

The Church: A Fellowship of Believers

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. Acts 2:36-40 - The Gospel is preached for the first time
- B. Acts 2:41 - A fellowship called the Church is born
 - 1. When the Law of Moses was given, 3,000 were divided and killed for their disobedience - Ex. 32:25-28
 - 2. However, at the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, 3,000 were saved and united by their obedience
- C. Salvation began with faith -- belief in God and obedience to His will.
 - 1. Worship of God by the church began with fellowship with one another through the word of God - Acts 2:42-47
 - 2. Just as there is no salvation without faith in and obedience to God, there is no church without fellowship with each other through the word of God
- D. Our fellowship in a local church
 - 1. Fellowship exists when we share common principles and practices
 - a. Love for God, His word, His children, and all of His creation
 - b. Faithful obedience to His word, working for His Son, and serving one another
 - c. Fellowship does not exist when we do not share common principles and practices
 - 2. If I am walking in the light, and you are walking in the light, we are in fellowship with one another
 - a. If you or I depart from the light, we are not in fellowship with one another - 1John 1:1-7
 - 3. We are discussing the individual's fellowship with a local church, not the local church extending fellowship to an individual Christian
- D. What Is Fellowship? Let the Bible define itself - 2Cor. 6:14-16
 - 1. Yoked - implies a common work
 - 2. Fellowship - denotes sharing in action
 - 3. Communion - normal word for fellowship
 - 4. Concord - implies harmony of thought
 - 5. Portion - having a part together with others
 - 6. Agreement - a union of purpose
 - 7. Hence, fellowship is agreement in principle facilitating joint or common action in spiritual work

I. FELLOWSHIP IN SUFFERING

- A. Phil. 3:10 - Paul in fellowship with Christ illustrates how that disciples in a local church can share in the same difficulty, bear with its duration together, and commonly engage the solution to it
 - 1. 1Peter 4:12-13; Heb. 10:32-33; 2Cor. 1:3-7; Gal. 6:1-2
 - 2. Each shared common principle and action

- B. We may have fellowship in suffering today also when suffer together for principles and actions commanded by God
 - 1. Our fellowship is with Christ and the faithful who also suffered
 - 2. Fellowship does not exist if we do nothing to share in it or we are the cause of affliction

II. FELLOWSHIP IN BENEVOLENCE

- A. Rom. 12:4-8, 13
- B. Based on common faith and action in Christ
 - 1. Benevolence from church is limited to saints is fellowship
 - a. Because it implies collective fellowship may have something to do with why it is limited to saints
 - 2. Benevolence from individual members to saints is fellowship - Gal. 6:10

III. FELLOWSHIP IN THE LOCAL WORK

- A. 1Cor. 12:20-27; Eph. 4:11-16; Gal. 6:6
- B. Things held in common enabled fellowship

IV. FELLOWSHIP IN THE TEACHING

- A. Philemon 4-7; Gal. 2:7-9
- B. Origin of commonality is provided by God: A common message, shared in common by the people of God who agree on the principles and share in the practice
- C. When we apply common principles and practices as Christians, that is fellowship
- D. It will define the fellowship between an individual and the local church, as well as between individuals within the local church