

"KEEP SCRIPTURAL FELLOWSHIP"

(VITAL TO ONE'S 'ETERNAL INTERESTS')

S186R

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Scriptural fellowship is a necessary Truth for each true Christian to consider, because it is vital to each one's 'eternal interests', yet among most professing Christians it is a neglected Truth. It is vital because our success in the Christian life here on earth (as well as in eternity to come, hereafter), depends on how we walk with God in this matter of Scriptural fellowship. Many people lost their lives in Bible times because they rejected the plain teaching of God's Word on this important and vital Truth given in God's Word to be heeded.

The Israelites had been forbidden to keep fellowship (or even to socialize) with Moabites, because of the wickedness of the Moabite people. But, we read of the Israelites ignoring and rejecting God's Word, and so, through keeping wrong fellowship with unbelievers they were led into serious sins which led to twenty three thousand of them perishing on one day. (Numb.25:9)

God had inspired Moses to warn the Israelites (before going into the land of Moab), not to go among the unbelieving, wicked, Moabites, saying, (Duet. 29:16-19), "You yourselves know how we lived in Egypt, and how we passed through the countries on the way here." (we did not go among nor socialize with unbelievers in those countries). "You saw among them their detestable things. (Indeed, we do see detestable things among unbelievers in this world today, wicked things which capture their attention, and so, are then put ahead of God in their life (and ahead of their eternal interests). (vs.18-19), "Make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison." "When such a person hears the words of this oath" (teaching) (and in self-confidence), "he (or she) invokes a blessing on themselves and therefore, thinks, 'I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way'.". (we cannot allow or bring the devil's temptations into our life or home, and then think that we will be able to resist the temptation in our own strength. Satan will overpower us if we are providing the opportunity to tempt us.) .(vs.19) "This will bring disaster on the 'watered land' as well as the dry" land (meaning, on unbelievers as well as the 'believer').

The Israelites mistakes were recorded for us to take heed and be warned, and to realize that we must choose to follow God's teaching and admonitions on keeping Scriptural fellowship in our life (and thus, enjoy God's blessing). We are to keep fellowship with those who also believe on what Jesus Christ's atonement sacrifice accomplished for us, and who place their trust in Him (and not suffer consequences for disobeying God on this important issue).

The 'fellowship question' always needs to be settled on the basis of God's plain teaching given in His Word,... not settled by opinions of men,

nor by our own thoughts in the matter (which are always susceptible to human emotions and sentiments and error). God's Word warns us (Prov. 4:20-22) "My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my Words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them, and health to a man's whole body."

God's Word speaks very plainly not only to Israelites (through Moses), but to all other people as well, those who are being tempted or enticed to follow the many dangerous pathways of 'misplaced trust' that is most prevalent among people of the world today. (Deut.13:3-6) "you shall not listen to the words of that prophet" (false teacher of false doctrine), "for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the LORD your God", (preached rebellion against the Lord your God via 'misplaced trust' on the world's plans and policies), (to turn you away from the Lord) "Who brought you out of the land of Egypt (out of sinful fellowship and away from 'false places of trust')". "and redeemed you from the 'house of bondage',... (and so) "to entice you(away) from 'the way' in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst. (run away from wrong fellow-ship with those caught up in false teaching and unbelief). "If your brother, the son of your mother, your son or your daughter, the wife of your bosom, or your friend who is as your own soul, secretly entices you", saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods, ['false places of trust' such as 'savings accounts' to lay up 'treasure on earth', or trusting on 'insurance policies' for 'financial protection', buying things on 'credit plans' instead of trusting on God to provide things when needed. And in this day of computer age, not to be enticed (influenced) by worldly opinions of 'people's (unbeliever's) writings' on the Internet, and whom Jesus said could not (as an 'unbeliever') (not)have the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as a 'child of God' is promised (John 1:12, John 14:17, John 3:18-19, Gal.3:2, Acts 5:32, 2 Cor.4:4] (And so, Deut. 13: continues in vs.8) "you shall not consent to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him or conceal him;".

Jesus also spoke very plainly for everyone to understand and to know who to keep fellowship with, (Matt. 12:50) "For whosoever 'shall do the will' of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." [Jesus was explaining to those who followed Him, just who they should keep close fellowship with (as He also did by His own living example for us to follow Him).]

Jesus kept an on-going companionship with His apostles and other disciples (or followers). His example of keeping Christian fellowship is one that we should want to follow, if we want to keep our spiritual interests and 'eternal welfare' in first place in our life. He told us in (John 14:12) "In most solemn truth I tell you that he who trusts in me--

the things which I do, he shall do also;" (then vs.23), "If any one loves Me," replied Jesus, "he will obey My teaching;" (and His example) for us, "and my Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."

That is Jesus' promise to true believers with truly surrendered hearts to follow Him on 'fellowship' and all other issues in life), that they would have the Spirit of Jesus Christ in 'their heart' to guide them in Truth. (Rom.8:1 assures) us there is "no condemnation for those who are 'in Christ Jesus". (and Rom. 8:4) "For our lives are regulated not by our earthly, but by our spiritual natures."

God's Word to us through Jesus (and, as He spoke through the prophets before, and the apostles of Jesus), speaks out many times in words (and true life examples of Bible Christians), on the importance of keeping Scriptural fellowship, (as well as the 'spiritual dangers' of keeping un-Scriptural fellowship).

Fellowship, with unbelievers (or those who have been led astray from the Truth), can be (and most always is) "spiritually harmful" to someone trying to live the "true Christian life". When someone turns their back on the Truth (which Jesus gave us by Word and by example), and they are deliberately following man-made plans of the self-life, they have (in fact) rejected His teaching. They are grieving the Holy Spirit of God, which we are told not to do. We are to come out from among them (the Apostle Paul said), instead of seeking the company of someone who is grieving the Holy Spirit by following plans of the self-life. (Ephes. 4:30), says, "And 'beware'... of grieving the Holy Spirit of God,".

Jesus had already confirmed the apostle's advice when He told His disciples to 'get away' from people who refuse to 'listen' to His Message,... "as you leave that house or town, shake off the very dust from your feet", he said (Matt. 10:14).

Jesus also warned, that we cannot let "even our family" come between us and Him, "Anyone who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and anyone who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take up his cross and follow where I lead ... is not worthy of me." (Matt. 10:37-38). That is scripture (to be obeyed), because it came from Christ, Himself,...that is, we should seek Him first, instead of the approval of family members. (Surely Jesus was not talking only about the fellowship issue when saying "follow where I lead",... but, financial trust, divine healing, forgiving from the heart, not avenging wrongs done to us, and any other issue on which He has set an example for us to follow Him.)

If someone is led to follow plans that trust the in self-life (accepting the medical profession, seeking to gain property, material possessions and position in this life, or avenging themselves of mistreatment, etc.),... then they are not following Christ and the Scriptures by faith. There is no middle ground or 'middle pathway' to walk, regarding being Scriptural on finances, divine healing, avenging wrongs, laying aside self-efforts, and wrong fellowship. A person either

follows Christ(in faithful obedience), or they do not follow Him. "No man can serve two masters:(Jesus said Matt. 6:24) (which not only refers to money, but to self-conceived false plans of trust and other precepts which are simply human rules, or anything else that one would put ahead of obedience to God in their life). (Matt.15:7-14) "Hypocrites! well did Isaiah prophesy of you, 'THIS IS A PEOPLE WHO HONOUR ME WITH THEIR LIPS, WHILE THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME; BUT IT IS IN VAIN THEY WORSHIP ME, WHILE THEY LAY DOWN PRECEPTS WHICH ARE MERE HUMAN RULES.'" "Then, when He had called the people to Him, Jesus said, "Hear and understand. It is not what goes into a man's mouth that defiles him; but it is what comes out of his mouth- that defiles a man." Then His disciples came and said to Him, "Do you know that the Pharisees were greatly shocked when they heard those words?" "Every plant," He replied, "which my Heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. Leave them alone. They are blind guides of the blind; and if a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into some pit."

'Simply speaking' (where our spiritual interests and eternal welfare are concerned), if a person (even a family member, Jesus said), is not a true follower of Christ in these things, we cannot afford to keep close fellowship with them.

We must not confuse 'fellowship' with occasional unplanned social meetings. Fellowship is defined as 'companionship', or 'mutual sharing of experiences', activities, or interests. We always want to be 'Christlike cordial' and friendly to people who do not share our religious convictions and are not part of our Church membership, treating them as we would like to be treated. We want to be pleasant with those we work beside, or we meet up with in the course of our day, ["but we should not desire or seek the company of those who have no time for God's Truth."] Nor should we have frequent or ongoing 'fellowship' with anyone who does not obey God's Word (to trust Him alone for things and circumstances in their life). We should not visit them nor invite them to visit us.

We can be 'Christlike cordial' and friendly if they stop by the house to see us, but we must be very careful not to allow anyone to bring in false doctrine or to talk about it while visiting. (2 John 1:10-11) "If any one who comes to you does not bring this teaching, do not receive him under your roof, nor bid him Farewell. He who bids him Farewell is a sharer in his evil deeds." (To quote the late Pastor) "It is a disobedience of Scripture to continue unscriptural fellowship, as much as it is a disobedience of God's Word if we steal, lie, or cheat someone.")

The Scriptures teach that a true Christian is one who believes and trusts on the power of the Atonement sacrifice of Jesus Christ,... one whose heart has been cleansed by the Blood of Christ,.. and, who is made obedient by the indwelling Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. 6:9-11) clearly explains who not to keep fellowship with. "Do you not know that unrighteous men will not inherit God's Kingdom? Cherish no delusion here. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters (means unbelievers), nor adulterers, nor any who are guilty of unnatural crime, nor thieves, nor avaricious people" (avaricious means greed or riches) "nor any who are addicted to hard

drinking, to abusive language or to greed of gain, will inherit God's Kingdom. And all this describes what some of you were. (says verse 11). "But now you have had every stain washed off: now you have been set apart as holy: now you have been pronounced free from guilt; in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and through the Spirit of our God."

That verse (1 Cor. 6:11), proclaims the fulfillment of God's promised Spirit for true believers,... those who love righteousness and obediently trust in God (Ezek. 36:25-27), "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them."

Apart from a fully surrendered and obedient heart to do God's will (as revealed in His Word), there is no true spirituality.

In order to be a Christian (in the true Bible sense of the word), we must not allow anything to come between us and God's expressed will,... (neither husband, wife, children, father, or mother). (Matt. 10:37) "Any one who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and any one who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;" (That is God's command about not keeping close fellow-ship with anyone not living a 'life of trust' on Him (a relative or anyone else), and Jesus said, "by their 'fruits' you will know them.")

That means we are to judge others actions which we can see and know, (and not try to judge intentions of their heart). Jeremiah said, that we cannot know our own heart (let alone know the other person's heart). (Jer. 17:9). "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?"

Nor can we allow owning houses and lands to come between us and God's expressed will, when our heart is truly surrendered to do God's will in our life (not having any lands or treasures on this earth which could be depended on in time of need). (Many who have been led away from a 'life of trust', try to justify owning a home, expensive vehicles, or other valuable possessions.) God knows the human heart, and that if there is some asset that could be trusted in or depended on, Satan will be sure to tempt a person to trust on it (the same as a person would be tempted to depend on 'insurance coverage'). God's will however, is for us to live a life of faith and trust on the 'promises' and 'provisions' of His Word, and Jesus explained that our surrender to follow His will must be final. (Matt. 10:38), "and any one who does not take up his cross and follow where I lead is not worthy of me."

(Matt. 7:20, Jesus said), "So by their fruits(or actions) at any rate, you will easily recognize them... (He continued vs. 21-23), "Not everyone who says to me, 'Master, Master,' will enter the Kingdom of the Heavens, but only those who are obedient to my Father who is in Heaven. Many will say to me on that day, "'Master, Master, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name expelled demons, and in Thy name performed many

mighty works?' "And then I will tell them plainly, "'I never knew you: begone from me, you doers of wickedness.'

(Jesus qualifies unbelief (not trusting Him for things in our life) as wickedness.) (The consequences are severe for not living a life of trust (believing on the power of Jesus' atonement blood sacrifice), and Jesus said, that 'day of reckoning' will come when you least expect it to come. Can we afford to have Jesus include us when saying "I never knew you",... because we refused to obey God's Word to 'come out from among' those who chose not to follow Christ by faith?

Jesus spoke with authority, because His Words carry the promise of "Life" with them (meaning of course, "Eternal Life (or Salvation)" instead of 'eternal torment'). If someone is giving (or following) a 'teaching' that gives approval of things that Jesus (in His inspired Word) told us not to do,..or to have,.. or to accept,.. what possible promise could that message carry with it? Certainly not 'Life'!! No wonder apostle Paul was inspired by God, to tell us to 'come out from among them'. (or do not seek fellowship with them.)

True faith on God means taking a risk on His Word, and we need to learn that God will control the other person toward us, when we need to make a decision to cut fellowship with someone who is acting outside of God's Word. Faith is always on the unseen result, so where no risk is involved, there is also no faith involved. Every Christian in the Bible walked the pathway of a surrendered will (and of perfect obedience) toward doing God's will with an un-compromising commitment toward following God's Word, to "come out from among them."

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THE FIRST CENTURY GOSPEL CHURCH/PHILADELPHIA

S186R SOME MAIN POINTS:

1... The 'fellowship question' should always be settled on the basis of God's 'teaching' (as given in His Word),... it is not to be settled by our own opinions and thoughts on the matter.

2... Jesus spoke with authority, because His Words carry the promise of eternal Life. He warned us to separate from those who will not 'listen' to Him,. and apostle Paul said "come out from among them.

3... Jesus said, that we cannot allow even our family to come between us and Him, or we are not worthy to be His follower. "Follow where I lead", He instructed us.

4... Friendship with the world makes us an 'enemy' of God (the apostle Paul was inspired to tell us), (and Jesus told us "by their fruits you will know them)(telling us to judge a person's actions, not try to judge the intentions of their heart.