

# The Church: A Fellowship of Believers

Acts 2:36-47

# The Church: A Fellowship of Believers

- The Gospel is preached for the first time
  - Acts 2:36-40 - “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. 37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 38 Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call. 40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, Be saved from this perverse generation.”

# The Church: A Fellowship of Believers

- A fellowship called the Church is born
  - Acts 2:41 - “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.”

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- When the Law of Moses was given, 3,000 were divided and killed for their disobedience
  - Ex. 32:25-28 - “Now when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to their shame among their enemies), 26 then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, Whoever is on the LORD'S side-come to me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him. 27 And he said to them, Thus says the LORD God of Israel: Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor. 28 So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day.”
- However, at the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, 3,000 were saved and united by their obedience

# The Church: A Fellowship of Believers

- Salvation began with faith -- belief in God and obedience to His will.
- Worship of God by the church began with fellowship with one another through the word of God

# The Church: A Fellowship of Believers

- Acts 2:42-47 - “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

# The Church: A Fellowship of Believers

- Just as there is no salvation without faith in and obedience to God, there is no church without fellowship with each other through the word of God

# The Church: A Fellowship of Believers

- An individual Christian's fellowship in the local church and with individual disciples is also answered by him at the personal level
- Fellowship exists when we share common principles and practices
  - Love for God, His word, His children, and all of His creation
  - Faithful obedience to His word, working for His Son, and serving one another
- Fellowship does not exist when we do not share common principles and practices



# The Church: A Fellowship of Believers

- If I am walking in the light, and you are walking in the light, we are in fellowship with one another
- If you or I depart from the light, we are not in fellowship with one another
  - We are discussing the individual's fellowship with a local church, not the local church extending fellowship to an individual Christian

# The Church: A Fellowship of Believers

- 1John 1:1-7 - “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life-- 2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us-- 3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. 4 And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. 5 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

# The Church: A Fellowship of Believers

- What Is Fellowship? Let the Bible define itself - 2Cor. 6:14-16
  - Yoked - implies a common work
  - Fellowship - denotes sharing in action
  - Communion - normal word for fellowship
  - Concord - implies harmony of thought
  - Portion - having a part together with others
  - Agreement - a union of purpose
- Hence, universal agreement in principle leading to joint or common action in spiritual work

# Fellowship In Suffering

- Phil. 3:10 - "...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death"
  - Paul in fellowship with Christ illustrates how that disciples in a local church can share in the same difficulty, bear with its duration together, and commonly engage the solution to it

# Fellowship In Suffering

- 1Peter 4:12-13 - “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.”
- Heb. 10:32-33 - “But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: 33 partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated”

# Fellowship In Suffering

- 2Cor. 1:3-7 - “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. 6 Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. 7 And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.”
- Gal. 6:1-2 - “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

# Fellowship In Suffering

- Each shared common principle and action
- We have fellowship in suffering when we suffer together for principles and actions commanded by God
- Our fellowship is with Christ and the faithful who also suffer with Him
- Fellowship does not exist if we do nothing to share in it, or we are the cause of the affliction

# Fellowship In Benevolence

- Rom. 12:4-8, 13 - “For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness... 13 ...distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.”



# Fellowship In Benevolence

- Based on common faith and action in Christ
  - Benevolence from local church is limited to saints and is a form of fellowship
  - Because it implies collective fellowship may have something to do with why it is limited to saints
- Benevolence from individual members to saints is fellowship
  - Gal. 6:10 - “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

# Fellowship In The Local Work

- 1Cor. 12:20-27 - “But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. 22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. 23 And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, 24 but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, 25 that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”

# Fellowship In The Local Work

- Eph. 4:11-16 - “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”
- Gal. 6:6 - “Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.”

# Fellowship In The Teaching

- Philemon 4-7 - “I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, 5 hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, 6 that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. 7 For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.”
- Gal. 2:7-9 - “But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter 8 (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), 9 and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.”

# Fellowship In The Teaching

- Origin of commonality is provided by God: A common message, shared in common by the people of God who agree on the principles and share in the practice
- When we apply common principles and practices as Christians, that is fellowship
- It will define the fellowship between an individual and the local church, as well as between individuals within the local church