

Fellowship

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And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. (Acts 2 v 42)

Introduction

In this study we shall consider the topic of fellowship, but as an additional reading, let us read from **I John 1 vv 3-7**.

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

This is again a study in the practical issues of the life of faith. We started by examining the idea of being filled with the Spirit. We cannot do anything for God unless we know, not simply the work of the new birth, but the fullness of the Spirit. The disciples waited in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. There is nothing that we can do of ourselves for God. We must be vessels in His service, filled with the Holy Spirit. It is what the Holy Spirit does. When the Holy Spirit comes, He will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. We cannot do it. We are no good to God if we try to go out in our own strength and power. The disciples would have been no good, but filled with the Spirit, what a tremendous effect they had. And so can we. Jesus said that without Him we can do nothing. That is very important as a practical issue.

Lots of Christians are struggling, wondering how to live their lives, wondering how to be pleasing to God. Be filled with the Spirit! Of course, we have looked at what that phrase in Ephesians means: it does not simply mean to be full of the Spirit - that is assumed. The command here is a command to Spirit-filled believers, to be filled with what the Holy Spirit was supplying. The construction is such that the Holy Spirit is presented as the agent who fills. So we can translate the phrase as 'Be filled by the Spirit.' Let the Holy Spirit fill you with all that He desires.

Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit came He would lead us into all truth, that He would speak of Jesus and glorify Him. Day by day, as we go on being filled by the Spirit, we are letting the Holy Spirit minister those things that are needful in our lives. This is practical, not a course of 'how-to' lessons, but letting the Lord do the work.

Then there is sound doctrine. How important that is! Of course, many nowadays, go all for the 'being led by the Spirit' side, but, through neglect of the Scriptures, go astray on sound doctrine. We need to know the Word of God.

I am persuaded that if we are being filled by the Spirit and if we know sound doctrine, we shall want to do these things which are the subject of our studies in practical issues. We will not have that attitude which regards prayer and Bible reading as a chore to be done before we can get on with the rest of the day. Now people often think that I am dispensing with a disciplined life, and advocating that prayer and reading be done when one feels like it. No, I do believe that discipline is necessary, that one should set aside a regular time for reading the Word and for prayer every day. If you are filled with the Spirit you will want to. You will want to defeat those weaknesses of the flesh which otherwise hinder progress. Then the whole of your day will be lived as unto the Lord.

Fellowship is very important too as a practical issue, for if we get fellowship right as well, we shall find that the Lord's purposes will become clear to us and we shall know that we are walking in the place where God wants us to be. We will have an assurance in our hearts: it is wonderful how it works. I feel that **I John 1** sums it up very clearly, that we have a fellowship that is a fellowship with the Father, a fellowship with the Son and a fellowship one with another. It also tells us not to have fellowship with evil things, with darkness. If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. There is a wonderful cleansing operative when we are in this place of fellowship. We shall find that there is cleansing in reading, knowing and taking heed to the Word. These are very practical issues, because if we are in the right place, being filled with the Holy Spirit, if we have got sound doctrine and know what the teaching of the Scripture is, then these will be of practical use in our Christian lives. You see, a lot of people get confused about doctrine. That is why we read that verse in **Ephesians** which says, ***"that you henceforth be not children, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine."*** People seem to get confused about doctrine and will not have anything to do with it. That is a wrong attitude. Doctrine is so important yet so simple. When we have that sound doctrine then we can go on in the things of the Lord.

What Is Meant By Fellowship?

What we so often mean and understand by fellowship is probably not what the Scripture means by fellowship. We often say on a Sunday evening, "We'll have a time of fellowship afterwards - a cup of tea or coffee, biscuits, cakes and a chat." Or, maybe we'll arrange a football match with another group and afterwards hold a barbecue. "Come and have a good time of fellowship," we say. What we understand in these instances is probably what the world understands by fellowship and that is having a good time, fun, socialising with others and then going home. But that is not really it. In the New Testament it is something permanent. It is the result of our Oneness, our unity in Christ.

We could say that Christian fellowship is true communism - but do not confuse that with the corrupt, worldly, atheistic systems. In the Greek, the word **κοινωνία** (*koinonia*) means just that. In the Bible it is translated by the words 'communion', 'fellowship', and 'distribution'. It means 'common-ness' or 'having things common'. Marxism and Marxist-Leninism were and are miserable failures because they reject God.

'*Koinonia*' can only work when God is in the centre of it. Communism will never work in this world, but Christian fellowship is a beautiful reality to those who are saved. *Koinonia* is sharing, not in the sense of partnership or equal shares. There is a Greek word for that – **μετοχή** (*metochē*) - and that word does carry with it the idea of equal sharing, possessing together. But *koinonia* bears the meaning of each one having a full share of everything. So when we are brought together into the body of Christ as Christians, we are brought into a community where each one of us and all of us together have a full share of everything, not part shares, but full shares. We are one Body: we have been baptised by one Spirit into one Body. We have a full share of everything - all things are yours (**I Cor 3 v 21**). We are heirs and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

It is sad that, in view of all that, we can be so separated from each other. Therefore, if we are separated, we are also powerless, because the things that God wants us to have are in the fellowship of His people. In **I John 1 v 7**, it says,

"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship (Common-ness) one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

Fellowship is being one. It is not so much 'fun, food, and fellowship', on which some churches seem to centre their activities, thinking that that is fellowship. They do that at the local pub or working man's club. This is something mightily different. This is being one in the Lord. In **Romans chapter 12 v 5**, we can read, ***"So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."***

And then **Romans 15 vv 5 & 6**: *"Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Members One of Another

There is a wonderful unity there and, in that chapter that speaks about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, **1 Corinthians 12 v 12**, Paul gives us some teaching there on this unity:

"For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many."

Galatians 3 v 28 is one verse that many like to quote on the issue of the ministries of men and women. We shall consider the implications of that in a future study, but it is also a statement of our unity:

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Ephesians 4 v 25:

"Wherefore putting away lying, speak everyman truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another."

We are one. Not only is that unity a fact but we have a full share of everything that the Lord has for us, together. This defies the laws of arithmetic. It is not a case of our sharing something and having half each. No, we each have a full share. What did Jesus do with five loaves and two fishes shared amongst five thousand men plus women and children. Did they each have a tiny crumb each? Of course not. They each had a full share, ate and were satisfied. They could all have had the equivalent of at least five loaves and two fishes. What is more, there were twelve baskets full left over, signifying that there had been plenty for everyone and still there was an abundant supply. That is a picture of how the Lord provides for all of us, as we are one together in Him.

In this fellowship we see that there is a provision for all our needs, whether they be physical needs, financial needs, psychological needs or needs of a spiritual nature. Every need in Him is supplied. We have a full provision and that provision is in the fellowship. It is a total provision. It is not eking out a meagre existence but an abundant and full provision, as the Scriptures promise us, for all that we need. If we see that what we have, whether it be in spiritual things or what Paul calls carnal things, is common, then we have a full share of things together. Let us look at **Acts chapter 2** again. One of the barriers we have to break down is that of possessiveness and selfishness, you know, along the lines of "what's yours is mine and what's mine is my own. Keep your hands off!" That is what we are like naturally. That is a barrier to our progress and to our spiritual growth. How different it was in the early church!

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers." Acts 2 v 42

Now in the next verses of this chapter we find an explanation of this fellowship:

"And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart."

Giving in Faith

They did not call their possessions their own. When I had a need, a brother in the Lord said, "Drive my car for the day!" When I protested that I was worried in case I dented it or something worse, his reply was to the effect, "So what?" The idea was, especially there in Jerusalem, and you can see how it progresses as you read through Acts, that the poor amongst them had a provision for all their needs, not out of a grudging charity, but out of the full provision that God gives. It was no good the community praying, "Lord, provide for these poor starving saints; let there be a miraculous provision Lord. Let them wake up and find that food on the doorstep." For the Lord would say to His people as He said to the disciples at the feeding of the five thousand, **"You give them to eat!"** Jesus showed them the way. Use what you have got. "What!" come the protests, "What is this amongst so many? I need all this for me." But as they gave, the need was met, and none went short. We shall find it too. It is so easy to say, "We'll pray about that need, sister." Certainly, pray! But then give. The provision is there.

Paul later explained that those that were able should give since, after all, they were receiving spiritual teaching and nourishment from others in the assembly. Thus some were spending a lot of time in prayer and the ministry of the word that the assembly might be fed. There was a distribution of spiritual things; there ought also to be a sharing of material things. Everyone then gets everything that God wants them to have. In **I Timothy 6 vv 17/18**, we shall find these words used:

"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate..."

The root of that word 'communicate' is *koinonia*, conveying the idea that people should have this attitude of having all things common. When I refer to some of these Scriptures that teach about fellowship, sometimes these words are translated differently in the A.V. Sometimes, in the Greek, it is a verb, sometimes it is a noun and sometimes it is an adjective, but they all come from the same root which means 'common-ness' (fellowship). So, in **Romans 12 v 13**, Paul refers there to distributing to the necessity of the saints. That word 'distributing' is, again, this word 'fellowshipping' to the necessity of the saints. Thus, reading from the previous verse, he says,

"Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints..."

Yes, we want to rejoice; we want to be patient in trials and tribulations; but we must also distribute, give and not be selfishly clutching possessions to ourselves. Wherever there is need amongst the saints of a material nature - food, shelter, clothing, money - then communicate. You who have, give to those who have not. It is not yours anyway: God gave it to you. As good stewards, distribute.

In **II Corinthians 9 v 13** we find other instructions. Now the whole chapter is about giving. The Lord loves a cheerful giver; He will make all things abound to you as you give. There is no need to worry about the fact that if you give away you might not have enough for your own needs. The Lord will provide your every need. He does. Christians through the centuries have proved it again and again. So, in verse 13, he says,

"Whiles by the experiment of this administration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them and unto all men."

That liberal distribution is their liberal fellowship. People were rejoicing because others were meeting their needs. Everybody had a full share in the blessings of God. There is no blessing in money. That is where the world gets it wrong. The world thinks there is blessing in money but the Bible says that the love of money is a root of all evils. If money is your aim in life, then, when you have got it, what are you going to do with it? It buys nothing of lasting value. True, it buys you what you want, but it does not buy you what you really need. Many a person has gone to the grave a miserable person because they made money their aim. Take Paul Getty as an example - a multi-millionaire, rich beyond belief, yet miserable to the depths of misery. What good did his money do him? He left it to others. His son gave much of it away, so much so that he was awarded a knighthood. If money makes you happy, then why does the son of Paul Getty not follow in his father's miserly footsteps?

"Ah," you say, "but I'm not like that. I just want enough to pay the bills, to buy food and clothing and so on." Rubbish. Trusting the Lord and knowing His provision is all we need. In Him, we have every need provided. Certainly money can provide food and clothing that we need, but when we know this fellowship, then there is a distribution to the necessity, the needs of the saints. Then we enjoy the blessings of being part of the Lord's people, of being part of His provision.

For poor people the provision of material needs can be very important and what I have just said may not sound too practical. In **Romans 15 vv 26 and 27**:

"For it has pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It has pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things."

The carnal things are, of course, material things such as food, clothing and shelter. There was a wonderful provision. But some of you may still not be convinced over this issue of money. How can anyone get by without money? It is true that you need money to buy food, clothing and shelter, but the Lord has promised to provide all of those things. Let me tell you about a person who had no money. He was in the Temple one day and He said, **"Show Me a coin!"** Seemingly, He had none of His own. To pay the Temple tax, He sent Peter fishing, whereupon Peter found a coin in a fish's mouth. He had no money of His own so that He could dip into His own pocket and say, "There, pay out of this!"

It was Jesus. Yet all needs were provided and supplied. Yes, the disciples used money: Judas held the bag. The disciples had some money available at the feeding of the five thousand. However, such money seems to have been distributed to the poor. That was their great cry when the woman broke open that alabaster box of ointment: **"That could have been sold and the money given to the poor."**

Galatians 6 v 6:

"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teaches in all good things."

The word 'communicate' means to fellowship. We are encouraged to share material things that are necessary. In **II Corinthians 8 vv 1 to 5**, it shows to us there about receiving the gift:

"...the fellowship of ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God."

So in the giving, ministering to the needs of the saints, they gave themselves, wholly and completely. And then in **Philippians 1 v 5**, Paul speaks about all this as being a fellowship in the gospel. Now if you have been saved and you are part of the people of God, baptised into that one body and yet you do not know this attitude of fellowship, of reaching out to the needs of other saints in the body of Christ, then there must be something wrong. There is no room for self here. In the Body of Christ we are one. Thus we must always reckon ourselves dead, crucified with Christ, that the self-life may have no place and that we might live unto Him. Then there will be this one-ness in Him.

The Fellowship of Suffering

Now that is fellowship in the sense of provision for needs. Let us move on to see that fellowship is also a fellowship of suffering. This really sounds gloomy - giving away all that I have and then the fellowship of suffering. Where is the good news in all this? It is part of being in the Body of Christ. The suffering is an extension of meeting the needs, because people who are in need are people who are suffering. In **I Peter 4 v 13**, Peter says, ***"But rejoice inasmuch as you are partakers (fellowshippers) of Christ's suffering; that when His glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy."***

There is a fellowship in Christ's sufferings, a sharing in common with Christ and His sufferings, because he was and still is the rejected One. Although we are in Him and accept Him, and He accepts us and we

are accepted in the Beloved, yet, because the world rejects Him, the world will also reject us if we are in Him. Jesus said that we should not marvel that the world hates us because it hated Him first. This age of Grace in which we live is also the night of His rejection.

"Yea, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (II Timothy 3 v 12)

Persecution can take a variety of forms. It may be physical, mental, psychological, and so on. We live in a country where the pressures tend to be psychological. We get embarrassed. There is that sort of persecution. People delight to make us look small and foolish and we suffer. But if that is what it means to be a Christian, then we must be prepared to suffer appearing foolish and ridiculous. That is why it is difficult to stand in the open-air to sing and witness, preaching the word. You know that people are going past thinking, "What a lot of idiots!" and communicating what they think by their actions and laughter. Now look at it this way. That is the rejection of Christ. We are fellowshiping in Christ's sufferings. If we are brought into the Body of Christ, we are brought into that fellowship. For us it is only a small measure of it. In some countries there is much physical suffering, imprisonment, torture, martyrdom, for the faith, solely because believers are in Christ Jesus. Are they fools? Are they idiots? I think not, for Paul says that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us (**Romans 8 v 18**) and that our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. (**II Cor. 4 v 17**) In **Philippians 3 v 8ff**. Paul explains his own attitude further:

"Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death."

And if we work backwards through the verse, we shall find that there is no other way to know Him. We have to be made conformable to His death. Does it not say that in Romans? Crucified with Christ, the old man, the old nature is dead. Unless we know that death to self, we cannot go on to know Him. Continuing to work backwards through the verse, we find that, being made conformable to His death, we know the fellowship of His sufferings. We are standing with Him in those sufferings. We do not suffer as He suffered. No one can suffer as He suffered, but we know the fellowship of His sufferings, the rejection. If we know that, if we are made conformable to His death, and the fellowship of His sufferings is known to us, we shall also know the power of His resurrection. You cannot know resurrection life until you have died. Resurrection is 'standing-up-again' from death. So as we came to Jesus, we came confessing our sins. The blood of Jesus has cleansed us, the old nature has died and we have been born again, rising again to walk in newness of life, resurrection life. And we know Him and we go on to know Him. Yes, Paul's prayer was, "That I may know Him."

That fellowship of sufferings is something which extends throughout the Body of Christ. There are believers who are suffering. There may be believers in our own assembly that are suffering for some particular reason. There are believers in other parts of the world who are suffering. The truth of the Word of God, in **I Corinthians 12 vv. 24,25**, is

"For our comely parts have no need: but God has tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ and members in particular."

Do we know that fellowship of sufferings? We experience the rejection of Christ, but the fellowship of sufferings extends to His Body which is the Church. If one member suffers, all the members suffer. The body metaphor is well understood. If you hit your thumb with a hammer, your thumb hurts, but your whole body reacts. You jump up and down, you shake your hand and stick your thumb in your mouth. Your vocal cords exercise themselves. Tears come to your eyes. It is agony and your whole body is in

sympathy with your thumb. All the members suffer, or are we separate? This is the fellowship. Do we know that common-ness one with another, that sharing together? Is this the fellowship that we continue steadfastly in as the apostles did? Now I do not desire to bring anybody under condemnation, but if we are filled with the Spirit, and if we know sound doctrine, then we will want to know that fellowship. The Philippians stood with Paul in his sufferings, in his imprisonment and so on, so that when Paul wrote to them from prison, he could say, **"You stood with me; you had fellowship with (did communicate with) my affliction."** They were not ashamed of his bonds; they sent him a gift. They were not ashamed to be associated with Paul, the prisoner of the Lord. Maybe we too can know that same fellowship, for as we do, as we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Fellowship to Avoid

Now there is a negative idea to this matter of fellowship. If we fellowship with Him and with one another, then the negative side is that we do not fellowship with anything that is contrary to the Kingdom of God, contrary to the things of God. We do not fellowship with anything that is evil, or wrong, or of the enemy. **I Timothy 5 v 22** says: **"Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure."**

That word 'partaker' means a 'fellowshipper'. Some people see this as a prohibition upon ruffian behaviour - laying hands on somebody. Some people see it as church behaviour - laying on of hands. There we have to be careful, if we are laying our hands on people, praying for the sick and needy, because, when we lay hands on people, following the Old Testament typology in the matter of the offerings, we are identifying ourselves with that person. When hands were laid on that goat that was for the wilderness on the Old Testament Day of Atonement, the sins of the people of Israel were transferred to the goat in a figure. They were identifying their sins with the goat that was going to be lost. We identify ourselves with Jesus and His righteousness is imputed to us. He was made sin for us. We are identifying ourselves with Him, but we must be careful not to identify ourselves with sin and evil. There is much that is demonic which must be discerned. Keep yourselves pure! Do not be a partaker of other men's sins! When we come round the table to break bread together, the Word of God tells us quite clearly that we cannot share together with those things that are wrong. We cannot share together the bread and wine with those who are living lives that are flagrantly immoral. We cannot share the bread and wine with those that are not saved. It is not right, because we are having fellowship, we are sharing in common and we cannot share in common with that which is evil and opposed to the Lord. Let that first be put right - for we are not rejecting a person - and then we can have fellowship one with another. That is the Word of God. We must be careful also in our personal lives that we do not fellowship with that which is of darkness, because we would be identifying ourselves with it.

Let us look at a few Scriptures to explain these things. In **I Corinthians 10 v 20**, concerning the communion, the breaking of bread:

"...the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God: and I would not that you should have fellowship with demons."

You will be having such fellowship if you get involved in wrong areas in your life. In **II Corinthians 6 v 14**, there is warning yet again about fellowshiping with those that are not right.

"Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion has light with darkness?"

Here the word translated 'fellowship' means partnership and, literally, the question is, "What partnership has righteousness with lawlessness?" Of course, there can be no such partnership. Lawlessness is being contrary to and without the law of God. Now the word 'communion' is actually the word 'fellowship'. What 'common-ness' has light with darkness? None whatsoever. God is Light and in Him there is no darkness at all. What concord has Christ with Belial, or what part has he that believes with an unbeliever? What agreement has the Temple of God with idols? You are the temple of the Living God. Verse 17 then speaks of the necessity of separation.

In **II John 11**, it speaks of those who come to our houses with doctrine that is contrary to the truth. The Word says that if they do not bring this doctrine that you should not receive them or let them enter your house. If you do, you will be partakers of their evil deeds and their wrong doing. You will be sharing together in their evil.

Paul said to Timothy, **"Keep thyself pure!" (I Timothy 5 v 25)**

Why? It is important to live lives that are more than just putting on a good show. You may think that what you do in the week between Sundays is none of my business, and what I do is none of your business. On the contrary, it is everybody's business, because we fellowship together. There was a village in Derbyshire, Eyam, that was contaminated by the plague in the seventeenth century. The vicar of the parish gave the instruction and leadership that nobody was to leave the village. Many died, but because of their sacrifice, the plague did not spread to other villages. Do you see the parallel? One person comes into a village with the plague and before long it spreads. One person comes into the assembly with impurity, because of wrong associations outside of the assembly life and the effects spread and contaminate. We are sharing together, one with another, in a full fellowship. If you are living unequally yoked, or in fellowship with what is wrong or evil and you are knowingly in that situation, compromising, then there will be a contamination of the fellowship. Paul said, in **I Corinthians 5**, concerning the man in the assembly at Corinth who was living in an immoral relationship, that the assembly had a responsibility to deal with that situation. As the man was unrepentant, he was to be cast out and cut off from the fellowship. Why was this necessary? Because **"a little leaven leavens the whole lump."** A little bit of yeast in the dough spreads through the whole of it. Leaven, in the Scripture, is a symbol of evil. A little bit of evil spreads. So we must be careful in these things that our fellowship is not with what is wrong. You may think that something is a harmless little association during the week sometime. It may be a connection with a club or society. Be careful! Is it right before the Lord that you should be involved in that particular thing, or that particular activity, with those particular people? If you have got to bring the Gospel to them; shine it to them, but do not go along with their wrong ways. You have got to lift people up, not to be dragged down by them to their standard. Remember, what you do affects the whole assembly, the whole fellowship. That is why Paul wrote so severely to the Corinthians about one man. People may have said that Paul should not judge, that it was up to the man how he lived his own life. No, it is not, because he was part of a fellowship of God's people, and that fellowship must be kept pure.

Fellowship of Blessing

Now that brings us to the last thoughts here and that is that there is a fellowship in blessing. We have been brought into a fellowship of blessing, a fulness, a completeness, a 'perfect-ness'. A 'koinonia', a common-ness means that we are not involved in a hierarchy with super-saints at the top and the worthless at the bottom of the stack. There is a fellowship and common-ness, because Jesus said, **"All of you are brethren."** So if you want to be great in the things of the Lord, start getting down on your knees and serve. We read that Scripture in **I John 1** which says that our fellowship, the things which we have a full share of, is with the Father. Once we were separated from Him.

***"Once far from God and dead in sin,
No light my heart could see,
Then in God's Word the Truth I found
Now Christ liveth in me."***

In verse **3 of I John 1**, it says that truly our fellowship is with the Father. All that He has is ours, because He has given it to Jesus and we are heirs and joint-heirs with Him. Do you remember when Abraham's son, Isaac, was born? It says that Abraham, a picture of God the Father, gave all that he had to Isaac, a picture of Jesus. So we have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. All His riches are ours, the unsearchable riches of Christ. The Holy Spirit wants to pour all those riches into our lives. That is why we are told to be filled by the Spirit, because we have a fellowship with the Father and with the Son. In **I Corinthians 1 v 9**, it declares, **"God is faithful, by whom you were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord."**

We have been called into this glorious fellowship where all that is His is ours. Then in **I Corinthians 10** we find there is that blessed communion: **"The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"** We share in the fulness of the body of Christ and all that it means.

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" There is a sharing, a full share in what the blood of Jesus Christ means. Jesus said, in **John 6**, that there must be an eating of His flesh and a drinking of His blood otherwise there is no life in you. We have communion; we have fellowship one with another. The bread which we break is the communion, the fellowship of the body of Christ. It is the reality of what we have in Christ Jesus, the reality of His body and His blood, and the fellowship that we have one with another and with His son Jesus Christ.

It says also, in **Philippians 2 v 1**,

"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit..."

We have a full share of everything: of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. God does not give us a bit of His Holy Spirit but a full share, a fellowship of working together with the Holy Spirit. We are involved in His work fully. At the end of **II Corinthians 13 (v 14)** we find this wonderful benediction:

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen"

That is blessing indeed - fellowship with one another, fellowship with the Father, fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ, fellowship with the Holy Spirit. We are in a place of full blessing and fellowship. We do not take the blessings of God and say, "There's some for you, and some for you and a few left over for Andy." We all have access to the lot, every one of us. **Ephesians** tells us that he has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Fellowship of the Mystery

In **Ephesians 3 v 9**, Paul expressed his desire to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God. There, I believe, is an intimation that we are involved in a sharing of the purposes of God. The mystery that was hid in God was the mystery concerning the church, not that God would just do a work amongst the Gentiles, but that God would bring both Jew and Gentile together into one body by His Holy Spirit and make of two, one people, a people, the Body of Christ, filled with His Spirit. That is the mystery now revealed. And God is making known to the principalities and powers, by the church, His manifold wisdom. Previously it was a mystery, hidden in God, but we have been brought into that place of fellowship, the fellowship of the mystery. God has revealed it to us. We are part of that work which was hidden in ages past, hidden even from angelic beings. It has been revealed to us as God has revealed His purposes. Is it not wonderful to be able to see what God is doing? "Blessings abound where'er He reigns." There are blessings indeed. There is fellowship. One day soon, that body, filled with the Holy Spirit, Jew and Gentile, male and female, bond and free, all one in Christ Jesus, sharing together, is going to be taken up to be with the Lord when He comes. That is the snatching-away of the Church, the Spirit-filled body.

They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Let us also continue steadfastly in fellowship - not fun, food and fellowship, although they are nice, but real, Biblical fellowship. Let us see the common-ness, the sharing that we have in Christ Jesus in all things.