

Christ Is Having Fellowship With Us

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Introduction:

When we speak of fellowship we usually think of our having fellowship with each other. And truly that is one form of fellowship. Or we may even elevate our thoughts higher to another form of fellowship – fellowship with God and Christ. Both kinds of fellowship are biblical. As John wrote, "...that you may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).¹ But there is another realm of fellowship that remains untouched and untapped by some, and that is the reality of Jesus Christ personally having fellowship with us. This Bible conference is bringing to light many of the present activities of the Living Christ. I have been assigned the topic of how Christ is maintaining fellowship with the saved and my assigned text is

1 Corinthians 1:9, "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

Notice that we were *called* by a faithful God into this fellowship of Christ. Just as Paul was called to be an apostle of Christ (v.1) and the church was called to be saints (v. 9), so we were called into the fellowship of Christ. God wants us to have fellowship with His Son and Christ wants to have fellowship with all whom God has called. Thomas a Kempis (1380-1571) said, "All his glory and beauty come from within, and there he delights to dwell, his visits there are frequent, his

conversations sweet, his comforts refreshing, and his peace passing all understanding." It is this kind of fellowship that Christ wants to enjoy with all those who have confessed Him as the Son of God and have made Him their Lord.

There is no doubt but what the Living Christ desires to have fellowship with us more than His own want to have fellowship with Him. This truth must make Him sad. If He wept over Jerusalem, crying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... How often I wanted to gather your children together ... but you were not willing!" (Luke 13:34), then does He not weep over those who are not willing to be gathered to Him today? Henry Benjamin Whipple (1822-1901) observed, "All we want in Christ, we shall find in Christ. If we want little, we shall find little. If we want much, we shall find much; but if, in utter helplessness, we cast our all on Christ, he will be to us the whole treasury of God." What treasures await those who find their all in the fellowship of Christ!

Fellowship – what is it? The Greek word, of course, is *koinonia*. It means "partnership," "communion," "fellowship." A marriage takes two partners. Communion is sharing together. Fellowship is not a lone existence. In fact, *fellowship with Christ is the sole means of spiritual life!* Jesus is the true vine and we are the branches. There is vital union. There is a sense of being connected. Jesus declared, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide

in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and *I in him*, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:4,5). Because we are branches and He is the vine, we need Him more than He needs us. But He wants us! He desires us! Did you catch it? He said it twice. “I in you.” “I in them.” Christ wants to have fellowship with us. Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) confessed, “I have a great need for Christ; I have a great Christ for my need.” And so do you and I! We are privileged to be “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). We can partake much or we can partake little. How much do you want of Christ? He wants all of you!

Christ lives in us. Paul testified, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, *but Christ lives in me*; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me: (Galatians 2:20). There are three “me’s” in this passage. (1) Christ loves me. (2) Christ gave Himself for me. (3) Christ lives in me! Say it with me: “Christ lives in me!” Phillips Brooks (1835-1893) said, “Feed on Christ, and then go and live your life, and it is *Christ in you* that lives your life, that helps the poor, that tells the truth, that fights the battle, and that wins the crown.” The Christian life is really the Christ life – Christ in me!

Christ in us, having fellowship with us, enjoying fellowship with us, maintaining fellowship with us, is the secret to successful Christian living!

First, this vital truth is seen in the teaching of Christ Himself.

- “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, *I am there in the midst of them*” (Matthew 18:20). The context is prayer. Christ inhabits the prayers of His people. He is in our midst. That fact should quicken our hearts, increase our praise, govern our thoughts, and temper our behavior.
- “At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, *and I in you*. He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and *I will love him and*

manifest Myself to him. Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, ‘Lord, how is it that You will *manifest Yourself to us*, and not to the world?’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, *and We will come to him and make Our home with him*” (John 14:20-23). Could anything be clearer? Jesus wants to make His home with us! He wants to be “at home” with us. Can we say, “Make Yourself at home”? Have you any room for Jesus?

- “Abide in Me, and *I in you*. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, *and I in Him*, bears much fruit; for without me you can do nothing” (John 15:4,5). John Henry Jowett (1864-1923) noted, “We get no deeper into Christ than we allow Him to get into us.” Christ wants to make His home with us but He will not knock the door down to gain entrance. He is a gentleman, not a battering ram. Without His inner presence life is an utter failure.
- “That they may be one just as We are one; *I in them*, and You in Me ... that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, *and I in them*” (John 17:23,26). Jesus Christ enjoyed unbroken fellowship with His Father, and He desires that same unbroken fellowship with us when He says, “*I in them*.” This prayer was uttered just 12 hours before going to the cross, so it must have been important to Him. Is it important to us?

Second, this vital truth is seen in the teaching of the apostles.

- “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of *Christ*, he is not His. *And if Christ is in you*, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness” (Romans 8:9,10). Paul declared that the Spirit of Christ dwells in us. He reminded the church in Rome:

“Christ is in you.” An ancient hymn attributed to St. Patrick puts it this way:

*Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.*

*Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all who love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.*

- “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, *that Jesus Christ is in you?* – unless you are disqualified. But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified” (2 Corinthians 13:5,6). To be “in the faith” is to know that Jesus Christ is in you. He is the object of our faith. In fact, Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. Paul prayed for the believers in Ephesus “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (Ephesians 3:17). “Dwell” means “to house permanently.” Christ desires permanent residence in our hearts. He enters by our faith and He remains by our faith. To be in the faith is to know that Christ is within.
- “To them [i.e., the saints] God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is *Christ in you, the hope of glory*” (Colossians 1:27). A saint knows that Christ is in his or her life. Because Christ is our only hope of glory. “When all my labors and trials are o’er, and I am safe on that beautiful shore, just to be near the dear Lord I adore will through the ages be glory for me. O that will be glory for me ... when by His grace I shall look on His face, that will be glory, be glory for me” (Charles Gabriel). With Edward Mote I say, “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus’ name. On

Christ, the Solid Rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand.”

- “For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’” (Hebrews 13:5). Our Lord will not leave us in the lurch. Our Friend who sticks closer than a brother will not forsake us in our hour of need. Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661) said, “Jesus Christ came into my prison cell last night, and every stone flashed like a ruby.” Paul experienced this first-hand. “At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom” (2 Timothy 4:16-18). My friend and brother C. Y. Kim spent two-and-a-half years in a cold and lonely Korean prison cell. He was hungry, cold, and alone. Or was he? One night, when he felt like he was freezing to death, he felt heat on his shoulder. He looked around. No one was there. The heat increased, flooding his entire body with warmth. Brother Kim cried, “Lord, is that you, is that you?” I have no doubt but what our Lord Jesus Christ was in that prison cell with Brother Kim!
- “Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, *and He in him*. And by this we know that *He abides in us*, by the Spirit whom He has given us” (1 John 3:23,24).
- “By this we know that we abide in Him, *and He in us*, because He has given us of His Spirit ... Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God” (1 John 4:13,15). Tom Graffagnino put it this way in his poem “Tiny Stranger in a Manger.” *“Born in flesh that we might know Him; Son and Father coincide...Holy Spirit fans love’s ember. God with us still seeks His Bride.”*

Third, this vital truth is also seen in the analogy of marriage, the most intimate of all human relationships.

- “Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, *that you may be married to another – to Him who was raised from the dead*, that we should bear fruit to God” (Romans 7:4). Every Christian, even if married, is “married to another” – to Christ, who was raised from the dead that we might bear fruit to God. Baptism has been called the believer’s wedding ceremony, Why? Because “we have been united together in the likeness of His death” (Romans 6:5).
- “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For ‘the two,’ He says, ‘shall become one flesh.’ *But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him*” (1 Corinthians 6:15-17). The word for “joined” is the word from which we get “glue.” We are to stick like glue to Christ for we have been joined together. And what God has joined together let no man separate!
- “For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2). We are pledged (promised) to one, Christ. “I am His and He is mine, His banner over me is love.” He is the bridegroom, we are His bride. He is the Christ, we are His church. We are subject to Christ. He is the King, we are His kingdom. When I worked in a grocery store I learned that the customer is always king. Christ is always king. “King of my life I crown Thee now, Thine shall the glory be” (Jennie Evelyn Hussey).

Fourth, this vital truth is illustrated by the biblical analogy of the body, the church.

- Jesus, the head of the church, does not exist without a body. “For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body *in Christ*” (Romans 12:5). Christ seeks fellowship with His body, the church. He gave Himself for her. He longs to hear her praise, her prayers, her petitions. “I love Thy Church, O God!” That is true, but Christ loves her more than we do!
- “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, *so also is Christ*” (1 Corinthians 12:12). I like what Adah Hutchcraft wrote concerning this verse on her Website. “This text plainly affirms that the church is one with Christ... The reference to the church as Christ’s ‘body’ is a term of incarnation... Christ is no longer in the flesh, but the church is and she manifests the person of Christ... The church is the continuation of the story of salvation; She is Christ in the flesh... May the church never forget who she is, whose she is, and where she is going.” Amen, Adah.
- “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually” (1 Corinthians 12:27). We are individuals but not independent of His body and its other members, all who have a gift and a function and a ministry.
- “For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones” (Ephesians 5:30). What does this mean? Not only are we members of His blessed body but also of His flesh and His bones. I realize that the last seven words are omitted in many translations, but I think there is some rich symbolism here. The name “Eve” indicates she was “taken from man.” She was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. Then she was given to man (that is, to Adam). So the church is taken from Christ and given to Christ (who is the second Adam). If it had

not been for the body of Christ nailed to the cross there would be no church of Christ. "No bride fit for the King of heaven could have sprung from the earth. As Eve came from the opened side of Adam, so figuratively the Church springs from the pierced side of Jesus" (Pulpit Commentary).

I like what John Bunyan (1628-1688) said of Christ's sacrifice (I have updated the English he used). "He wrestled with justice, that you might have rest; He wept and mourned, that you might laugh and rejoice; He was betrayed, that you might go free; was apprehended that you might escape; He was condemned, that you might be justified; and was killed, that you might live; He wore a crown of thorns, that you might wear a crown of glory; and was nailed to the cross with His arms open wide, to show with what freeness of all His merits shall be bestowed on the coming soul, and how heartily He will receive him into His bosom."

Conclusion:

Is the concept of Christ having fellowship with you foreign to your thinking? Do you know that Christ is in you? Does He dwell in your heart by faith? Thomas a Kempis said, "Give place to Christ, but deny entrance to all others, for when you have Christ you are rich and He is sufficient for you. Christ remains forever, standing firmly with us to the end." The key is to "give place to Christ." A song we used to sing in Christian service camp contained these words. "Give of your best to the Master; give Him first place in your heart; give Him first place in your service, consecrate every part."

After all, our life is hidden with Christ so we cannot be self-absorbed. Christ has absorbed us. Paul declared, "For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3). People should not see us. They should see Christ. When I stepped into the airport terminal of Warsaw, Poland, on a cold, gray day in November 1990, I saw a dull mass of faces. There were no smiles, no joy, and no cheer. But one face in the crowd stood out like a beacon in the night. It was Brother Kostek, a man who is now closer

than a brother to me. I had never seen him before but I recognized him by the glow of Christ.

Christ offers Himself to us as bread and wine is offered to a weary traveler. Did He not promise, "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in Him?" (John 6:56). John Spencer (1630-1693) put it this way. "Christ is full and sufficient for all His people. He is bread, wine, milk, living water, to feed them. He is a garment of righteousness to cover and adorn them. He is a Physician to heal them, a Counselor to advise them, a Captain to defend them, a Prince to rule, a Prophet to teach, a Priest to make atonement, a husband to protect, a father to provide, a brother to relieve, a foundation to support, a root to quicken, a head to guide, a treasure to enrich, a sun to enlighten, and a fountain to cleanse." Jesus is the all-sufficient Christ!

The all-sufficient, never-failing living Christ is here to have fellowship with us today. Paul said, "For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, *that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him*" (1 Thessalonians 5:9,10). Did you catch that? He wants to live with us in our waking hours! Life with Christ will be rich in Heaven, but He intends for it to be an enriching experience while we still inhabit this earth. The Christian life means living together with Christ. One of our most loved hymns expresses this truth. "And He walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own; and the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known" (C. Austin Miles).

How strong is this desire of the Living Christ to have fellowship with His own? Get this. The worst of all the churches received the best of all His promises. Christ told the church of the Laodiceans, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me." Dining with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! Who in their right mind would turn down a "state dinner" like this? And here is the beauty of it all. We can hear His voice every day. We can sit down with Him every day. We can dine with Christ every day. If we "give place to Christ."

In the classic book *The Imitation of Christ*, Thomas a Kempis wrote a chapter titled “The Intimate Friendship of Jesus.” Permit me to cite a few lines in closing. “When Jesus is near, all is well and nothing seems difficult. When He is absent, all is hard. Did not Mary rise at once from her weeping when Martha said to her: ‘The Master is come, and calleth for thee?’ Happy is the hour when Jesus calls one from tears to joy of spirit.

“How dry and hard you are without Jesus! How foolish and vain if you desire anything but Him! Is it not a greater loss than losing the whole world? For what, without Jesus, can the world give you? *Life without Him is a relentless hell, but living with Him is a sweet paradise.* The man who lives without Jesus is the poorest of the poor, whereas no one is so rich as the man who lives in His grace.”

Jesus Christ will not fail you. Never once in the history of the universe has He failed any true believer that lives in unbroken fellowship with Him. Listen to

this stirring testimony of that prince of biblical expositors, Charles Spurgeon.

“True have his promises been; not one has failed. I want none beside Him. In life He is my life, and in death He shall be the Death of death. In poverty, Christ is my riches; in sickness, He makes my bed; in darkness, He is my star. He is the Manna of the camp in the wilderness, and He shall be the New Corn of the host when they come to Canaan. Jesus is to me all grace and no wrath, all truth and no falsehood; and of truth and grace He is full, infinitely full.”

Thank God that Christ is maintaining fellowship with us today!

Preached by Victor Knowles, August 9, 2007 at the Refreshing Waters Renewal, Carl Junction, Mo. Victor Knowles is founder and president of POEM (Peace on Earth Ministries), P. O. Box 275 Joplin, MO 64802. www.poeministries.org or <http://honeyfromtherock.poeministries.org>

(Footnotes)

¹ All Scriptures, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New King James Version © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.