1:5-7; Rev. 21:27; 20:15
- B. Sin is the separating factor that destroys unity and fellowship among baptized believers.
- C. The Christian's attitude toward sin is to be abhorrence (Rom. 12:9).

VII. Consequences of Severed Fellowship due to Sin:

- A. No "salute" can be extended to the unfaithful. "*Salute*" is found in Romans 16 and used in each case of acceptance that is conditioned upon the individuals stand for the truth "*in the Lord*" (Rom. 16:8). The word "*salute*" is defined as "greetings to or remember me to" (AG 116). "To salute one, greet, bid welcome, wish well to" (Thayer 81). No such "welcome" can be extended to those who "bringeth not this teaching" (the doctrine of Christ) **II Jn. 10**.
- B. Those in error are to be "resisted" as the apostle Paul did to the apostle Peter who was in sin (Gal. 2:11). "*Resist*" (Gal. 2:11) is "to set one's self against, to withstand, resist, oppose: Rom. 9:19; 13:2; II Tim. 4:15; Matt. 5:39; Lk. 21:15; Acts 6:10; Gal. 2:11; Eph. 6:13; II Tim. 3:8 James 4:7; I Pet. 5:9; II tim. 3:8; Acts 13:8" (Thayer 45). Paul "*resisted*" Peter (Gal. 2:11) because he stood *condemned!* *Condemned* = "to lay as a charge against a person" (LS 404); "Condemned" (AG 409; Thayer 330).
- C. Admonish (teach) (I Thess. 5:14; II Thess 3:6, 14).
- D. There are some who must be "*avoided*" (Turn away) (*ekkleno*) (Thayer 196) "to turn away from, keep aloof from, one's society; to shun one: **Rom. 16:17; II Tim. 3:5; Titus 3:10.**"

Conclusion:

Though it is the Lord's desire that all Christians be "one," that is not the universal case among baptized believers and religious people of the world. Sin is the entity that wrecks, severs, divides, ruins, and crushes the fellowship that would otherwise exist between believers.