



The Voice Of Truth

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Can We Fellowship With Those Who Are Wrong With God?

By Jimmy Pettigrew

Our appeal should not be to human feelings or thought (Jeremiah 10:23; Isaiah 55:8-9). Our attitude must be one of accepting what God says in His word, even if that means we must give up our own ideas. When discussing the subject of fellowship, the question is often asked, what is the definition of fellowship? Thayer states fellowship is an association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse. This means partnership or union, to aid; to aid in something or encourage them in something; we are enjoying one another, helping one another in whatever we are talking about, and this is the idea of fellowship. It is right to fellowship those who are right with God, but wrong to fellowship those who are wrong with God. Fellowship is established upon two foundations: (1) Children of God may only fellowship those who are fellow children of God. This demands gospel obedience (John 8:31-32). It is clear that our fellowship with God and with one another is based on our knowing and obeying the truth revealed in Jesus. (2) Children of God may only fellowship those who currently walk in the light (truth) as the Lord is in the light (truth), (1 John 1:7). Notice that fellowship one with another is conditional upon one's walking in the light (truth). It is only as men walk in the blessed light of truth that we can have fellowship with each other. Love is not the basis of fellowship, **TRUTH IS!**

There can be no spiritual fellowship between a Christian and one who denies that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. There can be no fellowship between a Christian and one who says instrumental music in worship is pleasing to God. There can be no fellowship between a Christian and one who denies that baptism is essential unto the remission of sins. There can be no fellowship between a Christian and one who practices any error. Fellowship can be only with such men as walk in the light. Truth cannot fellowship

error. There can be no spiritual fellowship between New Testament Christians and individuals or groups which teach anything other than the pure gospel of Christ. For one to be in fellowship with the Godhead and the saints he must walk in the light; otherwise, he is walking in darkness. What communion hath light with darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14).

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3). This passage plainly shows that one must first be in fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son before he can be included in fellowship as a Christian. How can we be in fellowship with those who are not in fellowship with God? We fellowship all those who obey God and continue steadfastly in the teaching of God. Obedience to the voice of God is the standard by which we determine whom we fellowship. The disobedient and the rebellious are enemies of God, and we dare not attempt to fellowship them. Fellowship with God and Jesus depends entirely upon our loyalty and devotion to God's word. To have fellowship with God and with Christ is to obey the gospel of Christ (Hebrews 5:9). We cannot fellowship with those who teach and practice error. John no doubt loved the Gnostics, yet, he did not hesitate to speak out against their false doctrines and told Christians not to have fellowship with them (2 John 9-11).

Brethren, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ died for His church (Ephesians 5:23, 25), the family of God (1 Timothy 3:15), and we cannot receive into fellowship, and acknowledge as faithful brethren any denominationalist or false brother who stands contrary to the truth! Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling,

contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent (Romans 16:17-18). When we knowingly and willingly fellowship those who teach and practice error, we actually become participants in that sin. If we refuse to stand fast upon the truth of God concerning the matter of fellowship, we may as well close the doors of the church, for Satan has won! Brethren, it is high time we cling to the Bible's teaching on fellowship!

Brethren, there is not a denominational body on the face of God's earth that has a scriptural right to exist. A religious denomination comes into existence only when a group produces by the preaching, believing, and obedience of some doctrine other than the true gospel of Christ. The group openly decides to accept a source of authority beyond the Bible, and such are a curse to God (Galatians 1:6-9). A denomination cannot come into being or exist without practicing or supporting something distinct from what the Lord has authorized, for the Bible only makes Christians only.

Division has always been condemned by God. Unity was God's aim and His desire: And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we (are) one (John 17:22). Paul wrote: Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and (that) there be no divisions among you; but (that) ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Corinthians 1:10). Denominationalism defeats the purpose and ignores the Biblical proclamation that there is only one body (Romans 12:4; 1 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4). Seeing that the church is blood bought (Acts 20:28) and the sole possession of our Lord (Matthew 16:18), any religious institution that came into existence as a result of the ideas, plan, and action of men are in competition with the one true church, and will be rooted up (Matthew 15:13). Therefore, upon what grounds can we fellowship these unfruitful works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11)???

God will not accept into His fellowship those who support and teach error (Romans 16:17-18), nor must we. We are to mark those false teachers; they cannot be a part of our fellowship. John also spoke the words of God when he warned us that, whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into (your) house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works. (2 John 9-11). This passage teaches that those who go beyond the doctrine of Christ do not have God, that is, do not have God's approval. It is further stated that if anyone comes and does not bring this doctrine, then faithful Christians are neither to receive him into their

houses nor to give him greeting. This is the case because the one who gives the greeting is a partaker in, that is, has fellowship with his evil works. One must not fellowship a person or group when beliefs and practices are opposed to scriptural teaching.

It is wrong for Christians to send their children to VBS's conducted by denominational churches! It is wrong for a member of the church to attend the regular meetings of the denominational church that their spouse is a member of! It is wrong for Christians to attend liberal churches of Christ! God has always required His people to be separate (Leviticus 20:7-8, 24, 36). The Israelites were to keep themselves pure, separate and apart from sinful practices. They were to be holy, because Jehovah their Lord was holy (Leviticus 20:23). God expected His people to be separated from the religious practices of other nations. He banned them to intermarry, realizing that to intermarry with idolaters would be to take the chance of being led away from the one true God unto false worship (look at Solomon). If it could happen to them, would it not be possible for it to happen to us? Denominationalism is a work of darkness (Ephesians 5:11). Since it is a work of darkness, we cannot fellowship it. Are we not fellowshipping it when we allow our children to attend denominational VBS's? Fellowship is joint participation. If our children attend their VBS, then they are jointly participating in that activity. Do you know what your children will be taught? Why take the chance with our children's souls?

Are we not fellowshipping when a member of the church attends the regular meetings of the denominational church that their spouse, family or friends are members of? Some will say, if I attend with my spouse, family or friends, then they will attend with me and may learn the truth. God never approves of conversions by compromise. Rather than compromising, the Bible says, Contend earnestly for the faith . . . (Jude 3). You simply cannot compromise and contend at the same time.

Denominationalism is a false religious system. It teaches and practices error. We can safely say that idol worship would be false worship and false doctrine. Further, it may be said that God wants His people to have no part with idol worship. But would that not also be true of any other false religious belief or system? Division is condemned; false doctrine is condemned; those that teach these false doctrines are to be rejected and not fellowshipped. So where does this leave the denominations? I think the answer is apparent to all.

The Bible states we are to withdraw ourselves (fellowship) from those among our number who walk disorderly (2 Thessalonians 3:6), from those who live immoral lives (1 Corinthians 5:11), from those who are heretics (Titus 3:10). These are specific examples of those from whom we are to withhold our fellowship. If we cannot fellowship our own brethren who defy God by their ungodly lives and teaching of error, how in the name of common sense, and in the light of scripture, can we extend fellowship to the denominational world that are in open rebellion against God?

Brethren, because of our love for God, for His word, for the church, for our souls, and the souls of others, let us be ready always to declare, defend, and do God's will! Contend earnestly for the faith . . . (Jude 3).