

THE SCRIPTURAL MEANING OF  
"KOINONIA," FELLOWSHIP;  
ITS MANIFESTATIONS AND RESTRICTIONS .

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# K O I N O N I A

## THE SCRIPTURAL MEANING OF "KOINONIA," FELLOWSHIP; ITS MANIFESTATIONS AND RESTRICTIONS

Our Greek word "koinonia" occurs 19 times in the New Testament. It is translated "fellowship" 12 times, "communion" 3 times (1 Cor. 10,16; 2 Cor. 13,14; 2 Cor. 6,14), once "communication," once "communicate," once "distribution." (Phil. 6; Heb. 13,16; Rom. 15,26). "The word "koinonia" itself, together with its related words (cognates), ("koinonos" and "koinoneo") is derived from "koinos" (stem "koin-") which means common (belonging to several), shared in common."

To establish the scriptural meaning of "koinonia," fellowship, we must study briefly the passages in which the word "koinonia" occurs. The passages fall into two groups:

- I. Participation, communion (agreement, concord), intimate relationship with God through Christ.
- II. Participation, communion (agreement, concord), intimate relationship of believer with believer through Christ.

### SCRIPTURAL MEANING OF "KOINONIA" - FELLOWSHIP.

#### I. PARTICIPATION, COMMUNION (AGREEMENT, CONCORD), INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD THROUGH CHRIST.

In this group we find passages which speak primarily of:

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|---|---|----------------|
| 1-2. Fellowship with the Father and the Son | - | 1 John 1,3 (2) |
| 3. Fellowship with God                      | - | 1 John 1,6     |
| 4. Fellowship with His Son                  | - | 1 Cor. 1,9     |
| 5. Fellowship of His Suffering              | - | Phil. 3,10     |
| 6. Fellowship of the Spirit                 | - | Phil. 2,1      |

1-3: Fellowship with the Father and the Son ... Fellowship with God--  
1 John 1,1-6.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); THAT WHICH WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD DECLARE WE UNTO YOU: THAT YE ALSO MAY HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH US (koinonian echete meth' (h)emon); and truly our FELLOWSHIP is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ (koinonia ... meta tou patros ... meta tou (h)uiou). And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and DECLARE UNTO YOU, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth ... But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another (koinonian echomen met' allelon), AND THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST CLEANSETH US FROM ALL SIN. (v. 8-10 explanation of "walking in the light!")

We see from these verses of 1 John that "fellowship" is a relationship, with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. It is a taking part in that which God has to offer through Jesus Christ. It is participation. It is membership in God's family through Jesus Christ. Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3,26). John and the other apostles were members in God's family through Christ Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, the Word of life, which was manifested, whom they had heard, seen, and handled. God, who is light, had enlightened them, so that they were conscious of their natural sinful state, and

came to the realization that they daily sinned much in thought, word, and deed; and, indeed, deserved nothing but punishment. Furthermore, God had enlightened them, so that they knew and believed that the blood of Jesus Christ cleansed them from all sin. They were partakers of the grace of God through faith in Christ Jesus. They had fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. This was their joy. This message of the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ they now declared to their hearers and readers that their joy might be full; that they, together with them, might be partakers of the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus, that they might be members of God's family, that they might have fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

We can say, therefore, fellowship is participation, communion (agreement, concord), intimate relationship with God through Jesus Christ. It is a relationship which we cannot bring about by our own efforts. It is established and maintained by God Himself through the blood of Jesus Christ. This relationship can neither be discovered nor appropriated by us through our own endeavors. Fellowship is declared unto us and appropriated unto us by God Himself. Through the blood of Jesus Christ we are members of God's family. Through the blood of Jesus Christ we have fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. (Third Article) We have the Father in common through Christ. We have Christ and all His grace and blessings in common through the blood of Christ. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. We have fellowship with His Son.

#### 4: The Fellowship with His Son--1 Cor. 1.9.

v. 4-9 - I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that you come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord (eis koinonian tou (h) uiou autou Jesou Christou ...)

Again there is a taking part of the grace of God which is in Christ Jesus, a participation ... We, who have come to faith in Christ Jesus our Lord, are the richest and most blessed people on earth. Without any merit or worthiness in us, we are enriched by Him in everything: in all utterance (en panti logo - in all discourse: L. Reich gemacht an aller Lehre!) and in all knowledge. In what does this riches and knowledge consist? We might briefly summarize: the believer has definite, reliable teachings concerning God, concerning man, concerning Christ, concerning salvation, concerning the last things. He comes behind in no gift. He has all that he needs for this life and for the life to come. He has provision, protection, prosperity, security.--David already expressed this beautifully in the 23d Psalm. The believers one aim now is: waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And he knows that God is faithful. He knows that God shall confirm him--keep him firm, steadfast--unto the end. The believer needs no "movement" to keep him with Christ or with the church. He has fellowship with God and His Son Jesus Christ, is in the fellowship of His Son, has all the blessings of heaven in common with Him. The believer takes part in those blessings, as our next passage brings out.

#### 5: The Fellowship of His suffering--Phil. 3.9.

v. 7-10.11 - But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not

having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering (ten koinonian ton pathematon outou), being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Through His suffering and death Jesus prepared for all believers a perfect and complete righteousness. Through faith every believer has a part in His suffering, that is, reaps the benefits of it, namely forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. This is the fellowship of His sufferings.

This fellowship of His sufferings changes the entire outlook on life; yes, it changes life itself. Before his conversion the Apostle Paul considered many things important and gain--his being a pharasee, his zeal for the persecution of the Christians ... etc. After partaking of the sufferings of Jesus, after his conversion, he counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. He counted all things but dung that he might win Christ. His one aim: That if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

We are partakers of His sufferings (2 Cor. 1,7)--koinonoi--(Rom. 8,17 - sumpaschomen) He purchased and won us from sin, death, and the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood, and His innocent suffering and death; that we should be His own and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness; even as He is risen from death, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true (2d Article). Like Paul, every believer will be anxious to lead a God-pleasing life of sanctification. He will love Jesus, because Jesus first loved him (1 John 4,19). He will crucify the flesh and the lusts thereof. His one aim will be: to attain unto the resurrection of the dead. (For me to live is Jesus ...) However, to be able to perform the good work begun in us, we need the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

6: The Fellowship of the Spirit--Phil. 2.1 (2 Cor. 13,14).

v. 1-4 - If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit (koinonia pneumatos), if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Where there is fellowship with God through Christ Jesus, there is also the fellowship of the Spirit, a taking part of all the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost (3d Article). Where this fellowship of the Spirit exists, where there is participation, communion (agreement, concord), intimate relationship with God through the gifts of the Holy Ghost, there we shall find that every effort will be made by the individual--and by all those who are likeminded--to walk as it becometh the Gospel of Christ. Paul urges the believers to such a walk of life in the first chapter (1,27). On the basis of consolation in Christ, comfort of love, fellowship of the Spirit, and bowels and mercies he exhorts the believers, in the first four verses of chapter two 1 Philippians, to UNITY.

- A. UNITY OF DOCTRINE (to auto phronete). In what does this consist? It consists in LIKEMINDEDNESS - L. Das ihr eines Sinnes seid. This likemindedness, unity of doctrine, is urged in many passages of Holy Writ. To mention a few:

Romans 12,16: Be of the same mind one toward another, Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

Romans 15.5: Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Cor. 13.11: Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

Phil. 3.16: Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

Phil. 1.27: Only let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel ... (and in nothing terrified by your adversaries ...).

1 Cor. 1.10: Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Finally,

1 Pet. 3.8: Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous ....

Paul continues in Philippians 2 to exhort to:

B. UNITY OF PRACTICE (ten auten agapen echontes), on the basis of consolation in Christ, comfort of love, and the fellowship of the Spirit.

In what does this unity of practice consist? It consists in:

1. Having the same love--

- a. Love to Jesus: John 14,16: He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.
- b. Love to the brethren: Fellowship manifests itself in brotherly love. John 13,34: A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

It seems evident from the above passages that establishing new practices (practices neither commanded or forbidden in the Scriptures) is something which must be done with much concern for the brethren! If a new practice is to be introduced, it should be done with much brotherly love. The brethren ought to be apprised of the move--which may easily become a "movement"--and given a chance to express their opinion. Anyone who for conscience sake objects must be heard. Brotherly love would demand that, as long as there are valid objections, conscientious or otherwise, the practice be suspended. Deliberate continuation of the practice is a violation of brotherly love and brings with it the danger of a break in fellowship. Not the one who objects to a practice is guilty of creating a serious condition, but the one who refuses to let the love of Christ

constrain him to show consideration for his brother. Fellowship among brethren may be strained to the breaking point by this one thing: LACK OF BROTHERLY LOVE. Just as the practice of brotherly love is a manifestation of fellowship, so the lack of brotherly love is a manifestation of a break in fellowship, even though church bodies outwardly still travel under the same corporate name. Even though church bodies are united outwardly, if there is no unity of doctrine, no unity of practice, no brotherly love, there is no fellowship in the scriptural sense of "Koinonia," no matter how much propaganda is made for fellowship. This becomes very evident as we look at the next expression.

- c. Of one accord, of one mind (sumpsuchoi - joined in soul ... to (h) en phronountes - the one thing minding). In these words we have the intimacy of the fellowship (union) between believers in Christ. They are of one accord - sumpsuchoi: joined in soul; of one mind - the one thing minding. In Jesus the believers have in common, share in common, all the things that He has to offer. The souls are joined through the one thing, namely the precious Gospel of Christ. Where this intimacy exists, where this one thing, the Gospel of Christ, is minded, there will be unity of doctrine, unity of practice; there will be union, the communion of saints (3d Article). There is participation, communion (agreement, concord), intimate relationship with God, fellowship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Everyone who is in fellowship will by virtue of that fellowship be in a God-pleasing fellowship with everyone who is likeminded.

## II .

This brings us to the second group of passages which speak primarily of participation, communion (agreement, concord), intimate relationship of believer with believers. The passages speak of:

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|--|--------------|
| 1. The Fellowship with one another   | - 1 John 1,7 |
| 2. The Fellowship in the Gospel  | - Phil. 1,5  |
| 3. The Right Hand of Fellowship  | - Gal. 2,9   |
| 4. The Fellowship of the Mystery   | - Eph. 3,9   |
| 5. The Fellowship of Service or<br>The Fellowship of the Ministering to the Saints | - 2 Cor. 8,4 |
| 6. The Fellowship (Locus classicus)  | - Acts 2,42  |

## II. THE PARTICIPATION, COMMUNION (AGREEMENT, CONCORD), INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP OF BELIEVER WITH BELIEVER THROUGH CHRIST.

Although we have grouped the passages into two groups, it is difficult to make a clean-cut division. It naturally follows that where we have fellowship with God and with His Son Jesus Christ, where we have the fellowship of the Spirit, there will be a fellowship with all likeminded. Let us look again at 1 John 1,3 and then take along 1 John 1,7:

### 1: Fellowship with one another--1 John 1,7.

That which we have seen and heard and handled ... declare we unto you, that ye may also have fellowship with us .... v. 7 - If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another (koinonian echomen met' allelon), and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.

We have already seen that it is through the blood of Jesus Christ that we have fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is through that same blood of Jesus Christ that we have fellowship--"koinonia"--with one another.

Outside of that there is no fellowship in the scriptural sense! The means of grace: the Gospel and the sacraments are the means which the Holy Spirit uses to convert, quicken, and regenerate. We share in a common change of heart, mind, attitude. We have

## 2. Fellowship in the Gospel--Phil. 1.5.

3-7: I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the Gospel (te koinonia (h)umon eis to euangellion) from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ; even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the Gospel, ye all are partakers (sunkoinonous) of my grace.

The Gospel brings about an intimate relationship between believers. There is an intimate participation of believers in the gifts and graces offered in the Gospel. Paul had preached the Gospel in Philippi on his second missionary journey (Acts 16, 9-14). The Philippians heard and believed. They had come into fellowship with God and His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and into a fellowship with Paul and with one another--as many as were likeminded. They show that by their attitude toward their teacher (Paul) and by their attitude toward one another. When they heard that Paul was imprisoned in Rome they sent Epaphroditus, their pastor, to help Paul financially and otherwise if he needed any assistance.

### Communion:

1. Bread - Body; Wine - Blood
2. He who eats and drinks - communion with Jesus
3. Those who eat and drink - communion with one another

In connection with THE FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL, let us look also at 1 Cor. 10.16.17, where "koinonia" is translated "communion." The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood (koinonia tou (h)aimatos) of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion (koinonia tou somatos) of the body of Christ? In Chapter 10 of Corinthians the Apostle Paul shows by an example out of the Old Testament that the mere knowledge of the truth will not save if it is not followed by a life of faith (1-5). In this new walk of life, the fruit of faith--sanctification--the believer must avoid everything which might lead to sin (6-13). The Corinthians were especially to avoid participating in the worship of idols, in the feasts where things offered to idols were eaten. Such participation, though the idol is nothing, would mean fellowship with the idol and separation from God. Every believer is intimately related to God and His Son Jesus Christ through the blood of Jesus Christ (1 John 1,8). The believers should show forth His death by participating in the meal which Jesus Himself instituted. This meal brings them into intimate relationship with Jesus. In the eating of the bread, the believer receives the true body of the Lord, which was broken in death for the remission of sins. In the drinking of the wine, he receives the true blood, which was shed for the remission of sins. The believers become joint partakers of all the blessed benefits of His suffering and death. Jesus becomes part of them; they become part of Him!

WHAT AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP! HERE WE HAVE THE CLIMAX OF FELLOWSHIP! Not merely a ceremony, a commemoration celebration, as the Reformed group has it; not an unbloody sacrifice, as the Catholic Church teaches; but in, with, and under the bread and wine, Jesus gives us His true body and His true blood. What a blessing for him who partakes of this sacrament worthily, believing what the Scriptures teach concerning Christ, the Son of the living God! What an

awful thing for him who partakes of the Lord's Supper unworthily, not believing what the Bible teaches concerning Christ! He eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body (1 Cor. 11,29). How terrible, therefore, to partake of the Lord's body and blood with such who live and teach otherwise than the Word of God teacheth; by our action to strengthen them in their error and false teaching.

We can readily see that a God-pleasing fellowship can be established only with such who are likeminded on the basis of the Gospel. Where this Gospel, that the Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin, is preached in truth and purity, there will be unity of doctrine, unity of practice, brotherly love. There is union--the communion of saints (3d Article). To extend the RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP then becomes a mere outward formality, as we shall see in Gal. 2,9.

### 3. The Right Hand of Fellowship--Gal. 2,9.

v. 1-9: Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them the Gospel which I preached among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: and that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, and that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you. But of these who seemed somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person;) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me: but contrariwise, when they saw that the Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to me, as the Gospel of the circumcision to Peter; (for He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace (of God) which was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship (dexas koinonias), that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

Where inner fellowship exists, there outward fellowship is easily established. The Judaizers had bewitched the Galatians into thinking that in order to be saved it was not only necessary to believe the Gospel, but that also the law of Moses had to be observed and kept. The false teachers claimed that thus Peter, James, and the other Apostles were teaching at Jerusalem. Paul went up to Jerusalem by revelation. It seemed good to the Holy Spirit that he go. He took Barnabas and Titus with him. He presented to the council of the Apostles at Jerusalem the Gospel which he preached to the Gentiles. It was the same Gospel which the Apostles preached to the Jews in Jerusalem. The false brethren who were brought in unawares to spy out the liberty which Paul enjoyed in the Gospel, did not get very far with their demands that Titus be circumcised. The Apostles found that the same Jesus who worked effectually in their Gospel, worked effectually also in the Gospel of Paul. Jews and Gentiles were partakers of the same grace of God in Christ Jesus. This is the fellowship of mystery, as we see in Eph. 3,9.

### 4. The Fellowship of the Mystery--Eph. 3,9.

1-12: For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in a few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of



men, as it is now revealed unto His holy Apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel: whereof I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery (koinonia tou mysteriou), which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Christ Jesus: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by faith in Him.

Every teaching and doctrine which could not be known without divine revelation is a mystery. That the Gentiles should be co-heirs, fellow-heirs, with the Jews was such a mystery. The Jews were the chosen race. No human being would have ever conceived the idea that the Gentiles should be made partakers of the things promised to the Jews. God had to reveal this through His Holy Spirit. It was God Himself who called Paul to be the Apostle of the Gentiles. Paul certainly would never have gotten the thought himself. He did not even believe by his own reason or strength that Jesus was the promised Savior of the Jews! He persecuted Christ.--(Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?) That is why he says that he is less than the least of all the saints. Yet God revealed to him (and to Peter also--vision), how the Gentiles were to participate, have communion with, become intimate with the God of the Jews, and be fellow-heirs with them, through the preaching of the Gospel.

Free grace is offered to both Jew and Gentile. Eph. 2,4\*10: But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is a gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.

Through the means of grace we get into the fellowship of the mystery. Through the revelation of God we are made partakers, we have communion, we are on intimate terms with God and take part in everything which He has to offer in the Gospel. This mystery is far above human wisdom. No human mind can add anything to it. No human learning, wisdom, understanding can think of, or develop anything which is higher or better than this wisdom of God, no, not even an angel. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I again: If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1,8.9).

It is not possible for any organization, or group, no matter how appealing their principles, aims, and objectives, no matter how popular or influential they may be, to add anything to this simple Gospel, or to aid it in any way. The Gospel is sufficient unto itself. It must be preached. Fellowship will follow.

We saw that in Jerusalem. Without further ado James, Cephas, and John could extend the right hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas. They were workers together with God.

Thus the Holy Spirit through the means of grace establishes and maintains fellowship. It is the Holy Ghost who by the Gospel calls, enlightens, sanctifies,

and keeps the individual in the true faith; in like manner as He calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies, and keeps the whole Christian Church on earth with Jesus Christ in the one true faith (3d Article). Where the Holy Spirit operates through the means of grace there the individual members of the family of God are already in fellowship with one another (even though they be far removed from one another) in the holy Christian Church, the communion—fellowship—of saints.

It is this same Holy Spirit who moves the believers to give and to work jointly for the glory of God, the welfare of His kingdom, and the welfare of their fellowmen, especially those of the household of faith (Gal. 6). That is the Fellowship of Service or the Fellowship of the Ministering to the Saints, 2 Cor. 8.

5. The Fellowship of Service - The Fellowship of the Ministering to the Saints--  
2 Cor. 8,4.

1-6: Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; praying us with their entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints (ten koinonian ten diakonias tes eis tous (h)agious). And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. Inasmuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.

The fellowship of the ministering to the saints is the participation, a taking part with fellow-believers (with those who are likeminded) in providing for the needs of the poor; a taking part in the preaching of the Gospel, building the kingdom of God through offerings for mission work. As has been stated, it is the Holy Spirit who through the Gospel of grace moves the believers to give. Our old Adam does not like to give. He would much rather take. The new man in us, however, is created by Christ Jesus unto good works (Eph. 2,10). The love of Christ constraineth us. The believer realizes that whatever he has, he has received from the Giver of all good gifts, from the Father of Lights, through the blessed fellowship with Him. Therefore, whatsoever he has in gifts, graces, and talents, he places at Jesus' feet, for Him to use when, where, and how He sees fit--as the opportunity arises, as the doors are opened! We have this beautifully expressed in some of our hymns:

441 v. 1,2:

We give Thee but Thine own  
Whate'er the gift may be;  
All that we have is Thine alone,  
A trust, O Lord, from Thee.

May we Thy bounties thus  
As stewards true receive  
And, gladly, as Thou blessest us,  
To Thee our first-fruits give.

(Un. Walsham How - 1858)

438 v. 4,5:

Lord, we would lay at Thy behest  
The costliest offerings on Thy shrine;  
But when we give and give our best,  
We only give Thee that is Thine.

O Father, whence all blessings come;  
 O Son, Dispenser of God's store;  
 O Spirit, bear our offerings home;  
 Lord, make them Thine forevermore.

The Macedonian Christians are an example of how the fellowship of ministering to the saints works, manifests itself. Total strangers to the saints at Jerusalem, they bring an offering even beyond the fondest hopes of the Apostle Paul, who knew their financial condition. They were poor and had suffered losses. But they first gave their own selves to the Lord. Having been brought to the fellowship with God and His Son Jesus Christ through the Gospel, they realized that they were the Lord's. Therefore, willingly and happily they took part with other believers in the work of the Lord.

In this connection we shall also quote the other passages which come under this heading. "Koinonia" is here translated "contribution," "distribution," and "communicate" respectively.

Romans 15,26-27: For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution (koinonian) for the poor saints which are in Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers (ekoinonesan) of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

2 Cor. 9,10-15: Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness; being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causes through us thanksgiving to God. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings to God; whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for their professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution ("h"aploteti tes koinonias) unto them and unto all men; and by their prayers for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be to God for this unspeakable gift.

Hebrews 13,15-16: By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifices of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name. But to do good and to communicate (de koinonias) forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Finally now we come to Acts 2,42. In this classic passage we have "koinonia" in its full rich sense and meaning. In fact, all that has been said thus far is contained in the word here. It is indeed a pregnant word, a word very rich in content.

#### 6. The Fellowship--Acts 2,42.

And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship (te koinonia), and the breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul and many signs and wonders were done by the Apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common (koina); and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

In "koinonia" in this passage we have the embodiment of all the meanings we have looked at. We have here:

The Fellowship with the Father and the Son,  
 The Fellowship of His Suffering,  
 The Fellowship of the Spirit;

The Fellowship with one another,  
 The Fellowship of the Gospel,  
 The Right Hand of Fellowship,  
 The Fellowship of the Mystery,  
 The Fellowship of Service.

All this began at Pentecost. The promised Comforter, the Holy Spirit, was poured out. The disciples who before had a difficult time to grasp the teachings of Jesus, or who were afraid to be His witnesses, now boldly bear witness, and preach Christ crucified: Acts 2,36: Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. - They had a God-pleasing pulpit-, altar-, and prayer-fellowship. They shared in common the duty and privilege of prayer, the duty and privilege of charity. Here is participation, communion, intimate relationship with God and with His Son Jesus Christ by means of the Gospel through the operation of the Holy Spirit. Here is participation, communion (agreement, concord), intimate relationship between likeminded believers by means of the Gospel through the operation of the Holy Ghost. Here is FELLOWSHIP in the biblical sense. Here is "KOINONIA."

We realize that much more could be said, and that much that has been said could be said in better and more learned terminology. However, for all practical purposes, we believe that on the basis of the Word of God we have established the scriptural meaning of "Koinonia," fellowship, namely,--Fellowship is a participation, a taking part, a communion (agreement, concord), intimacy with the triune God through Christ, and a participation, communion, intimacy of believers with believers (of likeminded with likeminded) through Christ.

## II. ITS MANIFESTATIONS AND RESTRICTIONS

All the passages we looked at were really manifestations of "Koinonia"--fellowship. In fact we could not have derived at a meaning of "koinonia" without such manifestations. We have already seen how "Koinonia" manifests itself in

1. Unity )of doctrine  
           (of practice
  - 1) Having same love
    - a. to Jesus
    - b. to brethren
  - 2) Of one accord, of one mind
2. Union--(Pulpit-, altar-, prayer-fellowship
3. Christian Giving

No doubt, we also noticed that the restrictions become evident in its manifestations. Fellowship is restricted, limited, wherever it manifests itself, by its generating quality. Fellowship in the scriptural sense has a very narrow scope, because God Himself narrows down the scope, circumference, latitude. There is a certain axiom in logic which reads in the German:

"Je aermmer der Inhalt, desto reicher der Umfang; je reicher der Inhalt, desto aermmer der Umfang." The poorer the contents (meaning) of a term (word), the wider (broader) its scope; the richer the contents, the narrower the scope. For example: let us take the word "tree." It is very poor in content, but it takes in every type

of tree in the universe. It has a very wide scope. Enrich the content by adding the word "fruit" and immediately the scope is narrowed considerably. Enrich it still more by adding the word "apple," and the process repeats itself. The scope is narrowed once more. All other trees are excluded except apple trees!

"Fellowship" - "koinonia" without its rich scriptural meaning has a wide scope, yea, a universal scope; but in its rich scriptural meaning its scope is very narrow. And let us remember that it is God Himself who makes its scope so narrow, because it is He who has so wonderfully enriched its meaning.

"Koinonia" manifests itself on the one hand in intimate relationship (union), on the other hand in separation. Even though in the early church there was no conscious effort to separate--the believers met in the temple, used the order of service which was used in the synogogue as a pattern for their worship--yet the separating action of the Holy Spirit becomes evident. The Lord's Supper is celebrated in private homes. All that believed were drawn together by the Spirit (Acts 2,42-47; Acts 4, 32-35): And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things that he possessed was his own; but had all things in common ("koina"). A separation from the world to God, a separation from those who did not believe was taking place. This separation reached its climax, as far as the unbelieving Jews were concerned (Acts 13,46) when Paul and Barnabas turned to the Gentiles at Antioch in Pisidia: It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

We shall see that fellowship manifests itself in separation:

- I. From the world to God--from everything which is contrary to the word, council, and will of God unto God.
- II. From the unbelievers to believers (likeminded)
- III. From the impenitent

#### FELLOWSHIP MANIFESTS ITSELF IN SEPARATION.

##### I. From the World to God.

In 1 John 1,5 - 2,14 above we see clearly how fellowship is brought about, namely through the preaching of the Gospel, declaring Him who was made manifest, whom the apostles heard, saw, and handled. Through that Gospel the believer is separated from the mind, wish, and will of the world (converted, regenerated, quickened) to the mind, wish, and will of God. Those in fellowship with God will walk in the light of the Gospel, even as God, who established the fellowship, is in the light. Anyone who does not walk in the light of the Gospel and claims fellowship with God is a liar.

Fellowship manifests itself in separation from the world--the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. The world knows it, feels it, and does not like it! John 15,18,19: If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

The mere fact that a "movement" is popular should caution believers not to go along. Just as Jesus in His preaching and teaching was not popular in His day, so those who preach Christ crucified today need not look for popularity. The world will always hate it. The moment our preaching becomes popular, let us examine ourselves to see whether we are preaching the Christ of the Bible or another Christ.

In Christ's high-priestly prayer, that great prayer of intercession, we find separation from the world to God for those that are His. John 17,6.14-16: I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world: Thine they were and Thou gavest them me; and they have kept Thy word .... I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth!

Fellowship manifests itself in this that a believer through the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit will keep himself from complicity and conformity with the world; separation from the world to a living fellowship with God (Lebensgemeinschaft mit Gott).

Romans 12,1.2 shows this: I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.--Believers are the Lord's. They should act according to God's commandments. God's rules and regulations are different from the rules and regulations of the world (men). To present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God is our reasonable service. That does not make sense to the world! We renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways; we conform our lives to the rule of the divine word; and in thought, word, and deed, walk as it becometh the Gospel of Christ. That means separation! A reasonable, spiritual service is impossible if we walk in the counsel of the ungodly, stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of the scornful. (Ps. 1) The delight of the believer has to be in the law of the Lord. (Cf. Epistle for Invocavit, 2 Cor. 6,1-10).

And 1 John 2,15-17 surely speaks plainly of separation from world to God: Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in Him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: BUT HE THAT DOETH THE WILL OF GOD ABIDETH FOREVER.

## II. Fellowship manifests itself in Separation from Unbelievers.

Throughout the scripture God is very much concerned that those who are in fellowship with Him, and through His Gospel in a God-pleasing fellowship with those who are likeminded, should be separated from the unbelievers.

We see this before the flood. After sin entered into the world, mankind was divided into two groups: believers and unbelievers. The promise of God (Gen. 3,15) separated from the world to God, and from those who did not believe the promise (Cain and Abel - Seth). Faith in the promised Savior reestablished fellowship with God, and faith in the Savior reestablished a God-pleasing fellowship with all those who were likeminded, all who had faith in the promise of God.

We have the same development after the flood, a separating into two groups: believers and unbelievers. Shem receives the promise of Gen. 3,15. Japheth was to have free access to the promise of Shem. Ham gave sin free reign and received the curse (Gen. 9,25). Sin also gradually developed among the descendents of Shem and Japheth. The tower of Babel and the confusion of tongues follow. All peoples now fall into the worship of many gods. But God would not let mankind perish in sin, as it had deserved, but He gave another chance to know Him, the only true God; He gave another chance to be restored to fellowship with Him and to a God-pleasing fellowship with one another. He does it by separation. He

made a new beginning with Abraham.

We see again how fellowship manifests itself in separation when God calls Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees. (Gen. 12,1) God commanded Abraham to get out of his country, separate himself from his countrymen, his kindred, his father's house and go to a land which He would show him. God led him into that land, made of him a great nation, according to His promise, and hedged in that nation by laws, rules, regulations, offerings, sacrifices, in order to keep that nation from the unbelievers. Throughout the Old Testament we hear the call: "Come ye out from among them! Be ye separate!"

1 Kings 8,53: Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple: For Thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth, to be Thine inheritance, as Thou spakest by the hand of Moses, Thy servant, when Thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord God.

Ezra 6,21: At the restored passover: And the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the Lord God of Israel, did eat.

Ezra 9,10-12: Prayer and confession of Ezra: And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken Thy commandments, which Thou hast commanded by Thy servants the prophets, saying: The land unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abomination, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness. Now therefore give not your daughters to their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth forever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children forever.

Nehemiah 9,2: And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.

Nehemiah 13,3: Law was read - Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude.

In the prophets we read:

Is. 48,20: Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans....

Is. 52,11: Depart ye, depart ye, go out from them, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord....

Jer. 50,8: Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans....

Jer. 51,6: Flee out of the midst of Babylon....

Zechariah 2,6: Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north....

The writers of the New Testament reecho the appeal of separation to such who are in fellowship with God through faith in His Son, Christ Jesus. As Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, and others of the Old Testament called to the believers of the Old Testament, so the writers of the New Testament call to the believers of the New Testament: Be ye separate; come ye out from among them!

2 Cor. 6,14-18: Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and ye shall

be my sons and daughters, saith the Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

The Corinthians had been brought into the fellowship with the triune God through the preaching of the Gospel by the Apostle Paul. In order that this grace be not received in vain (6,1) Paul appeals to them to separate themselves from unbelievers (v. 14): Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers! What he means by that he puts in the form of five questions:

1. What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?
2. What communion hath light with darkness?
3. What concord hath Christ with Belial?
4. What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?
5. What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?

In these five questions Paul briefly reviews the scope of fellowship. He clearly implies that its meaning cannot be stretched to include unrighteousness, darkness, Belial, infidel, or idols. Those who are in fellowship with God cannot have any part in these things.

For the Corinthians that meant to avoid all participation in the heathen festivities, things offered to idols; their meals prepared and eaten in connection with their idol worship; it meant no participation in any part of their worship; it meant simply to step out the heathens' sphere of life. It meant separation from anything pertaining to unrighteousness, darkness, Belial, infidel, idols. They were to avoid anything and everything which would in any way conflict with their fellowship with God (Lebensgemeinschaft mit Gott). The scope of fellowship is narrowed down to those who are likeminded on the basis of the Gospel.

The scope of fellowship is just as narrow today as it was in the time of the Apostle Paul. The believers today, to be in fellowship with God, and a God-pleasing fellowship with one another, must walk in the light of the Gospel. Every fellowship with darkness must be avoided! He must shun anything and everything which would in any way seem to bring him in harmony or conformity with unbelievers. Any union of like and unlike or even a mere mixture, is an abomination unto the Lord, and a very dangerous thing for the soul. (Deut. 7,2.3) (A woman marrying a man to reform him!)

Such a union, or mixture of like and unlike (no unity!), will in no way serve to further the cause of Christ's kingdom. If differences are minimized, compromised, or even wiped out by a broad-minded attitude, (or latitude of theological opinion!), it does not help the unbeliever to come to realization that a change of heart, a change of mind, a change of attitude, is essential in a believer. It will not help the unbeliever to a deeper understanding of God's word. In a mixture like this it is not the believer who influences the unbeliever, but rather the unbeliever the believer. The unbeliever has nothing to lose in such a combination and everything to gain--outwardly at least; the believer stands to lose everything, even his outward gain--if any--must be counted as loss. Thus a liberal attitude, a compromising spirit, a narrowing down of differences will hinder and hamper the building of the kingdom of God.

God has very precious thoughts toward us, thoughts of salvation and thoughts of peace. God would have all men to be saved! Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity (Ps. 133,1). He who fully realizes this and who fully appreciates the precious and noble privilege of fellowship with God, will so conduct himself in the presence of his God--whose child he is through much undeserved grace--that he will avoid everything



which in any way is contrary to this high and noble calling (living fellowship with God--Lebensgemeinschaft mit Gott). He will conscientiously and consistently keep himself from anything which might in any way outwardly or inwardly jeopardize his position as a child of God. In all his conversation--walk of life, in his inner thoughts and outward acts he will strive to be a child of God, work out his salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2,12), always having as his example the Lord Jesus, who said of Himself: I do always those things that please Him (the Father) (John 8,29). Only such persons may take comfort from God's gracious promise (2 Cor. 6,17.18): I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters. What an encouragement for us to be thus minded when the Apostle now adds (7,1): Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God!

There is comfort in separation. The consequences should not fill us with alarm. 2 Tim. 2,19: Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal: THE LORD KNOWETH THEM THAT ARE HIS, And, LET EVERYONE THAT NAMETH THE NAME OF CHRIST DEPART FROM INIQUITY.

Every Christian, especially pastors and teachers, and others in responsible positions, should be very careful what they say, write or do. They are responsible to God for all their thoughts and actions. The word of God alone must decide all matters. The foundation of God standeth sure! Even though it would at times seem impossible to carry on our work in such a strict scriptural way, let us abide by the word. Even though at times it may be difficult to distinguish between believer and unbeliever, we have the comfort: The Lord knoweth them that are His. Those who are His must manifest that by separation. The individual by leading a godly life, the congregation by departing from a brother that walks disorderly (ataktos). Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

As Moses did - We read Hebrews 11,24-26: By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

In other passages:

1 John 5,21: Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

Rev. 18,4-8: (Come out from apostate Christianity) And I heard another voice from heaven saying: Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins (sunkoinonesete), and that ye receive not her plagues.--(See Romans 12,1.2)

### III. FELLOWSHIP MANIFESTS ITSELF IN SEPARATION FROM THE IMPENITENT.

The general method of procedure is outlined for us in Mt. 18,15-18: Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he neglect to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Fellowship manifests itself in

A. Separation from gross and scandalous sinners.

In 1 Cor. 5,1.2.9-13 we have the case of incest in the Corinthian congregation: It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornica-

tion as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he hath done this deed might be taken away from you. (9-13): I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then ye must needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company (associate), if any man that is a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or railer, or a drunkard, or extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

The Corinthians, proud of their learning, yet under the influence of the customs and practices of the big city, closed their eyes to certain practices among them. Factions were common--followers of Paul, of Cephas, of Apollos, of Christ. The Apostle Paul points out in his letter that the Gospel demands submission (1,17 -24). Being in fellowship with God they must walk as it becometh the Gospel of Christ. That meant dealing with this man. Put away from among yourselves that wicked person. Separation!

Concern for their purity and preservation should move every congregation to remove gross and scandalous sinners from their midst. Concern for the soul of the sinner should move the believers to action. Believers are obliged to clear themselves of any tie, any connivance with them. They must bear testimony against their wicked practice. Fellowship manifests itself in

#### B. Separation from those who walk disorderly.

2 Thess. 3.6.14-15: Now we command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly (ataktos peripantuntos) and not after the tradition which he received of us ... And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed (kleiner Bann). Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as brother.

Paul's method agrees with Mt. 18. It must be because the same Lord who spoke Mt. 18 is here speaking through Paul. The steps are: admonish, withdraw, expel (excommunicate)--put him out of the communion, out of the fellowship. The disorderly walk the apostle has reference to is that some did not work, but were busybodies. They are admonished to work with all quietness and eat their own bread. If they would not heed the admonition, the congregation was to withdraw from him, have no company with him. This was to make him ashamed; i.e. he was to see disorderly conduct and amend his ways. If there was no improvement, the final step would have to follow. If the Lord through the apostle suggests such methods for busybodies, it may certainly be applied to others who are "ataktos," out of step, out of line, outside of the accepted order!

Finally,

#### IV. FELLOWSHIP MANIFESTS ITSELF IN SEPARATION FROM THOSE WHO TEACH OTHERWISE THAN THE WHOLESOME WORDS OF CHRIST.

In Tim. 6.3-11 we have God's admonition that we separate, withdraw from all such who preach, teach, or tolerate false doctrine in their midst: If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of

men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness; FROM SUCH WITHDRAW THYSELF. But godliness with contentment is great gain; for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, o man of God, flee these things ....

Believers in Jesus Christ, those who have been brought into fellowship with Christ by the Holy Spirit through the means of grace and into a God-pleasing fellowship with one another by the same Spirit through the same means, are bound to God and to one another by the WORD of Christ.

Mt. 7,24,26: Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock ... And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened to a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand ....

John 12,46ff: I am come a light into the world, and whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believeth not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: THE WORD THAT I HAVE SPOKEN, the same shall judge him on the last day.

John 17,14: I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world .... (17) Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth.

John 8,31: Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him: If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Those who do not abide by the word, those who would use man's wisdom, man-made rules, and those who would employ organizations who do not adhere to the word of God, soon bring about the condition described by the Apostle: ... envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings .... If admonition does not help, we must withdraw.

We must, in this connection, also briefly look at Rom. 16,17-20: Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience is come abroad to all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you, Amen.

The Apostle Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans from Corinth during his stay there on his third missionary journey. How the congregation at Rome came into existence is not certain. The claim of the Roman Catholic Church that it was founded by Peter who was to have been its first bishop for twenty-five years cannot be upheld. According to that he would have been bishop during the time of the writing of this letter. Peter is not even mentioned in the part of the letter which contains the salutation. Had Peter been bishop, Paul would hardly have written his letter, because Paul was always very careful not to interfere with the work of any other apostle (Rom. 15,20). Most likely the "strangers of Rome" mentioned in the account of the first Pentecost, Acts 2,10, carried

back to Rome the message they heard that day. Other converted Jews such as Andronicus and Junia, Aquilla and Priscilla (Rom. 16,7) helped to spread the Gospel and to establish the Roman congregation.

It was a congregation made up of Jewish converts as well as Gentiles. The different background of these groups naturally caused a tension which could easily lead to factions and divisions among them, not to say anything of the easy mark it would be for some false teacher to get a foothold among them. Thus far they had a reputation throughout the whole Christian world for their faith and obedience of the Gospel (Rom. 1,8.16.19).

There seems to be no doubt that Paul knew the conditions in the church at Rome. Those of Jewish extraction were inclined to boast of their descent of Abraham and their possession of ancient revelation. The Gentiles were inclined to despise the Jews. This prompts the Apostle, in the first place, to show them that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile in the New Testament, neither in regard to their sinful state nor in regard to justification, but that, on the other hand, the blessings of divine grace are granted to all who believe, without any distinction. Then he proceeds to show that the eternal decrees of God are inscrutable, but that they are not influenced in any way by human merit; that, therefore, the Gentiles are not entitled to gloat over the fact that so many of them have accepted the Gospel, while but a small number of the Jews were converted to Christ. Now, way at the end of the letter comes this appeal; this exhortation: Now I beseech you brethren ... mark them ... avoid them--is sandwiched in between the salutations of the last chapter. We ask ourselves WHY this appeal?

No doubt, the apostle was rejoicing in the fellowship which existed between these people and their God through faith in Christ Jesus, and also in the fellowship which existed between him and them through faith in Christ. Then the thought looms up in the midst of this rejoicing that this fellowship might be disturbed by the false teachers who were making inroads in his congregations (Galatia, Corinth ...). He breaks off the greetings and inserts the plea: I beseech you, brethren.... We may rightfully assume that the Holy Spirit wanted it that way. It would seem that the false teachers referred to were not yet active in the church at Rome, therefore they should mark the danger, mark the method of approach of these false teachers.

I beseech you--I appeal to you, I beg you, brethren, mark--take note of, be on the watch, on the lookout for them that cause divisions and offenses (who make, introduce dissensions, difficulties, offenses) contrary to (in opposition) to the doctrine (teaching, instruction) you have learned. Be on the lookout for anyone whose teaching varies from the form of sound doctrine which you have learned from the Scripture. Watch for such who introduce, uphold, enforce, propogate offending notions which are erroneous. If the truth is once deserted, unity and peace will not last long.

Take note of, be on the watch, be on the lookout for their method of approach: By good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple.--by fair and flattering words they deceive the hearts of the simple-minded, with their plausible and flattering talk, their kind speaking and praises they will deceive the hearts of the innocent.

Such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ. Though they call themselves Christians, Christian teachers, they do not aim at His glory. They do not promote His interest. They do not promote His will. Their interest is carnal, sensual, secular. Their God is their belly (they serve their own appetites, their own base passions). Mark, observe, take note, be on the watch, be on the lookout for such AND AVOID THEM, turn away from them, keep away from them. Have no unnecessary communion or communication with them.

For your obedience is come abroad to all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf; but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning the evil. You have a reputation. Everyone has heard of your obedience to the Gospel. I am happy, very happy about you. I rejoice over you. Yet just that reputation might make you an easy target for the enemy. I would have you to be wise to what is good.--skillful, intelligent, in the truth and the ways of God. And simple concerning evil.--guileless, pure as to what is evil. (1 Cor. 14,20) For their comfort and encouragement he adds; And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

What has all this to do with us? Is this not merely a special warning of the apostle to the Christians at Rome who would suffer divisions and offenses by such who would teach differently from what they had learned? There were dangerous movements, false teachers, and false doctrines active--if not already in Rome--in other congregations. Paul had met the Judaizers, those who taught a strict adherence to the Mosaic law together with the Gospel, in Galatia. He had met the doubters of the resurrection in Corinth. There were others.

We admit that it is a special warning to the Christians at Rome, but its scope is definitely much wider. The description which Paul gives is so general that it cannot be referred to the Judaizing teachers alone. Furthermore, the warning, because of its general character, refers not only to false teachers, but also to false teachings, false organizations, false unions, false fellowship--in fact, to anything which causes divisions and offenses contrary to the Gospel of Christ. Because of its general character this passage applies to us today.

We have been brought to fellowship with God through faith in Christ. Our God employs the same method today to bring people to faith as He did in the days of Paul. We confess this in the Third Article; I believe in the Holy Ghost. The same Holy Ghost who brought the Romans to faith and worked in them that wonderful obedience to the Gospel is active today through the same means of grace: the Word, Baptism, and Lord's Supper. We confess: The Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.--which means nothing else but this, that the Holy Ghost has SEPARATED us from the ungodly world in order to cleanse my heart through faith (Gausewitz Cat. p. 106).--In like manner as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.--which again means nothing else but this, that the Holy Ghost through the means of grace SEPARATES the whole Christian Church on earth from the ungodly world, daily and richly forgiving all sins to me and all believers.

It now follows that I must confess in public, not only my faith in the Gospel, but also my adherence to that church which has the true faith, by belonging to its membership, and by marking, observing, taking note, being on the watch, being on the lookout for anything that might cause divisions and offenses. More than that, I must avoid anything and everything which would cause such divisions and offenses.

We must today, perhaps as never before, avoid all teachers, teachings, doctrines, organizations which try to harmonize, minimize, or wipe out the difference between believers and unbelievers. We must today as never before avoid all compromise with darkness. We who are the children of light must walk in the light. We, too, have a reputation, that of being narrow-minded, not progressive, of being satisfied letting the word of God, our precious Bible, be our sole rule and norm of faith and life. We must therefore dedicate ourselves to God. Avoid all semblance of association with teachers, teachings, organizations, that are not in accord with the Gospel which we have learned.

We must avoid everything which might be construed as a compromise with the world. And we need not fear the consequences. The promise to the Romans holds good for us today: And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ will be with us.

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BRIEF SUMMARY

"KOINONIA" - FELLOWSHIP

MEANING:

- I. Fellowship is participation, communion (agreement, concord), intimate relationship with God through faith in Christ Jesus.
- II. Fellowship is participation, communion (agreement, concord), intimate relationship of believers with believers--likeminded with likeminded.

MANIFESTATIONS AND RESTRICTIONS:

- I. God Himself sets the limits, bounds of fellowship by enriching the meaning of "koinonia." -- Passages in which "koinonia" occurs.
- II. Fellowship manifests itself:
  - A. In unity
    1. oneness of doctrine
    2. oneness of practice
    3. oneness in brotherly love
    4. oneness in Christian giving
  - B. In separation
    1. from world to God
    2. from impenitent

ADDENDA:

We may observe the manifestation and restriction of "Koinonia" in the history of our own Synod and the Synodical Conference. It is carried out much better than I could possibly do it in articles which have appeared in our Northwestern Lutheran by Prof. Meyer--

1. Before The Founding of the Synodical Conference ..... Jan. 4, 1948
2. Steps Taken in 1867 to Compose the Differences between Wisconsin and Missouri ..... March 28, 1948
3. Steps Taken in 1867 to Compose the Differences between Wisconsin and Missouri ..... April 25, 1948
4. Steps Taken by Our Synod in 1868 Towards The Founding of the Synodical Conference ..... May 9, 1948
5. History of the Synodical Conference ..... May 23, 1948
6. Toward the Founding of the Synodical Conference ..... Aug. 1, 1948
7. Unity with Missouri Achieved in 1868 ..... Aug. 1, 1948