

The Grace of God



"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us..." (Titus 2:11-12).

July 29, 2007 (Vol. 7)

Broken Fellowship

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We all know that the Bible speaks of ending fellowship with brethren who persist in sin. The abundance of passages on this topic make it very clear. But what impact does this have in our daily relationships? How are we to carry out these principles? This is something that is often misunderstood and something that some do not want to understand.

Matthew 18:15-17 shows that if one Christian sins against another, then we are to personally seek to bring them to repentance. If they repeatedly refuse to listen then "let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican." The Jews looked upon the Gentiles and publicans as unclean and distanced themselves socially from them. There was a sense of ostracism and rejection that could be felt by the Gentiles and publicans. Such people would know that the Jews did not commonly associate with these people. Compare Acts 10:28a where Peter explains to Cornelius that it was (according to the Old Law) unlawful for a Jew to "join himself or come unto one of another nation". This Old Testament distinction between nations was abolished in Christ, but it illustrates the point made concerning spiritual distinctions.

Consider also the reaction of the Jews when Peter returned from Cornelius' house. These had not yet learned that the Old Testament distinction was abolished, so they contended with Peter for going in and eating with uncircumcised men (11:3). Obviously, there were social limitations and restrictions between Jews & Gentiles under the Old Law. And under the New Law we must realize that there are social limitations & restrictions between the faithful and the unfaithful.

First Corinthians 5 elaborates further on this point. Paul rebukes the Corinthians for continuing to fellowship a man who was caught in fornication. Paul urges & commands them to "deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (5:5). In other words, publicly recognize this person as no longer following the Lord & let them reap the physical consequences to their actions in hope that they will repent & be restored before the judgment day. Their feeling of accomplishment at continuing to have this erring Christian continue to worship with them was foolish and blind. Instead of helping the man repent, they were allowing his sinful conduct to go unchecked and his corrupt influence to spread (5:6-8).

Paul clarifies that we are to "have no company with fornicators" (5:9). He does not mean that we are to in no way associate with people in the world, for we would have to leave the world to avoid this. But he speaks specifically of brethren who err (5:11-13). We are to judge them and "put away the wicked man from among yourselves" (5:13). Keeping company with them, acting like things are normal, eating with them are ways which we show acceptance socially. When a brother errs, we are **not** to do this with them. As Paul warns in 1 Corinthians 15:34, "Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals." If we casually associate with erring brethren, then we will be corrupted.

Second Corinthians 6:14-7:1 adds to this by asking "What fellowship has righteousness with iniquity?" What agreement & what harmony shall a believer have with an unbeliever? How is it that we, being Christians, can walk in harmony with brethren who are not walking in harmony with God? Don't we have our priorities straight? Don't we seek first the kingdom of God? Aren't we concerned about their souls? Aren't we concerned with their influence upon us for evil?

Galatians 6:1-2 teaches us that we should restore those overtaken in a trespass in a spirit of gentleness, guarding ourselves lest we be tempted. This is a limited, but permissible contact with the erring. General companionship is prohibited, acting like nothing is out of the ordinary is forbidden; but trying to teach and convert them is commanded. Are we getting the picture yet?

Ephesians 5:11 echoes this point by saying "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" because what they do is shameful. The aim is to keep ourselves from defilement and, if possible, convert the lost. If we are not doing this, then Paul warns us: "Awake, thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee" (5:14). If we disobey the Lord in how to save the erring, then we are also in sin, spiritually asleep, dead in our relationship with God.

First Thessalonians 5:14 tells us to "admonish the disorderly". Again, permissible contact with the erring is corrective & instructive. Second Thessalonians 3:14-15 tells us to "note" the one who disobeys God's word and socially make a distinction ("have no company with him") so that he may be ashamed. This sense of shame is designed to move them to repent of their sin. This does **not** mean we are to act like enemies, but we are to "admonish him as a brother". Again, this shows a limitation to contact & association with them. What company can we keep with those who err? The kind that teaches them and instructs them to repent of their sin. Just as James 5:19-20 says, we are to "convert" them from the error of their way and save their soul from death.

Let us ask ourselves a question now: In our lives, how do we treat brethren who are erring? Do we have brethren in error that we still hang with, as if nothing has changed? Do we have children or grandchildren whose souls are lost, but we associate with them normally? Do we have a wife or a husband who is in sin, but who does not see any indication whatsoever that they are noted and identified as unfaithful to God? Are we acting in anyway that would bring a sense of shame & contrition to them for what they have done?

If they feel no shame and hear no admonition from us, then we ourselves need to repent of our disobedience. We need to humble our hearts and examine the depth of our love. What are we doing to serve God faithfully? What are we doing to save the lost? And if we are not helping the congregation to be sound and healthy spiritually, what will we do when we stumble and no one here is practicing the inspired method of spiritual rescue?

No one enjoys broken fellowship. No one enjoys treating erring brethren differently. But either we work to save them or we join them in sin. Corrupted fellowship is a subtle way to ruin a congregation. May we ever be like the Romans brethren, of whom Paul wrote: "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." (Rom. 15:14)

May the you be rich in understanding, filled with love, and full of good works in the Lord.

PEOPLE TO REMEMBER & PRAY FOR

Marilyn Langford (foot), **Joyce Gardner** (eyes), **Johanna Fletcher**, **Othena Kinnard** (in Nashville), **Wesley Geer**, **Mag Bumbalough** (Life Care 519), **Thelma Cunningham**, **Mary Cox**, **Monie Petty** (breathing difficulties), **Dave Poteet** (NHC 212), **Dorris Williams**, **Robert & Betty England**, **Joe Smith**,

Mike Tenpenny, **Thelma Klein**, **Nathan Hill**, **DeLeesa Price** (expecting) and **Alisa Fletcher** (expecting). **Lydia Poe**, **Larry Bumbalough**, **Jake Hale**, **Joshua & Misty Poteet**, **Ed & Carolyn Williams**, **Kenley Streeval**. **Matthew Taylor** (Marci's friend's baby, leukemia).

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Radio Program** - Every Sun. 2pm, AM 1050 WSMT
- **Door To Door** - Every Tuesday @ 6pm.
- **Home Bible Study** - Sat. Aug. 4th & 18th.
- **Ladies Class** - 2nd & Last Sunday Each Month.
- **Business Meeting** - Sun. July 29
- **GM** - Raymond Castillo, Oct.14-19, 2007.
- **GM** - Brian Yeager, April 13-18, 2008.
- **GM** - Lanny Smith, Oct.12-17, 2008.

We Invite You To All Our Services!

Sun. Bible Study 9 am Sun. Evening Worship 6 pm
 Sunday Worship 10 am Wed. Evening Study 7 pm

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2007 August

SUNDAY-MORNING		8/5/07	8/12/07	8/19/07	8/26/07
<i>Greeter</i>		Ralph Sims	Adam F.	Harold Frazier	Ralph Sims
<i>Announcements</i>		Randy White	Michael Fletcher	Matt Eller	David Price
<i>Reading</i>		Micah Eller Eccl 9	Ben Trute Eccl 10	Jack Stafford Eccl 11	Matt Eller Eccl 12
<i>Song Leader</i>		Sam Gardner	Chad Sims	Adam F.	Chad Sims
<i>Opening Prayer</i>		Mark Welte	Mark Welte	Michael Fletcher	Kevin B.
<i>Lord's Supper Lead</i> <i>Lord's Supper Assist</i>		Michael Fletcher Ben Trute Anthony Rece Chad Sims	Sam Gardner Ralph Sims Randy White Anthony Rece	Randy White Micah Eller Anthony Rece Ben Trute	Mark Welte Jack Stafford Ben Trute Mark Eller
<i>Closing Prayer</i>		Jerry Taylor	Micah Eller	Ralph Sims	Anthony Rece

SUNDAY-EVENING		8/5/07	8/12/07	8/19/07	8/26/07
<i>Opening Prayer</i>		David Price	Kevin B.	Mark Eller	Sam Gardner
<i>Song Leader</i>		Harold Frazier	David Price	Chad Sims	
<i>Closing Prayer</i>		Matt Eller	Jack Stafford	Kevin B.	Jerry Taylor
<i>Lord's Supper Lead</i>		Kevin B.	Harold Frazier	Sam Gardner	Mark Eller
<i>Speaker / Invitation</i>			Randy White		Kevin B.
<i>Group</i>		1	2	3	4

WEDNESDAY-EVENING	8/1/07	8/8/07	8/15/07	8/22/07	8/29/07
<i>Opening Prayer</i>	Doug Hill	Mark Eller	David Price	Michael Fletcher	Sam Gardner
<i>Song Leader</i>	Mark Eller	Adam F.	Doug Hill	Harold Frazier	David Price
<i>Closing Prayer</i>	Jerry Taylor	Matt Eller	Jerry Taylor	Jack Stafford	Micah Eller
<i>Invitation</i>	Adam F.	Doug Hill	Mark Welte	Doug Hill	Adam F.