

FELLOWSHIP IN CHRIST (1)

BY KEITH GREER

Fellowship is a Bible subject that has been, and continues to be, abused and misunderstood. In our day, the ecumenical thinking that abounds advocates fellowship among warring, factious, competing churches and faiths. Religious groups can hold to different doctrines, as well as believe and practice various things, yet still maintain fellowship. Not only is such reasoning shallow, it is wholly devoid of true understanding of fellowship and what it is about.

The majority of modern religious thinkers long ago rejected God's definition and teaching regarding fellowship. How can those who accept Christ's authority fellowship others who believe authority resides in the pope and the Roman Catholic Church? We may think this is possible, but we need to consider whether God agrees! If one party withdraws from the paths of truth, is it possible to have fellowship between both parties?

What is the meaning of the term Christian fellowship? Even among God's people, this subject is often misunderstood. Many people think fellowship is chicken dinners, wiener roasts, picnics, parties, ice cream socials, coffee and donuts, and a host of other pleasant activities that bring people together. But Biblical fellowship is far removed from such actions. Let's define the term:

“Companionship, company; a community of interest, activity; state of being a fellow or associate; a company of equals; comradeship, partnership, joint participation, communion.”

To develop a clearer understanding, we examine some of the terms the Apostle Paul used in his epistles—fellow-servants, fellow-soldiers, fellow-citizens, fellow-heirs, fellow-workers, fellow-helpers, fellow-laborers, and fellow-prisoners. Do any of these terms pertain to the types of activities mentioned above? Christians enjoy joint participation in doing God's will and faithfully serving His cause—not our own. This is the ONLY type of fellowship that binds hearts together. *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”* {Acts 2:42} Notice what Paul said the other apostles had done, *“gave to me and*

Barnabas the right hand of fellowship,” {Galatians 2:9} The fellowship of which he spoke involved preaching the gospel to people who were lost and dying in sin.

Fellowship with the Father and the Son. *“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.” {1 John 1:3} Continue reading John’s words: “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 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.” {1 John 3:6,7} God’s children have true fellowship with the Father and the Son. Notice that we can also have fellowship with one another, but by walking in darkness, we can void such fellowship. Only by being in fellowship with the Father and the Son does one have continuing access to Christ’s blood. Each Christian wanting to know whether they can be in “fellowship” with another Christian must first ask this question: **IS THIS PERSON IN FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD?** The answer to this question will answer the other question about our fellowship with this particular Christian. One’s fellowship with God always determines the status concerning fellowship with other Christians.*

In the next article, we will discuss the three things that must be present if we are to have true Biblical fellowship with God and with one another. Failure to achieve any of the three points makes true Biblical fellowship impossible. ***