

KEEPING SCRIPTURAL FELLOWSHIP-II

(IS VITAL TO ONE'S 'ETERNAL INTERESTS')

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A previous message on keeping Scriptural fellowship, because it is a 'vital Truth' connected to a person's 'eternal interests', emphasized that it is however, a neglected Truth among most professing Christians today. But it is essential to our success in the Christian life here on earth, and our life in eternity hereafter depends on how we 'walk with God' on this issue of keeping Scriptural fellowship.

That can be made very plain to all of us, if we read and consider how this issue so greatly affected the lives of the Israelites when in the land of Egypt, and after God in His mercy took them safely out of that country, because they still continued to disobey God's instructions for them to not mingle with nor marry among Moabites and other pagan nations. (Duet. 29:16) "You yourselves know how we lived in Egypt, and how we passed through the countries on the way here. You saw among them their detestable things." (We surely do see detestable things among unbelievers in this world today, wicked things which capture their attention, and are then put ahead of God in their life and ahead of their eternal interests). (vs.19) "This will bring disaster on the 'watered land' as well as the dry land." (meaning, disaster on 'unbelievers' as well as the 'believers').

To be a "believer" means to trust in, or, have confidence in some thing or someone. Spiritually speaking, it means to 'have faith in', and to accept and 'obey' the inspired 'words' of Jesus, no matter what the risk involved (which proves our love for Him). Jesus said, (John 14:15) "**If you love me, you will obey my commandments.**"

Our surrender to do God's will on fellowship, finances, divine healing, repenting of self-life efforts, not avenging wrongs (and any other issue in our life), must be a final surrender and even unto death (if that be the case). Jesus said, (Matt.10:39) "**To save your life is to lose it, and to lose your life for My sake, is to save it.**" (A wonderful promise for those who reject wrong fellowship even with family and refuse to turn to human sources for help.) God tested the sincerity of Abraham's consecration (that is, his commitment to Him) on that very point of his family. (Gen.22:2) "Then God said, 'Take your son,

(your only son), Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.'"

Abraham obeyed God without a complaint, because his heart and his self-will were fully surrendered to do the will of God. As a result of his attitude toward God's Word, God pronounced him a true Christian, renewed His Covenant with him, and promised to bless him with blessings of Heaven above and earth beneath. Abraham perfectly obeyed God when his own son's life was at risk (while believing that God would somehow provide a 'way of escape')

Jesus Christ also walked the pathway of perfect obedience, and he learned obedience through meeting the circumstances of life as His Father directed Him to do. (Heb.5:8-9) "Although He was God's Son, yet He learned obedience from the sufferings which He endured; and so, having been made perfect, He became to all who obey Him, the source and giver of eternal salvation."

We (as 'believers') are told to follow Christ's example of obedience to His Father, and the Holy Spirit will guide our pathway, (1 John 2:5-6), "But whoever keeps His Word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him, ought himself also to walk just as He walked." (Jesus walked with and taught those who believed in Him). The Holy Spirit came to enable us to walk in all things just as the Master walked. (1 Cor.2:12), "Now we have received not the 'spirit of the world', but the 'Spirit who is from God', that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God." (vs.14) "The unspiritual man rejects the things of the Spirit of God, and cannot attain to the knowledge of them, because they are spiritually judged."

God's plan is that we obey Him in keeping Scriptural fellowship, as much as being obedient to trust Him for finances, healing, and protection, and meeting people in a right way, (and obeying Him by not stealing, lying, or cheating, etc.).

If we choose for our companions, those who reject the faith, and the Divine authority of God's Word, or are disorderly and controlled by Satan, the god of this world, 'the spirit who now works in the sons and daughters of disobedience', we will part company with God! God cannot have fellowship with those who reject His Will (given in His Word), but He will enter into fellowship with all who accept His good, acceptable, and perfect Will in all things.

(2 Cor.6:14-17) "Do not keep company with those who have not faith: for what is there in common between righteousness and evil, or

between light and dark? And what agreement is there between Christ and the Evil One? Or what part has one who has faith with one who has not? And what agreement has the house of God with images?" (false places of trust). "For we are a house of the living God; even as God has said, 'I will be living among them, and walking with them; and I will be their God, and they will be my people'. For which cause, 'Come out from among them, and be separate', says the Lord, 'and let no unclean thing come near you';" avoid every 'form of evil' we are told 1 Thess.5:22 (and there is a lot of evil today, at the click of a button on a keyboard). (vs.18) " 'And I will take you for myself I will be a Father to you; and you will be my sons and daughters', says the Lord, the Ruler of all." (those who will follow Him in faith). That is quite a promise from God, for "coming out from among them".

Truly believing is the only condition that God puts on His Salvation Plan (a condition of course that already includes not having any false places or persons to trust in). God offers that Salvation Plan to all who truly believe in Him, and not believing on some thing or someone else. When Jesus tells us to get out from among (or leave) those who do not listen to the Message of Salvation that He gave us, and to "shake off the very dust from your feet" as you leave, (that is a very solemn warning for us not to fellowship with those who have turned their back on His Truth (and refuse to listen) to His Words and to follow what He said).

The apostle James warned "Do you not know that friendship with the world means enmity to God? Therefore, whoever is bent on being friendly with the world makes himself an 'enemy to God'. Or do you suppose that it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, 'The Spirit which He has caused to dwell in our hearts yearns jealously over us'?" (James 4:4-5)

Bible examples reveal that God does 'yearn jealously' over true believers (those who trust and obey Him), and He wants to protect each one from evil and wrong fellowship with unbelievers (and professed 'believers' who still refuse to listen).

We can recall that God called Abram out of the land of the Chaldeans (from near the city of 'Ur', which was said to be full of wickedness), and it was to protect him and family from them. Later, God led him away from Harran to settle in the land of the Canaanites.

Abraham had been prosperous where he was living, but he gave up his possessions and obeyed God when He spoke to him. He left Harran with His family and servants, taking with them what

they could carry to an unknown place. That is having real faith in God's Word!!!

Then, when God promised to bless Abraham's descendants forever, he believed God, having faith that He would do as He promised. (Gen.15:9) says, "Abram believed the Eternal, Who counted his trust as real religion" (or true righteousness). (Gen.22:18) God said of Abraham's descendants, "all nations on earth shall seek bliss like theirs-all because you have obeyed My Word." Faith and obedience to God run hand-in-hand throughout the entire Bible, and always receive His blessing.

Jesus speaks to us through His inspired written Word, just as God had spoken to Abraham. Jesus tells us not to fellowship with (but to separate from), those who will not listen, or believe, or obey. It is our place as servants of Christ (to be like Abraham), to take heed to Christ's instructions, and obey Him.

Getting back to Abraham's family and descendants (the Israelites), they were however, destined to move again (just two generations after Abraham settled in Canaan), and spend four hundred years in a 'country not their own'. So, the unbelieving Canaanites were not removed from their land at that time. But, after the four hundred years went by, the Israelites returned into the Promised Land of Canaan (under the direction of Joshua.)

This time, by following the directions of the Lord, they drove out most of the inhabitants of the land where they were to settle, so they could live apart from the unbelievers, and not have fellowship with them. God's people were told not to mingle with nor intermarry with the unbelievers who remained in the land.

Rather, they were told to marry among their own people and within their own tribes, and they would have God's blessing on themselves. When the Israelites obeyed God's instructions on this fellowship question, they and their families were blessed by God, and they did not lose their family members to the world.

Even before, when the Israelites were forced to wander for forty years (prior to entering the Promised Land of Canaan), they had to settle in the desert for some of those years (near the land of Moab), but they were told to 'keep separate from' the Moabites.

The prophet Balaam could not put a curse on them, when he was offered money to do so (by the king of Moab). (Num. 23:9) "From the rocky peaks I see them, from the heights I view them. I

see a people who live apart and do not consider themselves one of the nations."

However, when the Israelites disobeyed God on this fellowship question, mingled with the Moabites and married Moabite women, then they fell out of God's favor and blessing, and brought a curse on themselves. Then, it was, that the Israelites saw their family members being taken away (one by one) by unbelievers, and by the wickedness of the world and its ways.

Their wrong fellowship eventually led them to worship Baal (a false god of the Moabites), in direct violation of God's first Commandment. "The Lord's anger burned against them," and "those who died in the plague, numbered 24,000," (the Bible says). A 'terrible price' to pay for wrong fellowship!!!

Many Christians have been (and are being) deceived by the devil, into thinking that their good behavior will influence the one who has not repented (and who shows no evidence of repenting). Unfortunately, this has not been the case in the past and is still not the case today. The wrong influence always works against one who puts themselves on the devil's territory of wrong 'companionship'.

When a person puts themselves in the company of those who were led astray by Satan from the faith (or fellowship with unbelievers who have never repented, nor accepted and put real faith in Christ), they are putting themselves on the 'devil's territory'. *The influence of the un-Christ-like person will eventually lead them astray also.*

(1 Cor.15:33) tells us very plainly, "Do not deceive yourselves: 'Evil companionships corrupt good morals.'" *Those words were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Our responsibility is to take heed and follow them*

In Revelation chapters 2 and 3, Jesus told each of the seven Churches of Asia, "Let all who have ears, give heed to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches."

We were given another example on wrong fellowship (2 Chron. 18) as we read where King Jehoshaphat of Judah, had allied himself with King Ahab in Samaria (a backslider from the Truth and from the kingdom of Judah, which God, Himself, had established in Jerusalem during the reign of King David). As result of Jehoshaphat's 'wrong fellowship', he then agreed to join King Ahab in battle against Ramoth Gilead.

However, he almost lost his life in the battle, but he cried out to God who saved his life. When he returned safely to Jerusalem, Jehoshaphat was met by a prophet (chapter 19:2) "Jehu the seer, the son

of Hanani, went out to meet him and said to the king, 'Should you help the wicked and love' (Or and make alliances with) 'those who hate the LORD? Because of this, the wrath of the LORD is upon you. There is however, some good in you,' the prophet said, (so Jehoshaphat's life was spared at that time).

After that warning from the prophet, King Jehoshaphat 'repented' of his wrong fellowship, and he went out among the people of Israel, and "turned them back to the Lord, the God of their fathers."

He was tested again when a vast army came against him and God's kingdom of Judah. This time King Jehoshaphat did not ally himself with unbelievers. Instead, he prayed (2 Chron.20:12) "O our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon You."

King Jehoshaphat had 'learned a lesson' on wrong fellowship. He did not to ally himself in war, with the branch of Israel who were backsliders from the Truth (and who had set up their own kingdom in Samaria) nor did he ally with other unbelievers.

His prayer was answered (2 Chron. 20:14), "Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel son of Zechariah, 'This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's.'" (Vs 17) "You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you." *A great battle was won against a vast army, and Jehoshaphat and his men, did not have to fight the battle while allied in wrong fellowship with unbelievers.*

However, even though he had learned not to ally himself 'in battle' with those who had left the Truth, Satan deceived him again, and he made the mistake of wrong fellowship by going into a 'business partnership' with King Ahaziah of Israel (a 'backslider' from the Truth which God had established within the Kingdom of Judah). (Chapter 20:35-37), "But at 'the close of his life', Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, went into partnership with Ahaziah, king of Israel" (a backslider who was a very wicked man the Bible says). "He agreed with him to construct a fleet of trading ships. After these were built at Ezion Geber, Eliezer son of Dodavahu prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, 'Because you have made an alliance with Ahaziah, the LORD will destroy what you have made.' The ships were wrecked and were not able to set sail to trade." *We*

must lose things that we get via wrong places of trust, instead of our getting things via trust on God.

King Jehoshaphat lost all of his investment and everything he had expected to gain from his business partnership with someone who had turned their back on the Truth. But again, God was merciful and spared his life, because He saw some good in Jehoshaphat. And He (undoubtedly) saw a willingness to repent. Not only was his life spared (until he later came to rest and “was buried with his fathers in the city of David” as the Bible says), but a great ‘spiritual lesson’ was learned as well (which is most important).

That willingness to repent of wrong fellowship (or any other sin) is most important for all of us to realize. The late Pastor warned “If we don’t repent, we will see no change and no conviction. We will be a hindrance instead of a help to those whom we want to see convicted.”

However, if we make a definite and final decision to be scriptural ourselves, first toward God and our fellow Christians, then our repentance will prove to be genuine, and we can be a stepping-stone to the victory that we are praying for with others as well.

We are responsible for our children (as well as for ourselves), so let us not deceive ourselves. When we engage in fellowship with unbelievers (and those who have been led astray from following and obeying the Truth in the Words of Jesus), we have also set a ‘wrong example’ for our children on the ‘fellowship question’. It is something we will have to answer to God for if we don’t repent.

The Apostle Paul tells us in (2 Cor. 6:14), “Do not come into close association with unbelievers,” “Or what partnership has light with darkness?” (15) “Where can harmony between Christ and Belial be found? Or what participation has a believer with an unbeliever?”

Those words of admonition and advice were inspired by the Spirit of God, Himself, who appeared to Paul (on at least three occasions), and spoke directly to him. Those inspired words should be heeded and followed on this most important issue in our life and the lives of others.

God also backs up that inspired advice from the apostle with a very valuable Promise for all who will obey Him on the ‘fellowship question’, and be committed to keeping Scriptural fellowship, (vs. 17-18) “Therefore, ‘Come out from among them and separate yourselves,’ says the Lord, ‘and touch nothing impure; and I will receive you, and will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters’ says the Lord the Ruler of all.”

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KEEPING SCRIPTURAL FELLOWSHIP-II”

SOME MAIN POINTS:

1. The ‘fellowship question’ should always be settled based on God’s ‘teaching’ (as given in His Word), it is not to be settled by our own opinions and thoughts on the matter.
2. Jesus spoke with authority, because His Words carry the promise of eternal Life, and He warned us to separate from those who will not ‘listen’ to Him.
3. The examples of Jehoshaphat will reveal that when he did not ally himself with unbelievers and backsliders from the Truth that God had established in Jerusalem, he had always enjoyed God’s blessings, (but that he almost lost his life when allied with unbelievers.)
4. Friendship with the world makes us an ‘enemy’ of God (the apostles James, as well as Paul were inspired to tell us) so, “come out from among them” he said. And we are reminded that we are also responsible for the example that we set for our children and grandchildren to follow, so we do not want to lead them on a wrong pathway to destruction.

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www.fcgchurch.org

P O Box 24283

Philadelphia, PA 19120

fcgchurch1@gmail.com

S393R 1211 24W

The First Century Gospel Church/Philadelphia