

*In
search
of*

Truth and Right

Tim Henderson, Editor

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"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things." Phil. 4:8 (NASB-U)

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church of
Christ**

Biblical Fellowship

Ethan R. Longhenry



The idea of fellowship is a significant concept in the Scriptures. Yet, many today have misunderstood and misapplied "fellowship" so that the term has been completely altered in meaning. Let us now look into the New Testament to attempt to restore the Biblical definition of "fellowship".

The word translated as "fellowship" in the New Testament is the Greek word *koinonia*, defined by Thayer's as:

1. fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse
 - a) the share which one has in anything, participation
 - b) intercourse, fellowship, intimacy
 - 1) the right hand as a sign and pledge of fellowship (in fulfilling the apostolic office)
 - c) a gift jointly contributed, a collection, a contribution, as exhibiting an embodiment and proof of fellowship

We will get a good idea of how this word is used in relation to modern concepts of "fellowship" by looking at 1 Cor. 1:9; Phil. 1:5; 1 John 1:3; and 1 John 1:6,7:

1 Cor. 1:9 *"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."*

Phil. 1:5 *"For your fellowship in the gospel from the first*

TIMES OF SERVICES	
SUNDAY	
Bible Classes*	10:00 AM
AM Worship	10:45 AM
PM Worship	6:30 PM
WEDNESDAY	
Bible Classes*	7:00 PM
(* Bible Classes for All Ages)	

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day until now;”

1 John 1:3 *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”*

1 John 1:6,7 *“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.”*

How then, shall we characterize “fellowship” in the New Testament?

It is a state, not an event. Probably one of the most significant alterations in the meaning of the term “fellowship” since its use in the New Testament is the idea that “fellowship” can be something that a group can come together and have as an event, like a period of “fellowship” during or after a meal or such thing, also exemplified in the existence of “fellowship halls,” ostensibly, a place where people can “have fellowship.” From the Scriptures that we read above we can see clearly that our fellowship is not an event, but a state of being. We are in a state of fellowship with the Father and the Son and with one another as Christians if we walk according to God’s truth. This “fellowship” is not a thing that we do somehow, but describes the current relationship we have.

Fellowship is partnership. We can see from Thayer’s definition above that another definition of the Greek **koinonia** is “joint participation” or “participation,” and some versions will translate “fellowship” as “partnership” in some places. The idea of partnership is perhaps clearer to us than fellowship is, and so we can see that our fellowship is a partnership to glorify God and the works He has wrought for us. We are in a partnership with God the Father and God the Son and with one another to accomplish these ends. We all have responsibilities and roles to play in our common partnership for the Gospel.

Fellowship, therefore, is a bond. The bonds of fellowship are to be strong for those who believe and obey the truth of God, and I am confident that few if any who would wear the name of Christ would not desire to have a bond with Christ that will endure. Our fellowship—with God the Father and God the Son and with one another—is to be a lasting bond that helps carry us through temptation, hardship, success, and glory. The bond of fellowship, however, can and must be broken in the case of those who have fallen away from the truth either by conduct or by teaching (1 Cor. 5:10-13; Rom. 16:17,18).

We can see, therefore, that Biblical fellowship is a bond—a partnership—and not an event. We perhaps demonstrate our fellowship by coming together for encouragement and edification in periods of worship, meals with one another, and with other such periods of togetherness, but we must not confuse the bond and partnership we have with these activities that prove and strengthen it.

Let us strive to maintain the bond and partnership of fellowship in the Gospel.

Faith and Gravy

By Paul Mansur
Via, Biblical Perspective—No. 13

The scene is Thanksgiving dinner in 1946. My sister was home from Harding College for her first school vacation. During the meal she said: "Please pass the faith." I immediately asked, "Pass the *what?*" Her reply was: "Pass the gravy. You know, *the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*" (Heb. 11:1 KJV). Of course we all had to hear an explanation. In brief, this was the first year after World War II had ended. During the austere days of food rationing during the war, the students began to call gravy "Faith" as it signified that there must be some meat somewhere in the kitchen even though there was none on the dinner table. Thus, the gravy supported their hope for a serving of meat, the substance hoped for but not seen.

The analogy of "faith" to "gravy" is apt, indeed. The words rendered as substance and evidence in the King James translation are translated as assurance and conviction in the American Standard Version. Faith must have a foundation, a base of support.

Just as one can not have beef gravy without the existence of beef, there can be no faith in Christ without convincing evidence in support of the claims of Christ. And there can be no hope of eternal life without evidence to persuade us of the existence of that heavenly abode. Certainly the Psalmist understood this quite well when he wrote: "*The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork*" (Psalm 19:1 KJV). Just a short time ago the Galileo space probe into Jupiter's atmosphere provided readings that did not fit the scientists' projected expectations. Why? Simply because their expectation (their faith?) was not based on accurate substantiation at hand in their current evidence. The substance for their projections was limited to the finite experiences of mankind; their faith was not adequately supported by known material fact.

Alas, such is the case all too often in matters of religious faith. Many say they believe this, that, or the other, without the under girding, the foundation of revealed truth from the Word of the Lord. Their "faith" has no substance. You see, "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). This is where the substance of our faith and hope is found. It can never be found in our unsubstantiated opinions and traditions.

Let us give diligence to substantiate our faith so that we can have a basis for real conviction.

How substantial is your spiritual gravy?



"Pass the gravy.
You know, *the
substance of
things hoped for,
the evidence of
things not seen*"