**Grace to You** :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

**Fellowship of the Body, The Part 2**
Scripture: 1 John 1:1-7
Code: 1315

If you have your Bible's, you might look at 1 John for just a moment, Chapter 1. We are studying the fellowship of the body in connection with a series we're doing on the body of Christ. If you haven't gotten in on this series, I don't usually advocate these specifically, but I would encourage you to get the tapes of this series and become acquainted with this divine information, because it's really important to an understanding of your relationship to the rest of the body of Christ to Christians to Christ Himself.

But we come tonight to the subject of the fellowship of the body continuing where we began last time. I want to review for a moment. Last week we gave you some basic general principles regarding the fellowship of the body. We are all a body, Christ is the head, all of us are members, our resources are in Him, our strength is in Him, our wisdom is in Him, our life is in Him, and we minister and move and work together as a body.

We've talked about many of the ramifications of that. One of the aspects of our life as the body is fellowship. And fellowship is a very important thing, and as I said last week, we gave you some...some basic principles. Tonight, I want to just review them very quickly and then I want to move to some new areas.

First of all, we talked last time about point number one the basis of fellowship. And I'm reviewing for a minute. We talked about the basis of fellowship in 1 John 1 and verse 3. It says, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you," and that's John referring to Christ, he saw Christ, he saw His light, "that ye also may have fellowship with us and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ."

Now, there you have the basis of all fellowship which is a right relationship to Christ and God. There is no fellowship apart from that. The grounds of our fellowship then is salvation. That is, I'm talking about our fellowship both with God and with each other. Salvation is the grounds of our fellowship. And as I just said there are two facets to fellowship. There is my fellowship with God and my fellowship with other believers. And they are distinct in many ways.

But the basis of both is salvation. When you receive Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior, when you come to know this Christ who gave His life for you, you enter into fellowship with God. And then you are placed into the fellowship of believers. So both of them take place at salvation. Now, the

fellowship we have with God, first of all, is different from the fellowship with each other.

The word fellowship is kiononia. Literally kiononia means partnership. When you receive Jesus Christ, now watch this, you went into an unbreakable partnership with God, an eternal fellowship. Now here's an important point, remember it. Our fellowship with God, now watch this, is basically non-experiential. Say it again, our fellowship with God is basically non-experiential.

It is a fact, we are in kiononia with God. That means we are in partnership with God. Now, I say that because I want you to understand this principle. No Christian at any time is ever out of fellowship with God. Now, that may violate some of the thoughts that you've had in the past. Hang on. We'll defend ourselves in a moment.

No Christian is ever out of fellowship with God. Kiononia means partnership, you can't severe that relationship. You are always in fellowship with God. Now you can have two people that can enter into a marriage, a partnership. Now, they may not talk to each other, but they are still in partnership. You can have two people in the same business, they own the same business, they're partners, they may not like each other, but they're still partners. Now, that's a very crude way of saying, that you and God are in an eternal partnership. You may not really be acting like a partner to God and you may be violating some of the partnership standards, but the partnership maintains itself.

Our fellowship with the Trinity is non-conditional. Once you're saved, you enter into permanent fellowship with God. It is non-experiential. We often say when everything is going great and everything is happy and we're kind of tuned into the Lord, I'm in fellowship. And when you're not plugged into the Lord and you're kind of sinning in your life and you're a little bit diffident about your Christian life you might say well, I'm out of fellowship. No, you're always in fellowship. You are a kiononias or kiononas, I mean. A partner of God.

Then you say, well, what about when we...when we're...you know, when we sin and it's just not like it should be. What does that mean? Well, that's verse 4, "And these write we unto you, that your joy may be," what, "full." It's the difference of a partnership where there is full joy and a partnership where there is not full joy. In other words, if you want to rightly evaluate your Christian life, say it this way. I am experiencing full joy in my fellowship with the Father. Or I am not experiencing the joy of my fellowship with God.

In other words, the issue is not whether you're in or out of fellowship. The issue is whether you're experiencing or not experiencing full joy in that fellowship. And that's true of marriage. You're not in or out of the fellowship, you're just either experiencing joy or not experiencing joy, right?

Our fellowship is eternal and it never ends. The joy of it is the key. And the joy of our fellowship with God is what is effected by sin. Now this is clearly taught here in Chapter 4. Full joy...pardon me in

Chapter 1, verse 4. Full joy is the experience of fellowship, right? Fellowship exists, the experience of it is full joy or not full joy.

Now notice that mixture is...doesn't exist. There's no mixture of fellowship. You're either in the fellowship or out of the fellowship. Not in and out of it. You're not in and out of fellowship with God. You're either in fellowship or out of fellowship. And if you're out of fellowship, that means you're not saved. You have no partnership with God.

Now, notice how he begins to teach us in verse 5. "This then is the message which we have heard Him and declare unto you that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." Notice there's no mixture. You're either in the light or you're out of the light. You're either in the light or in the dark, not both.

No Christian is ever in the dark. No Christian walks in the dark. We are in the light, walk in the light, and have continuous eternal fellowship with God. The only experiential aspect of it is joy, full joy, or no joy. Now, I'm reviewing some of the concepts from last week.

Now last week, we saw several cases in terms of these verses that we illustrated several times. How that some people counterfeit their experience and they feel that they're in the light, when in fact, they're not. You have a counterfeit fellowship. Some people think they're fellowshipping, but they're not.

Verse 6, here comes the counterfeits. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness," what, "we lie and do not the truth." That's a counterfeit believer. That's not even a Christian. That's somebody who comes along and says well, I have fellowship and you look at their life and say no, you're not in the fellowship because you're walking in darkness and believers are walking in light. That's the pattern of their life.

That in verse 6 is an unbeliever. And specifically John's writings of the Nostics who were a group of heretics who didn't believe they were sinful. And they were kind of infiltrating the church and saying we're in the fellowship. What do you mean, we're out of the fellowship. We're in the fellowship. And John is saying to them in effect, how can you be in the fellowship when the pattern of life is darkness. Your liars, you're not doing the truth.

All right, what did we learn then? We learned number one that one believer is ever out of fellowship. We learned number two, that all believers always walk in the light. Now if we do the deeds of the darkness, which we can do, we do them in the light, isn't that right?

If you as a Christian sin, you do it in full light of what you're doing don't you? You walk in the light and I walk in the light. We are children of the light. Remember how we talked about that. Children of the

day, we have been translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His son. We are in the kingdom of light. We walk as children of light, we are not sons of the night, we are sons of the day, we walk in the light.

Now, if you sin and do the deeds of darkness you do them in full light. And they're obvious to you, to God, and to most people around you. And so it's an unbeliever in verse 6 who says he has fellowship, it's a counterfeit fellowship and the pattern of his life is darkness so he couldn't be a believer. Then he gives the principle of a true believer in verse 7. "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship," now watch this, "one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His son cleanses us from all sin."

Now there's the pattern of a believer who is a true believer, an honest legitimate believer. Now notice it very carefully, we walk in the light as He is in the light. Consequently, we have a fellowship, now watch this, with...one with another. Now, who is the another here? Not other Christians, God. How do you know that? Because later on it says "and the blood of Jesus Christ," what's the next word, "His." Now what does the His refer to? It refers in case to another. God is view here.

If we walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship with Him. That's what it's talking about. The pattern of a Christian is fellowship with God. And then, of course, in verse 8 he brings up the fact that again the person jumps and says well, you know, the Nostics were claiming they didn't have any sin, so the person comes and says well we don't have any sin. Well, if that's the case then you deceive yourself and the truth's not in you.

See the problem was the Nostics were claiming to be a part of the fellowship and denying sin. And John is saying you can't do that. You're walking in darkness and you're not willing to admit your sin, and yet you're saying you're in the fellowship. That's ridiculous. You're not in the fellowship of God. You're not...you're not walking in the light. You're walking in darkness. Now, what do we learn here. We learned this, believers are always in fellowship with God, partnership. We learned believers always walk in the light, never in the darkness. If they do the deeds of darkness they do them while they're walking in the lot. You don't ever do them in ignorance. You don't ever do them without full light. You do them in the view of the light and God and yourself and every other believer.

And thirdly, notice in verse 7, the blood of Jesus always cleanses all sin, always. So we see three principles of our fellowship with God, it's eternal, we always walk in the light and the blood of Christ always cleanses all our sin. And then in verse 8 we saw the Nostics who denied this, and they came along and said they had no sin and of course, if they said that, they couldn't be in the true fellowship obviously. So then in verse 9, he gives that invitation. Remember we mentioned that last time. He says in effect, and this has many facets to it, but in effect he's saying if you counterfeit people would only realize that if you confess your sin, you know, if you'll acknowledge that you're sinners, which the Nostics denied, they denied sin, "if you'll acknowledge that you're sinners, God will be faithful and just

to forgive your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness."

You see that was an invitation. And so you see there's distinction here. Believers are always in fellowship, they always walk in the light, God always cleanses all their sin. That's the pattern of believing. We're never out of fellowship. We're never out of the light. We're never in a position where God isn't cleansing our sins.

You see some people have said that verse 9 means that if you don't confess, your sins aren't forgiven. That's not what it means. Other people say the only time God ever forgives is when you confess. That's not what it means. All your sins already have been forgiven, because you walk in the light. That's what it says remember in 2:12, "I write unto you little children because your sins are forgiven you."

So he's giving in verse 9 and invitation to an unbeliever and he's saying in effect, if you'll only realize that you must confess your sin, the God can forgive. But there's another facet here and I want you to see it. I want to add a footnote to verse 9. You know, verses in the Bible are like diamonds. You just think you've discovered the brilliant facet, and you turn it around and there's another one.

And all the...after all the hours and literal years that I have spent studying 1 John 1:9, I have discovered every day this week, something new about this verse. It's terribly frustrating, because you just get to the point where you think you've got it and some...the Spirit of God throws some whole new thing at you and it just flies off the page. Well, grab this one. This is not only an invitation to an unbeliever.

And if you're brain isn't in gear now, you're not even going to get the message, but it's not only idea to an unbeliever to stop being a counterfeit and admit your sin like the Nostics who were the heretics hanging around the people John was writing. It's not only to them that they might know that they need to confess their sins initially at the point of salvation to be forgiven. But this verse also has a continuous aspect that applies to a believer.

So if somebody says to me do you believer 1 John 1:9 is for a believer or an unbeliever, I'd say yes. Because it also, while it is an invitation to an unbeliever, it is also a characterization of a believer and what better way to give an invitation to an unbeliever than to characterize a true believer, right?

Now watch how this is a characterization of a true believer. Watch it, verse 9. "If we are confessing our sins, He is faithful and just to be forgiving us our sins and cleansing us for all unrighteousness." Now all those verbs are in a linear content and that means that they are continuous action. So there is a continuation process. It's not just once confessed, once forgiven, once cleanse, and that's it.

That's implied there obviously. That's the initiating of salvation. But there is also implied the possibility of continuation in these words. They could mean just once and I feel that initially that's what he's saying. He's saying that to the Nostics, you must come, acknowledge your sin, confess it, and that's the way you're forgiven and cleansed. But then in the linear Greek, there's also the continuation process which characterizes a believer.

Now hang on I want you to get this. We say then that it is not only an invitation to unbelievers, but it is a description of Christians. You say, well, how do you mean? How does this describe Christians? All right, this way, the counterfeit believers who've said they were in the fellowship, but weren't, and they were walking in the darkness, they were denying sin, right?

That's what he said back in verse 8 and he used the we there to. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." That's what the false ones were doing, denying sin. You know what true Christians do. They don't deny sin. Verse 9, what do they do? They confess sin.

Now hang on this is really beautiful. This is going to give you some insights into this. So this verse is also strategically important for a believer and it says this, that whereas an unbeliever is constantly denying sin, a believer is constantly confessing sin. Now watch this, it does not say he has to. It says he will. You see the difference? It is characterizing the believer. It is not a cause of forgiveness, it is an effect. The true Christian is not the one who denies sin, the true Christian is the one who just keeps on confessing them, right?

I had a guy who came to me one time at UCLA after I had spoken over there and he said...he said, "I don't believe you ever have to confess your sin. I take 1 John 1:9 purely to a...to an unbeliever, you never have to confess your sin." You don't have to. And he gave me this long lecture and all the verses. And I said, "I agree that it's for an unbeliever initially, but let me ask you this, just between you and me, do you confess your sins?"

He said, "why do you ask?" I said, "I just want to know." I said, "do you confess your sins?" He said, "yes, and that's what bothers me." You see it is not...it is first of all a requirement, but not for a believer, right? It's a requirement for an unbeliever. It is a result for a believer, you see. It's the most natural thing in the world for a believer to just confess.

When we do something wrong, it just kind of comes out. And you see the idea here is not if you confess on then on that basis you will be forgiven and if you don't confess sorry, you're sins not forgiven. That would send us to hell. And you know what, that would make salvation...a salvation by works, do you know that?

If you were saved by confessing your sin, that would be work. Continual, continual, continual, that'd be as bad as making sacrifices in the Old Testament. Your sins have already been cleansed, you do

never have to ask God to forgive them. Confession doesn't mean that. You never have to ask God to forgive your sins as a Christian, but you will because He has forgiven them, find yourself opening up your heart in confession to God.

You say what's confession? Simply this, acknowledging my sin to God. It's not begging Him to forgive it, He already has, hasn't He. 2:12, "Your sins are forgiven you for His name sake," That's done with. And so we don't have to confess to be forgiven, but we do confess because we are forgiven. Isn't that the way love works. Isn't it easier to open up and be honest with somebody you dearly love than it is to somebody who's your task master?

When we confess, it's because we know we violated God's grace see? And so it's in affect and not a cause. So when you look at 1 John 1:9, you see the basis of fellowship. The basis of fellowship initially is an initial confession where God forgives and cleanses all sin, right? And then that kind of confession becomes the pattern of life, not where we any longer need to ask to be forgiven, but where we're constantly by the very nature of our salvation opening up our hearts and admitting to God what we are. You see?

So it has both an immediate emphasis to an unbeliever and a continuous mark of a Christian. A Christian is one who is constantly acknowledging sin. And then he wraps it in verse 10, "On the other hand, if we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and His word is not in us." Now that can't be a believer. Can't be. That's the counterfeit again who's not willing to admit sin. Whereas the believer, in verse 9, is constantly willing to acknowledge his sin and say God I confess you and I thank You for already having, what, forgiven it. Right? Past tense.

There you have the basis of our fellowship. What is the basis of our fellowship? Salvation. And once we're in fellowship with God it is the pattern of our lives to acknowledge sin. That's the way Christians are. Not asking forgiveness, that's not confession. Not asking forgiveness necessarily, but simply acknowledging sin. Because we're already forgiven.

All right, now that's the basis of fellowship and that was a review. Secondly, the nature of fellowship. Now, the nature of fellowship and here we are leaving our fellowship with God and we're talking about our fellowship with the rest of the body of Christ. Will you remember this? Don't say I'm out of fellowship with the Lord. You're never out of fellowship with God. You're in a partnership with God that is eternal, all right?

When you say I'm out of fellowship, what you really mean is, you are missing the joy of that partnership and it may be that you are out of fellowship with other believers. You can never be out of fellowship with God, but you can sure violate the fellowship of other believers and be out of that fellowship in the sense of the joy of that. Although positionally, you're not even out of that fellowship are you?

Once you get into the body of Christ, how do you get out? No way. So once...once you establish that partnership with other believers, how do you get out of that? You don't. You're never out of fellowship. Now you may miss the joy of full...the full joy of that fellowship, but you're in it, because kiononia means partnership.

All right, the nature of fellowship, Acts Chapter 2, Chapter 2. And we're going to learn some just thrilling things here. The nature of fellowship, Acts 2:42. Now may I say this? Here we come to the experiential aspect of fellowship. That is on a level with each other. Fellowship with the Trinity is non-experiential. It's just something that God did and He made us partners with Himself and that's the way it is, it's a fact.

But our fellowship with each other, we really experience. We know what it is to have a warm loving fellowship with believers and we know what it is to miss the joy of that fellowship don't we. That's a really experiential thing. But in the purest sense our fellowship with God is a...is an established partnership. Although there is a sense in which it is also a joyous communion.

All right, in coming to Acts Chapter 2 and looking at the nature of fellowship, in one word the nature of fellowship is unity. That's the nature of fellowship. If you're taking notes, you want to put that word down. Unity is the nature of fellowship. Now verse 42, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers."

Now beginning at Pentecost they establish themselves in a fellowship. They were put into the body of Christ that fellowship was established. But then I'm talking mostly now about the experiential end of their fellowship, not so much the identification with the body of Christ, but the experiential end of their fellowship. They established it and it was a beautiful kind of fellowship in which they shared everything. They shared everything they had. It was a giving and receiving partnership.

Over in the 4th Chapter of Acts in the 32nd verse, "And the multitude of those that believe we're of one heart and of one soul, neither said any of them that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common." Isn't that great? They shared everything they had.

You know the results with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all. And here's the results, neither was there any among them that lacked for as many we're possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them down at the apostles feet and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. And Joseph who by the apostles was surname Barnabas, which is being interpreted the son of consolation, a Levite of the country of Cypress, having land sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles feet. And there's an illustration.

They had everything in common. This was a true fellowship where they shared in everything. In Philippians 4:15 says, "Now you Philippians know that at the beginning of the gospel when I departed fro Macedonia, no church shared with me as concerning, giving and receiving, but you only." And the word share there it's the same word. They...the church has actually had a part in Paul's ministry financially and this was part of the fellowship.

And so it was a sharing, a kiononeto, which means to share. Verse 44 then backing into Acts 2 again, verse 44, "And all that believe were together and had all things common and sold their possessions and goods and part of them to all men as every man had need. And they continued daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house. They'd eat their food with gladness and singleness of heart praising God and having favor with all the people and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

Now the early church was a...was a giving, receiving fellowship. Just constantly giving and receiving and this fellowship had a fantastic effect upon the world as many were brought to Christ. This was the oneness that Christ had prayed for and if the world could see this kind of oneness and this kind of love would be more readily convinced of the identity of Jesus Christ.

In Romans 15, for example, verse 26, Paul says, "It hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints who are Jerusalem." That means the wealthier church at Macedonia actually collected money to send to the poor people of Jerusalem. "It hath pleased them verily and their debtors they are for if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, there duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things."

In other words, if the gospel came from Israel, it's a good thing for the Gentiles to send a little of what they got back to Israel. So the whole thing was just a tremendous fellowship. Paul talks in Romans 1, I think it's verse 11, he says, "I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift." Then verse 12, "That I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith of you and me." So there was a real mutual love. A real togetherness in the Spirit of the early church.

Paul reflects on it in the 6$^{th}$Chapter of Galatians. I'll just read this. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fought, ye which are spiritual restore such a one," verse, "bear one another's burdens." Verse 6, "Let him that is taught in the word share with him that teacheth in all good things."

There was this commonness of bearing burdens and sharing needs and...and teaching those. If you knew something you imparted it to somebody else. So it was a fellowship of money and food and homes and prayer and love and spiritual blessing and teaching and the whole thing, all moving together in this kind of fellowship. And indeed a beautiful fellowship it was. And it was even...it was even as intimate as friendship.

And I think the apostle Paul...you know we think of Paul so often as a sort of a self-styled guy who really didn't need anybody. He could have just, you know, zipped through the world all by himself, but that's not really so. In verse 6 of 2 Corinthians 7, listen to what Paul says. "Nevertheless God who comforteth those that are cast down comforted us by the coming of Titus."

I mean, Titus just arriving where Paul was, just blessed his heart. Just fellowshipped with Titus. And then I love what he says in 2 Timothy 4:9, he says, "Do thy diligence," talking to Timothy, "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me." Then in verse 21, "Do they diligence to come before winter." You know, he really wanted to fellowship with Timothy. He cherished that kind of fellowship. He longed for it.

It was a love fellowship and Paul hungered for it. That early church had a commonness and a fellowship that was just beautiful. And certainly it reflected the words of Jesus when He established this love fellowship. Remember what He said? He said, "A new command I give you that you," what, "love one another." And this first fellowship was an experiential fellowship of love. And they just kind of basked in this fellowship. And what a beautiful, beautiful fellowship it was indeed.

In 1 Peter 1:22, listen to this, "Seeing that you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfamed love of the brethren, see that you love one another with a pure fervently." See that was the whole point of the fellowship was to create a love fellowship.

That's what the church was supposed to be. And you read the New Testament, you find one church that was that and that's the first letter to the Thessalonians. They had that. They had that kind of a church. It says this in verse 9, 1 Thessalonians 4:9, "But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you. For ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." They had it. They had that kind of love. And what a church they were. Why the Thessalonian church was the finest church of all the churches to which Paul wrote, because they had that love fellowship. A Spirit-filled loving fellowship was existing in that church.

That's really the nature of fellowship, unity, oneness, and we belong to each other for fellowship don't we. I not only need you to minister spiritual gifts, that's service, I also need you to just have fellowship with. We must meet in fellowship in order to minister to each other. Now you say what's fellowship? Is that like going to the class party? Well, no. Is it like meeting, having some kind of a meeting? Well, you know, it could be anything. It could be at the class party. It could be at church, can be anywhere. All it means is that you begin to get involved with each other and sharing love around the word of God in the energy of the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes you've been somewhere and you've come back and you've said, boy what a wasted evening, we didn't talk about anything but a whole lot of nothing. Other times you've been somewhere

and you've just fellowshipped in the word and the things of the Lord and the things in Christ and you've come away and you've just been warmed by that kind of fellowship.

In true fellowship, we don't judge one another. We don't bite. We don't devour. We don't provoke. We don't envy. We don't lie to one another. We don't speak evil. We don't grumble one against another. Those are all pulled out of the New Testament. But what do we do? True love builds up. True fellowship builds up. It means we receive one another, we're kind to one another, we're tender-hearted to one another, we forebear and forgive one another, we serve one another, we serve on another, we practice hospitality ungrudgingly to one another, we admonish one another, we instruct one another, we submit to one another and we comfort one another. That's true fellowship.

That's true fellowship, and the beautiful and glorious symbol of our fellowship is the communion table as we gather around it. That's what established it isn't it? Our faith in Christ who died establishing our fellowship first of all with God, non-experiential, factual fellowship and then put us into the kind of a warm experiential fellowship that we know with each other.

And so no wonder the early church was encouraged to come together around the Lord's table. The symbol of their non-experiential divine fellowship and also the time when they could lock their arms together and share in their experiential fellowship with each other.

All right, so the nature of fellowship is unity. Now again, remember, we're talking about fellowship with believers now, not with God. Of course, the fellowship with God is in the backgrounds, always.

All right, the danger to fellowship, thirdly. The danger to fellowship and it's very obvious in one word what the danger to fellowship is. What is it? Sin, sin is the danger to fellowship. Now even in...if we talk for a moment about my fellowship with God, I said that my fellowship with God is never broken. My kiononia is never broken because it's a partnership, right?

But since God is Holy, now watch this, since God is Holy, sin then though it does not eliminate the partnership, destroys the joy of that fellowship. You see? That's why John says, "I'm writing to you that your joy may be full." Sin is deadly to the joy of fellowship. In fact, when a believer is in sin, what's the one thing he doesn't want to do? He doesn't want to get anywhere near the things of God does he? Because he becomes so convicted.

So when sin comes in, he just completely loses the joy of communion with God and fellowship. And usually his prayer life goes, his Bible reading goes, he sort of drifts away from Christian...other Christians and their fellowship because he does not want to be confronted with God.

Sin is deadly to the joy of fellowship. You see if we sin, as believers, and by this I mean, the protracted kind of willful sin, if we do that then we have purposely broken trust with God, we have

willfully spurned His love, and though that does not break our fellowship, it destroys the joy of our fellowship.

And this is what Paul said in Philippians. He said I just want you to have the joy. Didn't he say that? I just want you to have joy. We have the fellowship. What miss is the joy of that fellowship. And isn't that the perfect word to describe what it's like when you're really experiencing the fullness of that fellowship? You just...it's just joy, see.

Now, if I sin that doesn't change God's love for me does it? It doesn't even mean I don't love Him, but it does mean I'm not walking in the joy of pure fellowship. The principle is obvious. If God is light and sin is darkness, then when we sin, the joy of that fellowship is lost.

And the principle of course is 2 Corinthians 6:14 and that's a principle that applies many places. It says this, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness. And what communion hath light with darkness. And what concord hath Christ with Beli-al or what hath...what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" And the principle is obvious. He's saying effect that, you know, light and darkness don't go together. Believer and unbeliever don't go together. Righteousness and unrighteousness don't go together, so naturally if I'm entertaining sin or doing the deeds of unrighteousness, I have then lost the joy of my partnership with God.

We are light, we are sons of the light, we always walk in the light. We are always in fellowship with God, but sometimes we miss the joy of that fellowship because of sin. Now, remember when you sin, it's never a question of love. Does that change His love for you? No, and sin is never a question of salvation. If you lost your salvation every time you sin, what good would salvation be? And it's never a question of fellowship, that's established. You're God's partner in this communion.

Sin is only a question of joy in that fellowship. Sin in my life breaks into the light and I can have no pure joy in my fellowship with God. Now the perfect illustrate of this is, and I want you to look at it, 1 Corinthians Chapter 10 and there's much more here than I'm going to dig into tonight, but I want to just give you some cursory thoughts. 1 Corinthians 10:16, this perfectly illustrates what sin does to our fellowship with God and with each other for that matter. 1 Corinthians 10:16, now what did we say is the physical symbol of our fellowship? Communion, right? When we meet around the Lord's table and we partake of the cup and the...and the bread we are symbolizing His death which is the basis.

Now the word communion, which we use so often is the same word kiononia. It's the exact same word it means fellowship, it means partnership. Same word exactly. So the symbol of our fellowship then is the Lord's table. All right, verse 16 of Chapter 10, "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?" In other words, when we're at communion, we're...we're experiencing our fellowship and

we're symbolizing it in the bread and the cup. Now, I want you to notice verse...let's see, let's go down to verse 20. "But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrificed, they sacrifice to devils or demons, and not to God." Now, "and I would not that ye should have fellowship with demons." Why?

Verse 21, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of demons." Now friends that's not the cannot of impossibility, that's the cannot of I can't believe it. See? That's the cannot of incongruity, not impossibility.

The apostle is saying you can't mean that...and they were doing it, that you're coming in here as believers celebrating communion, walking out of here and fellowshipping with demons. Right? But that's exactly what the Corinthians were doing. They were doing just exactly that. What are you trying to do? He says in verse 22? "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?" Now, the only reason you'd want to do that or the only excuse for doing that would be if you were stronger than the Lord. That's what he says. "Are we stronger than He and not afraid of Him?"

How could you Christians, how could you do it? Drink the cup of the Lord, celebrate your fellowship with Him and the go out and fellowship with demons. Now look over at Chapter 11, verse 27. Now he says, "Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup when you enter communion, if you do it unworthily, you'll be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." He's talking to believers here. You say what do you mean by that? Well, how could you possibly gather around the communion table and celebrate your fellowship with God when in fact you were actually on the other side fellowshipping with demons. That makes a mockery out of the cross doesn't it? A total mockery. That's...that's blasphemy to do that.

And so he says then, you'd better be careful, verse 28, "Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh not damnation, but judgment to himself not discerning the Lord's body." Well, how does God judge a believer who does that?

Well, look at verse 30, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep." Some of you even died. Some of the Corinthian believers had even died because of their misuse of the Lord's table. Now what am I trying to say here? Just this, the Lord's table is the common symbol of our fellowship because it symbolizes the cross, which brought us into the fellowship.

Now, when a believer was in sin, when a believer was living in a pattern of sin, he was thereby forbidden, right, to enter into this experience of communion. Why? Because his sin had violated all that the cross stood for. And his fellowship would have been a mockery. In fact, serious enough to cause his own death. To exalt the symbol of communion while denying the reality is ridiculous.

So sin robs of the joy of fellowship. In fact, it's so obvious that it does that, that here a believer who is in sin can't even participate in the symbol of fellowship, see? That's why he says boy before you ever take of the Lord's table, you better examine yourself and you better examine yourself carefully to be sure that you're not at the same time when you're saying I'm fellowshipping with God and celebrating that symbol on the other side of the fence celebrating or fellowshipping with demons.

Sin was such a danger to fellowship that those kind of people were restricted from even participating in communion. So sin is the danger, because it destroys the joy of fellowship. It breaks the joy of our fellowship with other believers as well as with the Lord. It shatters the unity of the body. Your sin effects me because it limits my fellowship. It limits the use of your gifts on behalf.

Sin destroys the whole concept of the body and the Christian can say well it doesn't bother me, I can go do what I want. It won't effect anybody else. That's not true. The fact that there's sin in a believers life causes a crippling of the body at that point, eliminating fellowship which is so needed. And the things, you know, I don't have to go over a list of sins, pride, lust, materialism, failure to minister your gifts, ceasing to pray, spiritual laziness, not yielding to the Holy Spirit, all these and every other sin, in a protracted sense, that is a continuous, it prolonged and made a pattern, then destroys fellowship.

Now, we all sin daily, but the sins that we do daily that are open in our lives and that we willingly acknowledge before God these kind of sins that do not become the pattern established in our lives, they don't effect the fellowship like that continual prolonged same sin or group of sins that you continue with, which destroys fellowship.

And I've always believed in my own life that if I sin immediately after that, if I acknowledge my sin to God and repent in Godly sorrow, that my fellowship and the joy of my fellowship is totally unbroken. But when that sin persists then the joy of fellowship is destroyed.

So repentance really is necessary for the joy of your fellowship. Well, these are just some basic thoughts. Let me look at a verse here in 2 Corinthians 7:9, listen to this. Now the Corinthians have sinned and listen to what Paul says, "Now I rejoice not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance, for ye were made sorry after a godly manner. That ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance."

Now, verse 11, "For behold this very same thing, that ye sorrowed with a godly sort, that you sorrowed after a godly sort," now watch this, "what carefulness it wrought in you." Isn't that good? When a believer willingly sees his sin and with godly sorrow repents and acknowledges, not asking for forgiveness, that's done, acknowledging it and repenting of it, why it makes him so careful because it keeps him aware of what's happening in his life. "What carefulness that wrought in you."

In other words, to take care, to hit sin right when it hits you and to bring it before the Lord. So repentance opens the joy of fellowship. Well, there's so much more to say and I'm kind of hurrying over a lot of things. The danger to fellowship is sin without repentance, see? As long as there's a willingness to repent and acknowledge it in godly sorrow, it's...then it doesn't effect the fellowship, the joy of fellowship I mean. It does not effect the joy of fellowship as long as there's a willingness to repent in a godly sorrow.

What then is the danger to our fellowship? It's sin. Sin was so much a danger to fellowship, to the purity of fellowship, to the joy of fellowship that a believer in sin was not even to partake of the symbol of fellowship which was communion, but rather to examine himself lest he make a mockery out of that symbol.

Then we've seen that the nature of our fellowship is unity, the basis is salvation. Now let's look just last at the responsibilities of fellowship, and then we'll tag it off in a moment.

The responsibilities of fellowship are to minister to each other, to minister to each other. Now this is a great area of importance to the believer to be able and willing to minister to each other. The basis of fellowship was provided by God, in salvation the nature of fellowship designed by God, unity. And here the responsibility of fellowship is given to us.

God takes care of the basis of it. God takes care of the nature of it and God even takes care of the sin problem and the responsibility of fellowship is ours and we're talking about fellowship among believers now. You say what is our responsibility in fellowship?

What is to be our obligation to other believers in terms of fellowship? How do we maintain it with other believers? Well, first of all, we've already seen that we make sure we have sin constantly in terms of our own lives brought before the Lord, acknowledged, confessed, and repented of.

But then apart from that, we maintain fellowship by doing certain things for other believers. And I'm just going to briefly go down these thoughts. The first thing we do is confess our faults one to another, James 5:16. And the word fault is the word amartia, it is the biblical word for sin. One way in which you maintain the fellowship of the body of Christ is to confess your sins to other Christians.

Now that might rattle your cage a little bit. But that's a tremendous concept. Can you just imagine, can you get a hold of it in your brain, what a depth of honesty and beauty and understanding would be brought to our fellowship if we could openly share our sins. If we could know that not only were we sharing our sins, but the guy who we're sharing was saying gee, that's amazing. That's the same problem I've got. And then the fact that we knew each other had that problem, how much more intelligently could we pray and minister to each other.

But instead we put a little glass bubble around ourselves and we all look like super saints. See, like we didn't have one single, solitary problem in the world. And we're not even willing to openly share, to expose our sins and our temptations to one another, but just get down together and say this is my problem and this my need and this is what's going on in my life and this is where Satan's beating me down and have somebody put his arm around us and say, you know, that's the same thing I'm going through in my life. You pray for me and I'll pray for you and every time you sin, you start to see that temptation, you think of all those people that you've shared with who have the same problem and it gives you some kind of a...of an undergirding with which to withstand the temptation of Satan.

Listen, James knew what he was talking about when he said, "confess your faults to one another." That's the greatest psychological therapy there is. And it's also a tremendous preventative to sin to know that everybody knows that's your problem.

And somewhere along the line we need to break through the isolation and crucify our egos and begin to share and to confess our faults one to another. You notice there's no priesthood here don't you? Except the priesthood of believers. You just confess your faults one to another.

And particularly if you've wrong some brother. If you've wrong some brother in Christ, then it's strategic that you go to him. Matthew Chapter 5:23 says, "Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way. First be reconciled to thy brother and then come offer thy gift."

In other words, you know, don't pay homage to God until you have made everything right with other believers. Whether you're sharing your sin with a believer or whether or you're going to a brother whose wrong, you, isn't that interesting, find somebody who doesn't like you and make it right. Say nothing to the ones that you don't like.

Confession of sin to each other maintains fellowship. And I'll tell you folks, very honestly, the purity of fellowship at that level will be exciting and thrilling to build a common bond of people who knew and loved each other and understood each other's needs and anxieties and temptations and sin, we would find out that we are all cut out of the identical same mold. And what strength we'd find in that kind of community.

Second thing, not only do we confess our faults one to another, but we forgive one another. And some people have a hard time doing that. You hear people say well, if somebody ever did that to me, I'd never forgive them. Well, you hear that all the time. Well, that's no virtue. People think they're so super moral, because they wouldn't forgive. That's really great. Why I'd never forgive anybody of that thing. All that does is sound worse. It's no kind of morality not to forgive, it's the greatest kind to forgive.

2 Corinthians 2:6, this is good. "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment," isn't that good, he's got enough problems just because he did the sin without you holding it over his head the rest of his life, "so that on the contrary," verse 7, "you ought to forgive him and comfort him lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with over much sorrow. Wherefore I beseeched you that you would confirm your love toward Him." Isn't that good?

I mean, after all if the guy is taken in a sin, he's going to have enough problems with the consequent of sin, isn't he? Without you playing God and holding it over his head, go to him, forgive him. That's a beautiful thought. Paul adds to that thought another in Colossians 3:13, "Forbearing one another and forgiving one another if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you," you like that? You think you deserve to be forgiven by Christ? No way.

Isn't it interesting how we allow Christ to forgive us and we accept that with great joy and then we hold something over somebody's head, you see? Forgive, forgive. Boy what a...what this does for a fellowship. This is the balance of confession isn't it? When somebody comes and confesses, then you've got to be willing to forgive. If somebody comes to you and says I just want you to know for ten years, I've hated you, everything about you. I've been playing with the books in your business and I've robbed you blind.

What's your reaction? It should be a reaction of forgiveness. You get that kind of mutual concern in the body of Christ and something's going to happen. There's a third thing that we do as a responsibility, that is to bear one another's burdens.

Galatians 6:2 says, "Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." You say well, I do. I'm on the prayer chain. Well, that's good. Real good. You know something folks, you can't bear somebody's burdens if they don't share them with you, you know that?

And it's always the kind of a burden that's sort of weigh...you know, it's a hospital burden I call them. Lots of hospital burdens, but nothing really intimate. Do we ever get open enough to share? How can I carry your burdens if you won't tell me? How can you carry my burdens if I won't tell you. You see that's why we've got to start by confessing our faults, forgiving each other and then carrying each other's burdens. Isn't that beautiful? Just bearing them. Just carrying them.

Sympathetic, loving care for one another. If you don't share your burdens, you lose out on this aspect of our fellowship. Now there's another thing we're to do and that's to rebuke sin in one another. Ephesians 5:11, just listen to this. You see a believer sinning, what should you do? Don't say anything to them? You don't want to embarrass them? Who are you to talk to him? No, no, no, Ephesians 5:11, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather," what, "reprove them."

If you see a brother who is sinning you have the spiritual obligation to tell him so in love. Absolutely, absolutely. This is a serious thing. In 1 Timothy 5:20, it says this, "Them that sin," watch this, "rebuke before all, that others also may fear." Can you imagine that? Can you imagine me coming in here on Sunday night and saying all right, Mr. So and So come up here?

And saying now I want to tell you what you did and rebuking him. You know what would happen if we lived in a kind of a fellowship where we were aware that that was a possibility? It'd tend to shape us up. And most of us are so afraid, we see somebody doing something wrong, we just gasp and hide so they won't see that we're in the same place.

Somebody will come to me and say, "you know, I don't know if you've heard, but so and so drinks." And I'll say "well, have you talked to them about it." "Oh me?" You know, "I've got my own problems." Listen if you see a brother in a sin, but just remember he has the mutual obligation to do the same for you.

You see the whole point of all of this is just to get us to open up and be ourselves to each other and really share what we are isn't it? I need to be rebuked, I really do. And so do you sometimes don't you? I need somebody to say to me, you know, you shouldn't do that. That doesn't please God. I need that. We need to be willing to rebuke the sin in each other.

Titus 1:13, "This testimony is true," Paul said to Titus, "Wherefore rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith." Listen you find somebody that teaches false doctrine what do you do? Tell them so. Tell them so. I told you that's why I haven't ventured up enough courage to go to the local ministerial meeting yet.

Titus 2:15, "These things speak and exhort and rebuke with all authority and let no man despise thee." Right? You do it and don't let men despise you for it. Do it, rebuke sin. The Christian who is Spirit-filled under the responsibilities of fellowship has the absolute right to go to a sinning brother and openly before whoever else is there rebuke him for his sin.

And that leads to pure fellowship. That purifies the ranks. Then there's another thing and we're coming to an end, we must restore that sinning brother. Galatians 6:1, "If a brother be overtaken in a fault," what, "restore such in one in love taking heed to your own self, lest you also be tempted."

So once rebuke and it's time to restore him. Pick him up and say now let me show you from the word of God what's going on. Let's have prayer together. Let's get back on the right track. Let's go. You see what this is? This is caring for him, isn't it? This isn't super-sanctimonious walking around just, you know, looking over your nose to find everybody who was doing something wrong.

This is going to somebody rebuking him and then putting your arm around him or her and saying now let me show you in the word of God what we need to do and let's pray together and let's make it right. You haven't done your duty if all you've done is rebuke. You need to restore and do it in love. You rebuke in authority. You restore in love.

And the sixth thing, and I'll just mention because we preached on it in our series on Romans is to be sure you take special care for the weaker brother, right? You don't want to offend that weaker brother. Special care for the weaker brother.

So what are we to do in order that...what other responsibilities of fellowship? To maintain the fellowship of the body, confess, forgive, bear each other's burdens, rebuke, and then after we've rebuked, what do we do? Restore and then we watch out especially caring for that weaker brother.

To that list that which is very partial, I want to add one thought and I'm not going to talk about it. I had planned to, but I'll just mention it. To the individual responsibility which we've talked about, all those are individual responsibilities. There's one responsibility the church has in the case of sin and that is to discipline the individual. The church has every right as a body, when someone is continuing in sin in the body, to put that person right out of the church.

Paul told the Corinthians to deliver such and one to Satan. Paul even told Timothy that he was delivering Hymenaeus and Alexander to Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme. A sinning believer is not the...you're not supposed to say well, I know you're in sin. Get him into church so you'll get the word.

Oh no. You don't even want him in the fellowship. A believer who is in sin, should be put out of the fellowship, in order that he might be buffeted by Satan and brought to the place of repentance that God might deal in his life and that he does not corrupt the fellowship. Why we're...you're...first...Matthew 18, you're supposed to go to them, and then you go in two or three witnesses, then you bring him before the congregation. If all that fails, you come to the other principles of Paul and you put him out.

You do not tolerate sin. Not at all. They are eliminated from the experience of fellowship. Now the early church put them out in two ways. Number one, they eliminated them from the Lord's table, and number two, they put them out of the fellowship of other believers. They're still believers, still Christians, but they are removed lest they taint the purity of the fellowship.

So the church has a responsibility in maintaining fellowship to maintain discipline, discipline. Well, we sum it all up. What is the result of fellowship? Fellowship with God that is pure, fellowship with other believers that is pure. What's the result? One word. Joy, that's the result. Praise God for fellowship.

Praise God.

True, honest, genuine fellowship and we have it in Christ. If we'll only begin to take the responsibilities to make it what God designed it to be.

Father we thank you. We thank you for all that You taught us in this...in these principles and all that You mean to us. We thank you for fellowship, first of all, that with You, we're never out of fellowship, an unbroken one. And then Father we thank you also for the experiential fellowship that we share with other believers. God may we strive to keep that fellowship pure by confessing our sins to each other, forgiving each other, bearing each other's burdens. By rebuking, by restoring, by lifting up that weaker brother, and even as a church by exercising discipline that we might maintain the purity of the fellowship.

That our joy might be full. Even as Paul said, "we might be like-minded with a total joy in our fellowship." To this end we pray Lord for your glory, Christ's name. Amen.

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