

"What A Fellowship"

December 15, 2019

I Corinthians 1:1-9

Thank you for joining me today as we come before the LORD and His word. And thank you for opening your Bible with me to two places: II Corinthians chapter four and I John chapter one.

According to the book "Jesus And the Gospels" by Craig Blomberg, the Jewish population inside the Roman Empire would have been about four million; and about 700,000 living in the land of Israel.

The average family in those day lived in a one-room, two story home; generally above their stable. And Jewish families often included grandparents. As well, most Jewish families lived on two meals per day, mostly bread. And, nearly 70 per cent of the Roman Empire consisted of people living in poverty; primarily farmers, shepherds, fishermen, and herdsmen; but also those who served the Roman government in the military or as tax collectors.

The disciples; generally speaking, would have been very poor. If you added together the Jewish Temple taxes and the variety of Roman taxes; that would have taken approximately 50 per cent of their earnings in a year. [Found on <https://bj-stockman.wordpress.com/> "Everyday Life in the Time of Jesus of Nazareth by B. J. Stockman].

And, yet, it must have been quite amazing to be around Jesus when He was here on earth; to see how He interacted with the Jewish leaders, the Roman officials, and the common people. They watched Him heal and they heard Him teach and they watched Him deal with the all sorts of people.

Well, is there any difference in the relationship the Apostles had with Jesus in those days and the relationship Christians have with Him today?

Look with me now at II Corinthians 4:18 "*While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*"

The only difference between those days and these days is that Jesus was here physically *then*; and today; today we look at the things which are *not seen*. We look at the things that are eternal.

Now, please find with me the first Epistle of John at chapter one and see how John describes it. I John 1:6 "*If we are saying that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: (7) But if we are walking in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*"

Today we can walk in the Light. Walking in the Light means to fellowship with the eternal. It's to walk with the Eternal One. To walk in the light is to experience fellowship with the Eternal Father and the Eternal Son.

So, no, we can't see Jesus with our physical eyes. But, yes, we can know Him and fellowship with Him in a new. Then, the first century disciples followed Jesus physically. But, even then, one of them, Judas Iscariot, never really "followed", did he?

But some of us don't know His presence – for one reason only – we haven't made the choice to walk with the Light.

You could almost say "the secret to the Christian life is in this term: fellowship." Fellowship, folks, is the normal Christian life.

I've titled today's message "What A Fellowship." Shall we pray?

Now, can you remember the second miracle Jesus performed in Galilee? A Roman Official was in Cana at the same time Jesus was there. And this man had a son who was on his deathbed. So, he walks over the LORD and asks Him to come to Capernaum to heal his son. And what did Jesus do?

John 4:46 “*So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman [official], whose son was sick at Capernaum (17 miles away). (47) When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.*

(48) *Then said Jesus unto him, except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. (49) The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. (50) Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. (51) And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.*

(52) *Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, yesterday at the seventh hour (between Noon and 1:00 pm) the fever left him. (53) So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.”*

Jesus not only knows everything, He can do anything. And, He's able to be everywhere at the same time. This young child is seventeen miles away from Him and yet, Jesus is right there with him. And He heals him. A clear evidence that He's deity as well as man. He's omnipresent. Jesus is God. He's God in the flesh. And, being God, Jesus is always present; everywhere present at the same moment. No, He's not physically present today. But, He is fully present. He's as much here in this room as He was on the hillsides of Galilee.

In those days they physically saw Him, physically heard Him teach and preach. They ate with Him. They lived in the

same world He lived in. And, even when He was asleep among them, He was present physically. Today, He's present spiritually.

So, that's what's really on my heart today.

While Jesus was here on earth, His presence was local; meaning only those in Israel could know His presence.

But, at this very moment, the LORD is here.

Matthew 28:20 “*Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world [age]. Amen.*”

Matthew 18:20 “*For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*”

He's constantly among us as the Resurrected Son of God. And the term we use to describe this new “presence” is fellowship. Listen again to John. “And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

What a fellowship!

One of the great Christian hymns describes it like this.

1. What a fellowship, what a joy divine,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
What a blessedness, what a peace is mine,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Refrain

Leaning, leaning, safe and secure from all alarms;
Leaning, leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms.

2. O how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
O how bright the path grows from day to day,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Refrain

3. What have I to dread, what have I to fear,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
I have blessed peace with my Lord so near,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Refrain

This hymn was written by Pastor Elisha Hoffman (1839-1929). Pastor Hoffman wrote some 2,000 hymns in his lifetime as well as editing fifty songbooks. But, this is one of his best. Let me show you why.

Look again at this third verse.

3. What have I to dread, what have I to fear,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
I have blessed peace with my Lord so near,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Pastor Hoffman is describing his experience of fellowship with the LORD Jesus. It's a joy divine in verse one. It's sweet in verse two. And here in verse three, it's peace because the LORD is so near.

How else can you explain what fellowship with the LORD is. Isn't it this. "I have blessed peace with my LORD so near."

Look at John's words here one again. I John chapter one and verse six.

I John 1:6 '*If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: (7) But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. (8) If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

(9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (10) If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

According to the Bible, Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. Hebrews 13:8 '*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever."*

Today someone in China can experience the LORD's presence equally with you and I here in the West.

That's because Jesus is omnipresent. He's everywhere present at the same moment. But that doesn't mean we experience fellowship with Him every minute of the day.

And here's why – because to some degree, it depends upon us. The LORD is here right at this moment. And He wants each one of us to experience and enjoy His presence. But, we don't want to or we're somewhat fearful or we're too occupied with other things. So, what we are doing, in essence, is this; walking in the darkness.

I John 1:6 '*If we are saying that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: (7) But if we are walking in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."*

At any moment when you choose to walk in the Light or walk with the Light and follow Jesus, then you experience His fellowship. Clearly, the LORD wants you close to Him; to know Him; to experience His presence. But, if we'd be honest, we often choose darkness rather than the Light.

Can you see that this is the practical side of being saved?

Let me illustrate it like this. Let's say you're married and you are upset with your spouse today. Would you agree with me that you are fully and completely married?

Well, where's the problem? Isn't it in the fellowship between you and your spouse?

Now, when it comes to salvation, aren't you a Believer? Isn't Jesus Christ your LORD and Savior? Aren't you sure of Heaven? Yes, yes, and yes.

So, where's the practical side of your salvation? Isn't it the experience of His presence?

First, then, fellowship with the LORD is primarily a matter of living in His presence. Do you see the power of fellowship with the LORD? Verse six. I John 1:6 '*If we are saying that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie,*

and do not the truth: (7) But if we are walking in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship ...”

The Bible makes this simple statement about the LORD.

“God is love.” And, what better experience can there be than to have fellowship with the One Who is love? And along with this, we have John 3:16 ‘*For God so loved the world...”*

Now, turn back with me to the Book of Genesis. Find Genesis 3:7. What was the one thing Adam and Eve needed after they'd eaten from the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil? What really was their most important need? They needed fellowship. They needed to be restored to fellowship.

Genesis 3:7 “*And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. (8) And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. (9) And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, where art thou?”*

Immediately upon sinning, they felt ashamed. So, they covered themselves and they hid. And, the One Who is Love, does what. He seeks them out and, in essence, calls them back to fellowship with Himself. He calls them to communion.

Now, there's another example of this in the Book of Exodus. Can you remember with me the reason God had the Israelites build the Tabernacle in the wilderness? It was for communion.

Exodus 25:22 “*And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, ...”*

When the Old Testament uses the word “commune,” it means “speak with.” When the LORD communes with us,

He speaks with us. So, if you are in communion with the LORD, you are on “speaking terms” with Him.

And how do we use the word today? We say “communicate,” which means “to convey by speech.”

Now, when the Bible uses the word “fellowship,” it refers to all of the following.

Fellowship is conversation. It's communion. It's companionship. It's friendship. It's a relationship. It's “God knows me and I know Him.” It's “God speaks with me and I speak with Him.” It's “He knows me perfectly and loves me perfectly and can never stop loving me.”

Fellowship is the joy and wonder of a true connection with the One Who created you. It's “I have a relationship with God through the One Who died and rose again from the dead.” Today, when I say I am in fellowship with God, I'm saying “I'm in fellowship with Someone Who died and rose again from the dead.”

So, fellowship, for the Christian, is the most ordinary thing in the world. Its' also the most essential thing.

Folks, the LORD created you for close communion; so you would have a close relationship to Him. He saved you to know and to love Him. He brought you to Himself in order for you to know Him.

When Jesus died on Calvary, He paid for your sins. Why? So, you wouldn't go to Hell? Yes. But, is that it? No. It's not. He paid for your sin so that, now, as a child with a father, you have entered into fellowship with Him.

As you've heard me say so many times. Sin's penalty and power are gone. The judgment of Hell is gone. And fellowship with Him has come. If you're saved, you are now standing in the place of “I can enjoy fellowship with my LORD; all day, every day for the rest of my life.”

Christ died and rose again so that you might have fellowship with God.

Now, there's another picture of this matter of God's presence in the days of Moses.

Here's Exodus 33 where you find Moses asking God for one thing when the Israelites went into the Promised Land.

Exodus 33:13 ‘*Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people.* (14) And he said, **My presence** shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.

(15) *And he said unto him, if thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. (16) For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.*”

If there's one thing you and I need, it's the LORD's presence each day of our lives.

First, fellowship with the LORD is primarily a matter of living in His presence.

Second, fellowship with the LORD includes doing the truth.

Now, with the idea of a relationship and a conversation in mind, look again at these words. I John 1:6 “*If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: (7) But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

(8) *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (10) If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”*

Just as soon as John begins his epistle, he immediately describes some conditions that might be true of Christians. Conditions are things that might be true in your life or they

might not be true. They all begin with the word “if.” There are five of them here.

Now, look with me at the condition. If the first half of the condition is true, then the second is also true. Let me show you what I mean.

I John 1:6 “*If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: ...”*

The condition – “**If we are saying** that we have fellowship with God while **we are walking** in darkness ...” – if that is true, then, what's the reality?

The reality – “**we are lying, and not doing the truth**”

The condition is that you're saying something while you're doing the opposite. When that condition is true, that's lying.

In plain English, when it comes to fellowship with God, *saying it* is important. But *saying it* isn't enough. You are in fellowship with God only if you are doing the truth.

Let me give you an illustration, if I said that I am a climber and the reality is that I've never climbed a mountain, I'm be lying. I'm not doing the truth. Now, *If I said* to you that I've climbed Mount Ampersand in New York with my friend Brad Iverson; and that I've climbed Mount Washington in New Hampshire with my son Dan; and that I've climbed Mount Katahdin in Maine with Gavin Kyrcz, and I showed you pictures of my climb, then you'd recognize that I really am a climber. I'm not lying.

Don't you find it easy to “say” something and not have the experience of it? Of all the things that matter to God when it comes to fellowship, this is vital. “Don't say what isn't true.”

Do you remember what Jesus said just before He ascended into Heaven? Here's what He said. Matthew 28:19 “*Go ye therefore, and teach [disciple] all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: (20)*

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

And what exactly did Jesus command? First, believe on Him and second, only after we exercise faith in Him, obey Him.

John 3:36 “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

John 6:29 “Jesus answered and said unto them, this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”

Saving yourself by religious effort has never been a means of salvation. The normal condition of someone who is unsaved is that of a sinner. And the only answer to your sin is the Savior. Believe on the LORD Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

Then, after you are saved, the normal condition of a Saint is a life of surrender; a life of obedience to Christ. Jesus said ***Matthew 28:20 “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”***

So, you see, fellowship with the LORD includes doing the truth. It's as though the LORD is equating saying with doing. Simply put, it's just as important *to do* as it is *to say* when it comes to communion with Him.

Fellowship, folks, is sweet. When? When we do what God says.

Now, "Doing" something "for God" prior to salvation is simple "trying to please the LORD by religious effort." But "doing" now that you are saved is living in a manner that honors Him.

Here's your an example. ***Ephesians 4:28 “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. (29)***

Let no corrupt [unwholesome] communication [words] proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying [building up], that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”

When was the last time you walked out of the store in which you were shopping and realized there were things in your cart for which you didn't pay for? And, what did you do as soon as you realized it?

Before you were saved, you'd keep those items and simply forget it. But, now; now that you are saved, now you want to "say" you have fellowship with God. So, you "do" the truth. You return to the store and pay for those items.

And, says Paul; will you let unwholesome words proceed out of your mouth? Or, will it be words that build up those around you?

First, fellowship with the LORD is primarily a matter of living in His presence.

Second, fellowship with the LORD includes doing the truth.

Folks, you've heard me say before that you were made for fellowship. You belong to Him because He's your Creator. But, He's much, much more than that. He's the Savior. God created you for fellowship with Himself. He's the One Who loves you deeply *and* perfectly. He's always interested in close fellowship with you.

If we choose to neglect fellowship with God, it's always to your detriment. He's made a way for each one of us to enjoy His presence and forgiveness continually? It's found in the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, which cleanses us from all sin.

So, now that you've repented and trusted in Christ, it's the most normal in the world to walk in the Light. You see, the plain fact is this. We know we need fellowship with the LORD. And we really do need to experience joy. But, can

you stop your world long enough to ask yourself if fellowship isn't the most important thing in your life?

Fellowship is what John wants for you and me. Fellowship is what life is all about. And fellowship with God is possible because Someone has loved you so much He was willing to shed His blood and die so that we could be cleansed from all your sin.

Jesus isn't here physically. But, He is here spiritually. And you and I are here to know Him and to enjoy Him. That's God's plan for us. That's what He's after for your today.

And He's made a way for you to do just that. Go to Him for fellowship. He'll welcome and He'll receive you.

So, will you respond to Him? Will you choose to walk in the Light and enjoy fellowship with the LORD? Trust in just One Thing, the blood of God's Son as the means for your forgiveness. It's all yours if you belong to by faith.

Last, if you've never trusted in Christ, Go to Him today; this One Who is Eternal Life? Turn to Him? Receive Him as your LORD and Savior? Trust Him and receive the free gift of Eternal Life? God puts the choice into your hands. What will you do? If you've never trust Christ as you Savior and LORD, do it today.

The Sinner's Prayer

"LORD, I know that I am a sinner. I ask Your forgiveness for all my sins. I believe on Your Son today as the One Who paid for all my sins. Thank You for the free gift of Eternal Life in Him. Amen"

And here's the Christian's Prayer. "LORD, I thank You that You want my fellowship. Thank You for Your presence here today. And thank You for the blood of Jesus that perfectly cleans me from every single sin. I will do the truth today. I will walk in the light."

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 278 "Angels We Have Heard One High"