

HWMR - THE GENUINE CHURCH LIFE, Week 04

Fellowship— the Reality of the Church Life

Scripture Reading: 1 John 1:1-3, 7; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:16-17

- 1 John 1: 1 - 3 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the **Word of life** (And the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us); That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have **fellowship with us**, and indeed our **fellowship** is **with the Father** and **with His Son Jesus Christ**.
- 1 John 1: 7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have **fellowship with one another**, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.
- Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the **fellowship of the apostles**, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.
- 1 Corinthians 1:9 God is faithful, through whom you were called into the **fellowship of His Son**, Jesus Christ our Lord.
- 1 Cor. 10:16 - 17 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the **fellowship** of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the **fellowship** of the body of Christ? Seeing that there is one bread, we who are many are **one Body**; for we all partake of the one bread.

I. Just as there is the circulation of blood in the human body, so there is a **circulation in the Body of Christ**—a circulation that the New Testament calls **fellowship**; this **fellowship** is the **reality of the church life**—1 John 1:3, 7:

- A. **Fellowship** is a common participation, a joint participation; thus, to have **fellowship** is to have a **corporate participation** in something—Phil. 4:14; 2:1.
- B. Fellowship is the issue of eternal life and is actually **the flow of the eternal life** within the believers—1 John 1:1-3, 7.
- C. In order to have the unique fellowship, we must **live by and behave in the divine life**, not in our natural life—Rom. 8:2, 6, 10-11.
- D. To have **fellowship** with the Triune God in the apostles' **fellowship** is to **put aside our private interests** and join with the apostles and the Triune God for the carrying out of God's purpose—Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:3; 2 Tim. 1:9.

II. "God is faithful, through whom you were **called into the fellowship** of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord"—1 Cor. 1:9:

- A. God has **called us into** the **fellowship** of His Son so that we may **partake** of Christ, **participate** in Him, and **enjoy** Him as our God-given portion.
- B. God has called us into the **fellowship** of, the **participation** in, the all-inclusive Christ; all believers should be **focused** on Him, not being distracted by any gifted person, any overstressed doctrine, or any particular practice.
- C. Christ Himself is the **fellowship** into which God has called us—v. 9:
 - 1. The **fellowship** of the all-inclusive Christ as our portion is nothing less than the living person of the all-inclusive Christ.
 - 2. To be called into the **fellowship** of Jesus Christ is to be called into Him, for He Himself is the **fellowship**—v. 30.
 - 3. We have been called into this person and into His **fellowship**—called into Christ for our participation and enjoyment.
 - 4. The **fellowship** in verse 9 is our **participation** in Christ; it is our **enjoyment** of Him and our **preference** for Him.
- D. The **fellowship** of Christ—a **wonderful, excellent mutuality**—is actually carried on by the Spirit; thus, in our experience the **fellowship** of the Son is the fellowship of the Spirit—2 Cor. 13:14; Phil. 2:1.
- E. **Fellowship** means that **we and Christ have become one**—1 Cor. 6:17:
 - 1. In our experience, being one spirit with the Lord follows being called by God into the **fellowship** of His Son—1:9; 6:17.
 - 2. We have been **called into a oneness** where we are one with Him and He is one with us.
 - 3. The word **joined** in 6:17 is a synonym for **fellowship** in 1:9; the joining is actually the **fellowship**.
 - 4. Whenever we are **one spirit with the Lord**, we are in the **fellowship** of Christ, and we experience Him as the all-inclusive One.
- F. **Fellowship** means that **we enjoy Christ** and all He is and that **He enjoys us** and all we are—Phil. 1:18; 2:17-18, 28; 3:1; 4:4, 10:
 - 1. We have been called into a **mutuality** in which we enjoy what the Son of God is and He enjoys what we are.
 - 2. This **fellowship** implies a wonderful, universal, mutual enjoyment—our enjoyment of the Triune God, the Triune God's enjoyment of us, and the enjoyment that the believers have with one another.

III. Fellowship is related to **oneness**—1 Cor. 1:9; 6:17; 10:16-17; 12:20:

- A. The **fellowship**, the **circulation**, of the **divine life** in the Body brings all the members of the Body **into oneness**—Eph. 4:3-6.
- B. This oneness is called **the oneness of the Spirit** (v. 3); it is also the oneness of the Body—v. 4; 1 Cor. 12:12-13.
- C. As long as we have the divine life flowing within us, we are in this oneness—the oneness of the Body, the **oneness among all the saints**.

D. The unique **fellowship** is the genuine oneness of the Body of Christ as the unique ground for the believers to be kept one in Christ—Eph. 4:3-6.

IV. The experience of the cross deepens both the vertical and the horizontal fellowship and enables us to know the life of the Body and live in the fellowship of the Body—Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20; Matt. 16:24; 1 Cor. 12:27:

- A. We need the experience of **the cross** to deepen our experience of the divine **fellowship**—1:9, 23-24; 2:2:
1. Without the cross, our **fellowship** is superficial; **only the cross can remove the many obstacles to the divine fellowship** and deepen our fellowship with the Lord and with one another—Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20; Matt. 16:24.
 2. **Fellowship frees** us from our sinful self through the cross; without the cross, there is no release, freedom, or liberty from the self and no genuine fellowship—1 Cor. 1:9, 23-24; 2:2; Gal. 2:20.
 3. In Matthew 16:24 the Lord used the term **his cross**, indicating that there is a particular portion of the cross for each one of us in order to cross each one of us out:
 - a. To **bear the cross** is to deny the self, to put the self to death, to apply the cross of Christ to the self all the time—Luke 9:23-25.
 - b. We are easily offended by others because we are so sensitive about ourselves; if we did not have such a strong self, we would not be offended by others.
 - c. If we have a strong self and are offended by everything and everyone, we cannot have real **fellowship**; in order for us to have **horizontal fellowship**, we need to deny ourselves—Matt. 16:24.
- B. The experience of the **cross brings us** into the **fellowship** of the Body of Christ—Rom. 6:6; 8:13; 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 1:18, 23-24; 2:2; 12:12-14, 27:
1. The cross deals with our flesh, self, and natural life so that we may know the life of the Body in reality—Matt. 16:24-26.
 2. If our flesh, self, and natural life are dealt with by the cross and if we submit to the headship of Christ and live the Body life, we will enjoy the **fellowship** of the Body—Gal. 2:20; 5:24; Phil. 3:3; Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 10:16.
 3. **Our relationship with the Head** is that of **obedience**, whereas **our relationship with the Body** is that of **fellowship**—Col. 2:19; 1 John 1:3; 1 Cor. 10:16-17:
 - a. **Fellowship** implies the fact that we are **limited** and inadequate and that we are willing to accept what comes from others and take it as our own.
 - b. **Fellowship** is to acknowledge that **we need the Body**—Rom. 12:4-5.
 - c. We can live in the Body and have **fellowship** in the Body only when our flesh, self, and natural life have been dealt with; otherwise, we will not see the importance of **fellowship**—Gal. 2:20; 5:24; Phil. 3:3.
 - d. God must bring us to the point where we cannot go on without **fellowship**—1 Cor. 12:14-27; John 15:4-6; 1 Thes. 3:8.
 4. Once the flesh, the self, and the natural life have been dealt with by the cross, we will know the life of the Body, we will see the importance of fellowship, and we will not be able to live apart from this fellowship—Rom. 6:6; 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 1:9; 2:2; 10:16-17; 12:14-27; 1 John 1:3, 7.

V. The fellowship among the churches is the fellowship of the Body of Christ—cf. 1 Cor. 10:16:

- A. The Lord's recovery is based upon the truth that Christ has only one Body, which is expressed as the local churches—Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; Rev. 1:11.
- B. Because there is one Spirit, there is only one Body, and there is only **one circulation of life in the Body**; this circulation is the **fellowship** of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:4; 1 John 1:3, 7.
- C. **The fellowship of the Body of Christ is the circulation, the current, of the Spirit; when the Spirit is circulating within the Body of Christ, divinity, humanity, Christ's person, Christ's death, and Christ's resurrection are all circulating.**
- D. A local church is a part of the unique Body of Christ, and the **fellowship** of the Body is universally one; in **fellowship** there is no separation—Rev. 1:11; 2:7a:
 1. No church or region should isolate itself from the **fellowship** of the Body.
 2. The result of a church or a region isolating itself from the **fellowship** of the Body of Christ is darkness, confusion, division, and death.
- E. Whenever we come to the Lord's table, we come to practice the **fellowship** of the Body—cf. 1 Cor. 10:16-17:
 1. The Lord's table is a testimony that we who belong to Christ are one:
 - a. We are one bread, one Body, because we all partake of the one bread—v. 17.
 - b. Our partaking of Christ constitutes us into His one Body.
 2. If we isolate ourselves from the **fellowship** of the Body, we are not qualified to partake of the Lord's body, because the loaf on the table in the Lord's supper signifies the entire Body of Christ.
- F. Among all the churches that compose the one universal Body of Christ, there is no organization, but there is the **fellowship** of the Body of Christ—Phil. 1:5.
- G. **The divine fellowship is the reality of living in the Body of Christ**—1 Cor. 1:9; 12:12-13, 27.