

In Spirit and in Truth: Rooted and Established Freedom Church of Denton

Fellowship and the Breaking of Bread

Volume 1, Lesson 8

- **In Devotion** (feel free to highlight, underline, and scribble notes. Take your time, working through the following material over the course of the next week...it would be better for you to get through one sentence with understanding than the whole lesson with no understanding!)

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers
Acts 2:42

Creed would be cold and impersonal were it not incorporated communally and relationally into its beneficiaries' lives. The Holy Spirit affords no such tragedy here. In the apostolic church, we find the unfolding revelation of the New Covenant beginning to make its way spontaneously and prolifically into the homes and around the dining tables of these first-generation Christians. So, we will now take into consideration the second discipline in the triad of disciplines that Luke chronicles in this verse. He states that they *devoted themselves to...fellowship, [and] to the breaking of bread.*

Have you ever heard someone make the following statement: "I believe in God, I am just not into that organized religion thing?" Well, God may not be into organizations (especially unspiritual ones), but I am certain that He is into organisms, and that is exactly what the church is. It is as much a living, breathing, coordinated, and well-ordered spiritual entity as a man is a living, breathing, coordinated, and well-ordered corporeal being. It has a head and a nerve center. It is moving, growing, adapting, and renewing. It has design, plan, and purpose with contingent and contiguous parts. It can be more-or-less healthy. It is Christ's body on the earth and we have been baptized into it. It is the community that God has graciously provided as the nursery for growing the young disciple in his newfound faith.

As such, it is impossible for the believer to grow and mature in his faith if he is disconnected from the body of Christ. He could not survive in this any more than a hand could, were it severed from its arm, or a baby could if cordoned from its mother's breast. The assembly *is* the environment where he is encouraged, taught, and trained, and more importantly, where he learns to encourage, teach, and train others. It is where his spiritual, social, and emotional needs may be met, and where the privilege of serving others finds its expression.

Community is at the heart of God's plan for the elect, and it is what we see forming here; but this was no average community, and this was no average fellowship. This was *koinonia* (the Greek term for fellowship), a new and Spirit-filled kind of fellowship, baptized in the glory of the recently resurrected Christ. Luke takes this archaic term and Christens it with fresh and profound theological meaning. It signifies a truly supernatural and spiritual community; the hosts being the sons and daughters of God, and the most honorable guest, the Holy Spirit.

This is true fellowship, given that the household of faith is the only community in the world to whom the Holy Spirit has been given. Any attempt at enjoying fellowship without the Holy Spirit is nothing more than a mere caricature, if not an outright counterfeit.

And though we have referred to this earlier as a discipline, it seemed to be of little difficulty to the primitive church. Luke records that they continued in this fellowship *day by day* (v.46). They seemed to need little of the admonishment that the author of Hebrews would provide later in at least two different passages in his epistle. The author warned, in convincing fashion, of the need for daily exhortation in the first place (Heb. 3:13) and not to forsake the assembly in the second place (Heb. 10:24). The danger in each passage is the same – the falling away in apostasy. Fellowship with other believers is one of the primary means that God has established for the edification of the saints and for guarding against the deceitfulness of sin that will eventually lead to outright apostasy.

This is the reason the early church believers assembled daily. Spiritual people recognize their need for regular, if not, daily fellowship. Here was a revival of the Spirit that had produced an un-exhorted desire to gather with other followers of the Way that would help secure inoculation from the world and the wolves that sought to devour them. They did not allow excuses, even good ones, from keeping them from the assembly. They understood that if the enemy would have succeeded in cutting off their fellowship, that sin, compromise, and failure would not have been far behind. They discerningly knew that the day was evil and was not going to get any better.

And we should understand this as well. We should know that in these last days, deception and distraction will be so powerful and pervasive that even the elect will be greatly tempted. The author of Hebrews admonishes us to the assembling together daily, and all the more, especially as we see that day approaching (Heb. 10:24-27). People that isolate themselves quarrel against all sound wisdom (Pr. 18:1). Especially in a day when lawlessness is being revealed (2 Th. 2:3). Predators always stalk the isolated and defenseless. And we have an enemy that prowls about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8). And while a man may prevail against one that is alone, two will withstand, and a three-fold cord is not quickly broken (Ecc. 4:12). Extreme times call for extreme measures. If you remain unconvinced, this may be a sign that you are already (on some level) defeated and vulnerable to further deception.

Fellowship is not only preventative however. It is also celebratory and joyful. We see the early church routinely fellowshiping around food and the Lord's table, breaking bread from house to house (v. 46). Fellowship is even more enhanced when it is focused on the source of our great joy and life. This is the Lord's Table. It has become the second ordinance of the church whereby we memorialize what Christ has done for us and look forward to what He is going to do. It is the great hope we have in the tension of the already-not-yet. It is the one thing that binds us together as a community of faith. It confirms our identity, gently corrects our wandering, and refocuses our vision.

Brethren, make a commitment today as you look down the corridor of time to never allow anything to keep you from the body of Christ! Fix your eyes on *that day*, that you may hear the words, *good and faithful servant*, coming from the lips of your Savior. Make it your goal to be so connected and so thoroughly trained that you may become a competent minister of Jesus Christ that trains others to train others. This was Jesus greatest joy! It was why he sought to dwell in community. He called them to be with him. He never left them. He was a good shepherd who found no greater joy than to see His own disciples doing the greater works! And even as He gave the ultimate gift in that ultimate example, on the eve of His crucifixion He found time to be with them and enjoy a meal, a meal that would forever unite them in the bonds of love and peace! Maranatha! Lord, come quickly!

- **In Meditation**

As you consider the following references, first pray and invite the Holy Spirit to come and teach you as only the Teacher and Comforter can. Admit to him your complete inability to understand anything spiritual apart from his grace and illumination. Then consider each of these verses, taking notes on anything that the Spirit brings to your attention; perhaps a **Sin** to confess, a **Promise** to claim, an **Example** to follow, a **Command** to obey, or a **Seed** of righteousness to sow. If successful, you are learning to read the Word of God with your **S.P.E.C.S.** on!

What do the following verses say about our discretionary time, recreational activities and amusement, formal business relationships, prospective marriage partners, etc.?

Psalms 1 _____

2 Cor. 6:14-18 _____

Romans 14:23 _____

Philippians 4:8 _____

2 Timothy 2:3-4 _____

1 Corinthians 16:12 _____

As noted, authentic biblical fellowship (*koinonia*) is intentionally spiritual. That is, it must be centered around the interests and activities of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, the edification of the saints, and holiness. Meditate on the Acts 2:42-47 again, and try to imagine yourself in some of the living rooms of the early church. Answer the following questions:

What types of activities do you imagine they were doing in those living rooms? _____

What types of activities do you imagine they would not be doing in those living rooms?

Why was this not a chore for them? How do you think they managed this type of daily fellowship in view of all their other responsibilities, families, and chores? _____

The absence of a desire for regular, if not daily, fellowship may be a symptom of a lack of spiritual health. What could some of the root problems be of this deficiency?

Meditate on Hebrews 3:12-19 and Hebrews 10:23-27. What is the danger that the writer warns about in both passages? Be very specific. _____

What was the author's prescription for avoiding this danger? Be very specific. _____

Were the author's admonitions suggestive merely? How long should we determine to continue in this pattern of fellowship? _____

In Application

Hebrews 10:24 commands us to *consider* how to stir up one another to love and good deeds. How many of us take intentional time to get alone and quietly ponder the various ways that we can actually encourage one another to love and good deeds? Take time in groups of 3-4 to brainstorm different ways that we can be faithful to this exhortation. Record your ideas here:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

- 4.
- 5.

Ephesians 5:18-21 offers prescriptions for fellowship. This includes being filled with the Spirit and paying careful attention to the way and ways in which we speak to and with one another. He admonishes that our speech ought to be filled with Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, and rich thanksgiving. Again, in groups of 3-4 discuss what this means for our times of fellowship and interaction. What are fresh and creative ways that we could employ this in our times of fellowship? Ask God for fresh ideas

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

In Prayer

Father, thank You that you have not left me as an orphan in this world. Not only have you given me the Holy Spirit as a friend and helper, but you have placed me in a loving family. Teach me how to never take this for granted and never find it difficult to fellowship daily with my family. In fact, Lord, teach me how to progress more and more in fellowship, in spiritual and mature ways. Season my speech with salt. Cultivate in me the desire and skill of encouraging others more than being encouraged. Help me to commit to abiding in fellowship all the days of my life, that I may reach the finish line of my life faithful in The Faith and hear You speak the words, well done good and faithful servant to me!