UPLOOK

APRIL 2008

Assess the Need • Catch the Vision • Take the Challenge

Am I in Fellowship?

FELLOW SERVANTS
Mark Anderson

FELLOW HEIRS
Scott DeGroff

TEAM C3 UPDATE
Cross Canada Cruisers

www.uplook.org

John Nicholson

A relatively astute observer could move to a new assembly and, within a few months, know pretty much exactly who is practically in fellowship and who is not.

Am I In Fellowship?

A daily walk in the light

As we read the New Testament, we can't help but notice the monumental roll the church played in the lives of the early believers. Once the church came into being (Acts 2), the vast majority of the New Testament concerned or was directed to local churches. It was assumed that every believer would take his or her place as a vital part of the local church.

How do we describe the relationship of believers to the local church? Often, the word "membership" is used. But this is misleading, for it brings to mind the idea of being part of an organization. The New Testament never speaks of church membership. It does use the word "member" (1 Cor. 12:12-27), but in the sense of living members of the human body (like hands or feet) rather than simply casual members of a club. Instead of *membership*, the Bible presents *fellowship* as one of the four essentials of church life (Acts 2:42). Fellowship speaks of partnership, harmony, communion, being bound together (2 Cor. 6:14f). It tells us that our bond isn't incidental or trivial, but fundamental and crucial.

But this brings us to another point of confusion. For when we speak of church fellowship, what often comes to mind is the idea of reception policy—the process by which new believers (either newly saved or newly moved to the area) are officially recognized as being a part of the assembly. However, when the Bible speaks of church fellowship, it is usually speaking of something quite different. Let us lay aside (for the moment) the question of official reception and ask instead: Am I participating in the church fellowship that the Bible speaks of? Am I *practically* in fellowship, for that is certainly the sense in which the word is characteristically used in the New Testament. This is not an insignificant question, for there are many believers who are officially "in fellowship" who have been—in all practical terms—out of fellowship with their brothers and sisters in Christ for decades. Surely the Lord isn't fooled. He doesn't view them as "in fellowship" simply because their name is on a list.

Our responsibility to be in fellowship with the local assembly does not end when we are officially welcomed. Rather, it entails our daily walk. It is not a one-time event, but a duty that we are to be continually devoting ourselves to (Acts 2:42). As such, allow me to mention two factors that can prevent us from sharing in the practical fellowship of the church.

Our ***attitude*** can keep us out of fellowship. If I view the assembly as "me" and "them," or if I harbor bitterness towards the other Christians, or if I have a critical spirit, or if I am merely tolerating the assembly, considering it the best of several bad options, then I am not in fellowship. Do I love the assembly, even though it is comprised of sinners (like me)?

Our ***behavior*** can keep us out of fellowship. If I am uncommitted to meetings, or if I am half-hearted in service, or if I have no burden for the other believers during the week, then I am not in fellowship. Am I devoted to the assembly, both during and outside of meetings?

There is always a tendency to officialize, and thereby stifle, the Christian life. Thinking of church membership instead of fellowship is one way we do that. But thinking of fellowship as a one-time event, rather than the daily occupation of each believer, is another. Let us each honestly evaluate our attitude and behavior and then ask ourselves: Am I in fellowship?

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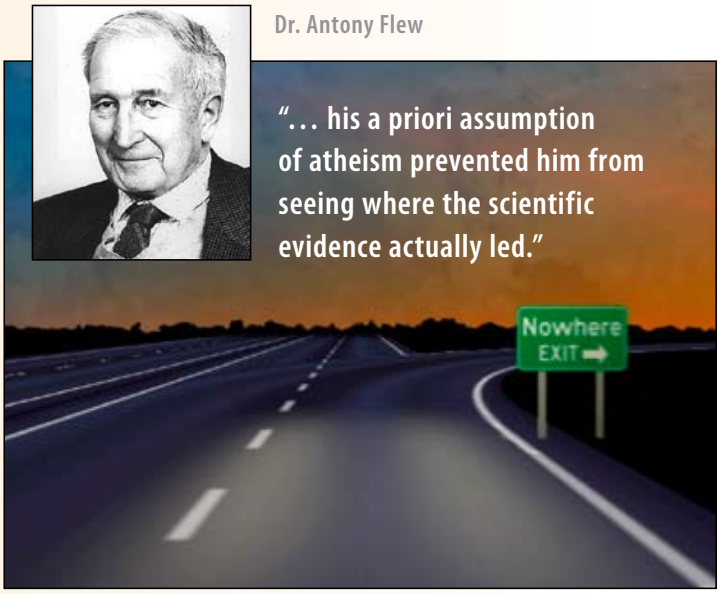
Denial to Discovery

Atheism yields to reason

It was a long journey from denial to discovery, but the journey isn't over yet. After seventy years of following where the evidence led, prominent atheist philosopher Antony Flew announced in 2004 that he had finally "discovered God." The announcement rocked the world of fundamentalist atheism to its core. Now, in his 2007 book, *There is a God: how the world's most notorious atheist changed his mind*[1], Professor Flew more completely outlines the evidence and arguments that led him to repudiate atheism.

The scientific arguments supporting God's existence presented by Flew are strikingly familiar to anyone who has followed the creation/evolution/intelligent design controversy over the last twenty-five years. He observes first that nature obeys discoverable laws that are mathematical in form and are finely tuned in degree. Secondly, it surprised Dr. Flew to discover that the chemistry of life, the DNA molecule for example, is intelligently organized and that life is purpose-driven. Lastly, he realized that the universe is not eternal but had a beginning and so it was caused to exist by something outside the universe. His was a pilgrimage, not of faith, but of reason, and, at long last, he "discovered" an infinite, intelligent "Mind" (a.k.a. "God") behind the observable universe.

But why should it take Flew so long to come to a conclusion that many scientists see as obvious or even self-evident—that design and purpose in the universe originate in a transcendent, infinite God who really does exist? Flew admits to being largely unaware of the progress made by science since he published the conclusions of his earliest work in philosophy. Those conclusions became the mold which shaped how he interpreted all later evidence bearing on the reality of God. In other words, his a priori assumption of atheism prevented him from seeing where the scientific evidence actually led. He paints this error as "the peculiar danger, the endemic evil, of dogmatic atheism." These are shockingly strong words from the former atheist and a candid admission of a lifetime of error.

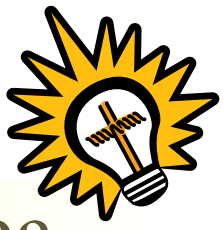


Dr. Antony Flew

Aldous Huxley, the troubled English essayist, once observed that "[t]he course of every intellectual if he pursues his journey long and unflinchingly enough, ends in the obvious, from which the non-intellectuals have never stirred." This describes Flew's intellectual journey well but fails to take into account the many people he has led into the error of atheism during his life. This is an unenviable record that he may one day be called to account for. And his journey is not over because, although he now believes God exists, he does not yet know the God of the Bible personally, and Flew does not "think of [himself] as surviving death." So, what good is it to gain the whole world but lose your own soul? What is needed by Flew, now 84, and all who are still in denial, is not just a change of mind, but a change of destiny, and this only happens when, as Jesus says, you are "born again" (Jn. 3:3).

—Michael G. Windheuser, Ph.D.

1 Antony Flew and R.A. Varghese, *There is a God: How the world's most notorious atheist changed his mind* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007).



Powered Youth Web Site & Summit '08

An online magazine by and for young people to inspire, inform and equip them for service.

Do you know a young person who could benefit from reading the writings of other young Christians or stories of encouraging happenings in their lives and as they share the gospel? Then tell them about **www.poweredyouth.com** This is not just another social networking web site–it is meant for serious Christian young people to encourage each other and themselves in the Lord! There are articles written by youth and youth leaders including special sections for young men and young ladies, plus a section focussed on evangelism. There are audio messages geared for youth with teaching on how to get involved in their assemblies. Youth conferences and outreach opportunities will be listed. With this site, the desire is for young people to be equipped to meet the challenge of 1 Timothy 4:12: *"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."*

There is also planned to be a second bi-annual Powered Youth Summit held at Grand Valley Good News Center, 12064 Linden Dr., Marne, MI 49435. This conference with an emphasis on the practical, will be held on May 17, 2008. Videos of Bill MacDonald's "Christ Loved the Church" will be shown and vigorously discussed with John Lyman leading the conversations. Breaks and activities are planned similar to what we enjoyed last autumn. Please invite all youth to attend! **Contact:** David Nicholson *poweredyoutheditor@gmail.com* **www.poweredyouth.com**

SPRING CONFERENCE IN INDIANA

The Spring Conference at the Gospel Chapel, 321 Cliff Dr., Logansport, IN, is to be held Apr 19, Lord willing. The expected speaker is Rob Kerr (KS). Refreshments at 9:30 AM with sessions at 10 and 11 AM. Lunch will be provided. Brother Kerr will also speak on Sunday morning. **Contact:** Ralph Garver ph: 574-722-1012 email: *leegar@verizon.com*

LADIES MISSIONARY CONF. IN MI

The 2008 Southern Michigan Ladies Missionary Conference will be held Apr 19 from 9:30 AM to 3:45 PM at Northwest Gospel Hall, 1350 Garfield N W, Grand Rapids MI 49504. Speakers expected are Jean Wunsch with MAF International and Molly George of India along with reports on various works in the US and Michigan. Sisters are encouraged to come and seek to find their place in the work of missions. **Contact:** Hazel Johnson ph: 616-791-4179

ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN COLORADO

Limon Bible Chapel, 385 J Ave., Limon, CO will host its annual conference Apr 19-20. Speakers will be Steve Price (KS) and Jamie Hull (CO). Accommodations and meals will be provided. **Contact:** Judy Standley ph: 719-775-9788 or 719-346-7675 email: *jstandley@centurytel.net*

CAMP HOPE IN GEORGIA

Camp Hope will host their *Father/Son Retreat* Apr 18-20. Cost: $50/family. Their *Home School Camp* for ages 7-19 is planned for May 5-10. Speakers are Nate Thomas (Junior) and Ben Scripture (Teen). The annual *Memorial Weekend Conference* will be held May 22-25. Sam Thorpe (GA) will minister God's Word to the adults and Nate Thomas (SC) will minister to the children. Cost: $50/family. The *First Annual Southeast Family Conference* is planned for Aug 2-8. Speakers are Steve Price (KS) for adults and Nate Thomas (SC) for children. Visit *www.camphopega.org* for the complete summer camp and conference schedule. **Contact:** Steve Roys, c/o Camp Hope, 7011 Pony Lake Rd., Dahlonega, GA 30533 ph: 770-536-4787 email: *camphopega@arilion.com*

DEARBORN MICHIGAN CONFERENCE

The second annual Dearborn Chapel Conference will be held Apr 19-20. The speaker will be Doug Kazen (WA). Meeting times will be 4:00 PM & 6:00 PM Saturday with dinner provided. Sunday morning meeting at 9:30 AM, Family Bible Hour at 11:15 AM. Lunch provided and the second meeting at 1:15 PM. **Contact:** Ross Rainey ph: 734-453-8585 or David Donnelly ph: 313-278-4592 email: *dgdonnelly@wowway.com*

SPRING CONFERENCE IN WISCONSIN

Wauwatosa Bible Chapel, 2200 North 67th St., Wauwatosa, WI 53213 will hold their Annual Spring

Randy Amos speaking at the "Walk Through Tabernacle"

Conference Apr 19 from 10 AM - 4 PM. The theme will be *"Insights for an Effective Ministry"* with Dick Yarrell (CA). Lunch provided. Please RSVP by Apr 11. ph: 414-771-1030 M-F, 8-noon.

CHICAGO AREA CONFERENCE

The Palos Hills Christian Assembly is hosting its annual conference Apr 25-27. Scheduled speakers are W. H. Burnett (ON), Randy Amos (NY), and Steve Price (KS). There will be a program for children. **Contact:** Rich Battaglin ph: 708-599-9407 e-mail: *paloschristians@hotmail.com*

WALK IN THE WORD WEEKEND

Warren Henderson, (WI) will be the speaker for a special weekend of meetings at Bethany Bible Chapel, Toms River, NJ Apr 25-27. Brother Henderson has authored a number of books including his latest; *"The Search for God"* and *"Hiding God"*. Meetings are scheduled as follows. Fri. 7:30 PM: *"Supernatural Revelation vs. World Religion"*; Sat. 9:30 AM: *"Lessons in Discipleship from 1 Timothy 3"*; Sat. 2-5 PM: *"Lessons from the Lives of Isaac and Jacob"* (Bethel Bible Chapel, Middletown NJ) and two meetings on the Lord's Day at 11:00 AM and 1:30 PM. **Contact:** Mark Kolchin email: *knowtheword@comcast.net*

REDFIELD IOWA CONFERENCE

Hilltop Bible Chapel, 1314 1st Street, Redfield, IA 50233 will host their conference May 2-4. They are expecting Joe Reese (ON) to minister the Word. **Contact:** Dave Hammond ph: 515-523-2357 Butch Horn ph: 515-833-2754 email: *rhorn2@iowatelecom.net*

LOUISIANA ANNUAL CONFERNECE

Lake Park Chapel, 201 Schlief Dr., Belle Chasse LA 70037 will hold its 63rd Annual Bible Conference May 3-4. Keith Trevolt (KS) will be the speaker DV for a spiritually refreshing weekend in God's Word. The conference begin Saturday at 3:30 PM. **Contact:** Ray Cummings, 103 Dickson Dr, Belle Chasse, LA 70037 ph: 504-394-3087 or 504-393-7083 email: *lakeparkchapel@cmaaccess.com*

LADIES' MISSIONARY CONFERENCE

Hosted by Oakwood and Turner Road Bible Chapels, the 31st Annual Conference will be held May 3 from 9:30 AM to 3:00 PM at Oakwood Bible Chapel in Windsor, ON. Child care for 2 yrs. old & under and lunch provided. Speakers: Lillian Horne (Equador); Sandra McCaffrey (formerly Zambia) and Lois DeJager (PNG). **Contact:** Jan Gillis ph: 519-967-1075 email: *ngillis@cogeco.ca*

SPRING CONF. IN SCHENECTADY

The Bellevue Gospel Chapel in Schenectady, NY will hold their Annual Spring Conference May 10-11 beginning Saturday at 3 PM. The speaker will be Jabe Nicholson (MI). **Contact:** John E. Smith ph: 518 861-6486 email: *johnesmith@aol.com*

WORD ALIVE BIBLE STUDY IN GA

Studies are held at Washington Chapel, 808 East Robert Toombs Ave., Washington, GA. Scheduled times are 9 AM - 3 PM with lunch provided.
May 10 - *The Foundation of the Church* Acts 2:41-42 Steve Price
Sept 13 - *A Dispensational Transition* Acts 1-28 Mark Hartley
Oct 11 - *The Saving Gospel of Grace* Acts 12:25-16:5 Sam Thorpe Jr.
Dec 13 - *Reaching the Known World* Acts 19:21-28:31 Mike Attwood
Contact: Sam Thorpe 706-359-6297

WALK THROUGH TABERNACLE IN NJ

The believers at Community Gospel Chapel in Voorhees, NJ invite you to their *Weekend in the Word* May 16-18 with speaker Randy Amos (NY). Sessions Friday and Saturday will take place in front of a two third's size Walk Through Tabernacle. Space is limited so register early. **Contact:** Sherman Fray ph: 856-546-9005 email: *safray@msn.com* web: *www.weekendintheword.eventbrite.com*

17th ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN CA

Claremont Bible Chapel, Claremont CA will hold its Bible Conference May 16-18. Meetings begin Friday at 7:30 PM. Invited speakers are Harold Summers (BC) and Dr. Joe Mikael (AZ). Accommodations available. **Contact:** J. Harry Elliott ph: 909-621-1064 e-mail: *jhdelliott@aol.com*

VESSELS OF HONOR 2008

Convened by East Tulsa Bible Chapel, this young adult conference will be May 23-26 on the campus of Park University in Parkville, MO. See web site *www.vesselsofhonor.org* for full details. **Contact:** Dan Moffitt 918-744-6484 email: *danmoffitt@sbcglobal.net*

COLLEGE AGE CONFERENCE IN CA

The 4th Annual Summit Conference for college age young people will be held Memorial Day weekend, May 23-26 at Emmanuel Heights campground in central California. The main speaker will be Daniel Kim. **Contact:** Bob Bruton ph: 510-636-0851 email: *tsbruton@yahoo.com*

ANNUAL MISSIONS CONFERENCE

Willingboro Christian Assembly, 175 Somerset Dr., Willingboro, NJ 08046 invite you to their conference Jun 6-8. The theme is *"Hearts For the Harvest: Penetrating the Darkness"* with Melvin Hunt (Guyana, South America) as the expected speaker. A Youth Extravaganza is planned for Friday 5-8 PM. The Lords Supper at 9 AM Sunday will be followed by a general session at 10 AM. Dinner will be served followed at 2:30 PM by a *"Workshop with the Missionaries."* **Contact:**
Hy Kennedy ph: 609-239-4028
Carmen Harris ph: 609-871-4011

SKYLAND BIBLE CONFERENCE

The conference will be held at Brevard College, Brevard NC from Saturday Jun 28 to Friday Jul 4. The speakers will be Tom Taylor (PA) and Roy Hill (Eng). This is a family conference with planned activities for all ages. Children's meetings will be conducted by Phil Guikema (FL). See *www.SkylandBible.org* for full conference information.

UPWARD BOUND

Upward Bound will be held at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, ON. Week one's focus is on intensive Bible study and practical teaching from the Scriptures, but there are also social and recreational activities. Week one runs Aug 10-17. Week two is a canoe trip into Algonquin Park from Aug 17-22. Speakers are: Brian Russell (UK), Charlie Tempest (ON), Craig Shakarji (MD), Dennis Leblanc (NB) and Sandy McEachern (ON). Attendees are welcome to attend either or both weeks. **Contact:** *sandymceachern@hotmail.com*

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

The Calendar Project provides calendars with Scripture verses in twelve languages. The goal of the Project is to enable missionaries to get Scripture verses into homes. The calendars are available to assembly missionaries and nationals via a network of volunteer workers throughout the U.S and Canada.

In 2007, more than 40,000 calendars were sent all over the world. This is an ideal ministry for ladies groups, youth groups or individuals. New workers are always needed. Visit *www.calendarproject.info*

Logos School in Cyprus requires teachers commencing Sep 2008. The school will be hiring primary and high school teachers who are able to teach one or a combination of: Religious Studies, Math, Physics, Geography, History, English and Physical Education. **Contact:** Gary Love email: *g.love@logos.ac.cy*

Guelph Bible Conference Centre, ON is looking for two born again, mature married couples who are interested in full-time ministry on a year round basis. One couple should have proven experience in a wide range of maintenance/construction/groundskeeping functions, office support and other areas as required. They are also looking for a couple who have experience in administrative functions, directing staff, team leading and general skills in assisting in the many facets of camp life. Good interpersonal skills are required for hosting midweek and weekend groups. Housing is available. This is an excellent opportunity for serving the Lord in a demanding yet rewarding ministry. **Contact:** Bruce Dureno
email: *bdureno@mnsi.net*
web: *www.guelphbiblecc.com*

Emmanuel Bible Camp in PEI, Canada is looking to the Lord for a camp manager for the upcoming camp season. Fifty-four years in presenting the gospel to boys and girls in the area, Emmanuel continues to emphasize Christ in all its ministry. **Contact:** Grant Canfield email: *gandscanfield@pei.sympatico.ca*

Parkside Ranch, located in Orford Quebec, Canada has a need for a full time cook, (single or couple). The cook position includes 8 weeks of summer camps with weekend and weekly groups during the year and the responsibility of ordering food. web: www.parksideranch.com email: *registrar@parksideranch.com* Fax to: 819-868-6730 c/o Mr. Dean Somers

HOMECALL

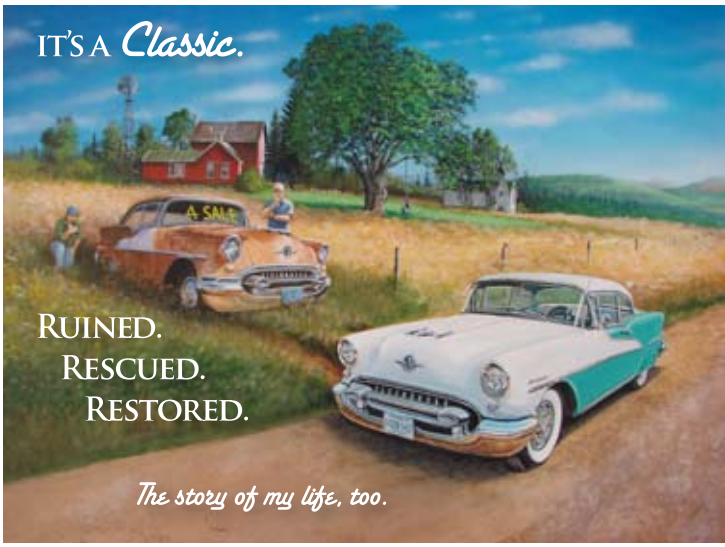
Donald C. Perrault was called Home to be with his Lord and reunited with his wife Nona on Jan 13. Together they had faithfully served the Lord at Immanuel Mission, AZ for 38 years, commended in 1953. They ministered to the Navajo, sowing the good Seed in the hearts of children and adults. Don and Nona were dorm parents and Don took care of the maintenance. Nona's skill in accounting, hospitality and ministering to the women and children was invaluable. The work continues at Immanuel Mission among the people that Don and Nona dearly loved. They are greatly missed.

Cross Canada Cruisers Update

Team C³ gears up to get on the road!

As springtime in Canada begins and the snow finally melts, we look forward to the orientation time for Team C³ from May 6-18. Then the road trip begins as Team East starts in Prince Edward Island, Team West arrives in British Columbia, and the two teams move toward Ontario, learning to share the gospel effectively. The teams will follow a similar routine as used on the *Good News on the Move* team in the USA (see page 20). Special handouts that tie in to the symbolic message of the cars are in final stages of development, including a gospel text with a painting (right). Other products are being prepared including gospel CDs and texts in French.

Thank you for continued prayer for this effort. More information on the vision for the team, the schedule and more can be found at: **www.crosscanadacruisers.com/info**



Painting by Glenn Hayes. Text with gospel message will be on reverse side of print.

ADVANCE NOTICE: Georgetown, ON Gospel Effort

by Nathan Griffiths

At the conclusion of this year's *Cross Canada Cruisers* road trip, both teams will meet in Georgetown, Ontario (north of Oakville, only about 45 minutes from Toronto) for a major gospel effort. After five months of travelling, sharing the gospel and working with assemblies, the team looks forward to joining with the saints of Halton Hills Bible Chapel to take the gospel into their community.

This outreach is planned for ***October 5-11, 2008,*** D. V. During that week there will be many opportunities to serve with planned outreach events, such as door-to-door visitation, kids clubs, car washes, good works projects and public seminars in the evenings.

The *GNOM* team in the United States has co-hosted several of these outreaches in the past two years, namely in Sioux Falls, SD; Huntsville, AL and Tuscaloosa, AL. They have been times of immense blessing from the Lord, where He has shown His hand moving in mighty ways in the lives and circumstances of people.

The week spent in Georgetown promises to be a time of encouragement and challenge to all those who attend. This is an opportunity to allow the aroma of Christ to spread through the town, so residents can experience the goodness of the Lord. For believers who join us, there is the prospect not only to tell others of the Saviour of sinners, but also to gain experience in evangelism and discipleship.

What can you do to be involved? Pray. Pray for the unsaved in that area that the Lord would even now be working in the hearts of people, preparing them for the gospel. Pray for open doors into the community with the good news. Pray for the influence of the Jehovah's Witnesses to be overcome in the town, (Georgetown is where the *Watchtower* magazine is printed for all of North America). Pray for the local believers as they prepare for the outreach and the follow-up work that we pray will result from the sown seed.

Join us. Does serving in this way interest you? There are no qualifications required, but that you be open to the Lord using you where He leads. Please consider booking vacation at this time and come along to share the gospel in this unique setting. Watch here in *Uplook* and on the **www.uplook.org** web site for more information on this evangelistic effort, or email: *nathan@uplook.org*
For information on Halton Hills Bible Chapel, visit: **www.haltonhillsbiblechapel.com**

Fellow Prisoners

The fellowship of His sufferings

"When God designed the bird, He designed it for the air. When He designed the fish, He designed it for the water. And when He designed the church, He designed it for persecution."
–Jabe Nicholson

The history of the Christian church is one of suffering. Perhaps some of us lose sight of this in our pleasant homes, our peaceful countries, and our comfortable lives. But the sort of peace and plenty that many of us enjoy today is very much the exception, not the rule. For two thousand years, Christians have been imprisoned and executed for their faith, and our suffering continues today in many countries. And yet, despite the persecution—one might even say because of the persecution—the church continues to grow.

The New Testament example

This is the way it was in the beginning of the church. In three of his epistles, Paul makes reference to those who were imprisoned with him (Rom. 16:7; Col. 4:10; Phm. 23). Paul was no armchair general. He knew what it was to suffer imprisonment for his faith.

Sean Warren

A building that housed Christian gatherings in a troubled region of Africa.

What is more, he used the expression "fellow prisoner" in each of these passages. The implication is that, through imprisonment, Paul shared something very special with these believers. Philippians 1:29 makes it clear that for a Christian to suffer is not an indication that God's plans have gone astray; rather, suffering is something granted to the believer. This suffering is tied to the purity of our lives, the fervency of our devotion, and the constancy of our witness. Though frequently in prison, Paul lived a life that was at the center of God's will. God's plans were worked out in and through Paul's life, whether imprisoned or free.

These three passages also make it clear that imprisonment was not an unusual event in the lives of the early Christians. Though the purity of their lives stood in stark contrast to the society around them, they were frequently imprisoned. In some cases, this was an attempt to prevent the growth of the early church. In other cases, it was proof that a totalitarian state cannot permit anyone to have a higher loyalty than to the state itself. But in all cases, it is clear that the early Christians had done nothing to deserve imprisonment. Their lives were an embodiment of the words of Christ in Matthew 5:16, *"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."* They let the light shine before men but men chose not to glorify the Father in Heaven—a choice which carries with it eternal consequences.

So what happened to the early church? Did the danger of prison limit its growth? Did threats divert people from loyalty to their Lord? Absolutely not! Our enemy is crafty but sometimes he oversteps himself, and, in this case, persecution refined and strengthened the church. The book of Acts is a testimony to the constant growth of the early church. One could wish that a small army of church growth consultants would understand that the true church grows under the most adverse circumstances. If we want to see church growth New Testament style, we don't need to eliminate the scandal of the cross or soft peddle the cost of discipleship, but rather we

Phil Morley

"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you." (Jn. 15:18)

need to fill the seats with people who are willing to suffer prison and death for the sake of Christ. When Christ is our all and all, we will have no problem running outreaches, supporting missions, and winning the lost for Christ. Indeed, the enemies of Christianity would complain those dedicated early believers were turning the world upside down (Acts 17:6).

After the New Testament

Moving out of the first years of the church, we also see imprisonment, torture, and death for the followers of Christ. About 150 years after Paul experienced imprisonment, a 22-year-old woman named Perpetua chose death rather than denial of her Lord. Although she had a newborn child, and despite the urging of her unbelieving father that she apostatize, she chose death in the arena. Perhaps even more moving is the example of Blandina. Eusebius of Caesarea tells in book 5 of his *Ecclesiastical History* of the tortures suffered by this slave girl. Though she was physically weak, her torturers wore themselves out trying to force her to recant. She faced the wild beasts in the arena and public torture. Finally, at her death, Eusebius tells us, "And the heathen themselves confessed that never among them had a woman endured so many and such terrible tortures." We know that the writings of church historians like Eusebius do not have the same authority as Scripture, but we have no reason to doubt the persecution of the Christians under Roman rule and the subsequent growth of the church. No wonder the early Christian writer Tertullian would say, "The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians."

The suffering continued through the Middle Ages and into the Reformation. Hugh Latimer and Nicolas Ridley were slowly burned alive on October 16, 1555. While burning, Latimer encouraged Ridley with the words, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out." During the terrible year of 1555 in the reign of Queen Mary, Rowland Taylor was also imprisoned and executed. But the steadfast servant of Christ could not be silent about his hope and said to his family, "Count me not dead, for I shall certainly live, and never die. I go before, and you shall follow after, to our long home." Clearly these men took to heart Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 5:8 that he would *"prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord."*

And what of today?

Today, the church continues to suffer. While far removed from the experience of most Christians in the Western world, our brothers and sisters in many places suffer imprisonment, torture, and even death. Yes, the church suffers; but, through it all, the church continues to grow. About a year ago, I heard the horrifying stories of Christians in North Korea being put to death by being run over by army tanks. Knowing what we know of church history, we should have been able to predict the consequences. Far from destroying the church, there are now "outbreaks" of Christianity within the North Korean Army! Should the North Korean leadership decide to deal with this "problem" through more imprisonment and persecution, the church in North Korea will grow unstoppably.

Yes, persecution and prison helps the church to grow. But we in the Western world should not think ourselves immune. For several centuries, we have seen an unusual phenomenon in certain Western nations: Christianity holding a place of favor with the people and governments. In the United States, Britain, Canada, and a couple of other countries, we may be tempted to think this the normal state of affairs. It isn't. Historically speaking, this is a rare occurrence. The normal state of affairs is for the believers to be weak, persecuted, despised, and fearless in spirit. Persecution may very well come in our own nation. Of course, the persecutors will claim good reasons. They always do. Moral evil always disguises itself as moral virtue. In Roman times, it was a sense of outrage that the Christians were impious towards the gods and the accusation that Christians were cannibals. As such, the Christians were viewed as a danger to the Empire. In our nation, it will be the fact that Christians will not bow to the great god Toleration, but will instead continue to call sinners to repentance. Yes, we too may be called upon to enter into the fellowship of suffering. So how should we prepare? The best way is to learn the Bible, start experiencing the life of faith, grow mighty in prayer, be devoted to one another in brotherly love, to adorn ourselves with good works, and to share our faith far and wide. By doing so, we prepare for the future and we obey in the present.

Fellow Citizens

The destruction of the double wall

"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19).

The church at Ephesus was largely comprised of converted Gentiles. In the opening ten verses of Ephesians 2, Paul shows that, prior to their conversion, they (the "you") had shared a common spiritual predicament with believing Jews (the "we" and the "us"). Both had been spiritually dead. But, from verse 11, Paul shows that prior to their conversion, they, as Gentiles, had been not only spiritually *dead*, but spiritually *distant*.

The word "Gentiles" sums up their former spiritual condition perfectly, carrying with it a seven-fold disadvantage and deficiency (vv. 11-13): they were (i) uncircumcised; (ii) without ("apart from") Christ, having no claim on Israel's Messiah; (iii) alienated ("estranged") from the "commonwealth" (literally, "citizenship") of Israel; (iv) strangers to God's covenants of promise—the covenants of blessing such as God had made with the patriarchs and with David; (v) without anything to look forward to in the future ("no hope"); (vi) lacking God to whom they could turn in the present ("without God in the world"); and (vii) "far off", removed from Israel's privileged religious position. Their spiritual condition had been grim in the extreme!

"But now…"

Starting at verse 13, the apostle describes how the work of Christ has changed everything for them—in two entirely different dimensions and directions: first horizontally, in their relationship with the Jews; then vertically, in their relationship with God.

In the section down to verse 18, the Lord Jesus is associated with peace three times. *"He is our peace"* (v. 14), He *"made peace"* (v. 15), and He *"preached peace"* (v. 17). In the context, this peace is mainly that between Jew and Gentile. But the peace which our Lord "came and preached" (v. 17) through His apostles and other gospel messengers, probably points not only *immediately* to harmony between Jew and Gentile, but *ultimately* to a restored relationship between them both and God.

The apostle describes the peace accomplished by our Lord in both negative and positive terms.

First, negatively, the Lord Jesus broke down *"the middle wall of division [partition, enclosure]"* (v. 14). In all likelihood, Paul had in mind the layout of the temple of Jerusalem. The temple rested on a huge stone platform which was divided into the Court of the Gentiles and a smaller court around the Temple proper. A five-foot stone wall surrounded the inner area, symbolizing the separation between Israel and the Gentile nations. Stern warnings about the penalty for Gentiles trespassing beyond the wall were displayed in Greek and Latin on its pillars.[1] Interestingly, Paul wrote this very letter while a prisoner at Rome, as a result of having been wrongly accused of taking an Ephesian Gentile (Trophimus) beyond this wall (Acts 21:28–29).

The commandments contained in God's Law were intended to keep Israel pure, free from the idolatry and immorality of the Gentile nations around. But the Jews not only failed to keep that Law, they took pride in their very possession of it. And, when they looked down contemptuously on the Gentiles because they didn't have the Law, the Gentiles retaliated by regarding the Jews as haughty and ignorant bigots. The Law, therefore, became the innocent cause of deep hostility and hatred between Jews and Gentiles.

But in His death, our Lord Jesus removed all barriers to peace between Jew and Gentile by demolishing the dividing wall and abolishing

There are no second-class citizens in the church.

Sean Locke

[annulling, rendering inoperative] the Law in that its ordinances are no longer binding.

Second, positively, the Saviour not only removed the barriers to peace, He *"created in Himself one new man,"* comprised of converted Jews and Gentiles. The word "new" indicating that which is new in quality; that which is different in nature. For He neither made Jews into Gentiles nor Gentiles into Jews. The Lord Jesus did something far more wonderful: He obliterated all distinction between believing Jews and Gentiles.

But the peace that our Lord made between believing Jews and Gentiles (v. 15) was tied up inextricably with an even greater work: the reconciliation of both Jews and Gentiles in one body to God (v. 16). When Paul says that converted Gentiles were *"made near by the blood of Christ,"* (v. 13), he is referring to the removal of the barrier between Jew and Gentile. When he says that both are reconciled *"through the cross,"* (v. 16), he is referring to the removal of the barrier between men and God.

Paul concludes by saying that converted Gentiles are therefore *"no longer strangers"* (those found among a people they cannot call their own), but are *"members of God's household."* They are *"no longer ... foreigners"* (those sojourning in a place they cannot call their own, having no citizen rights), but are now *"fellow citizens with the saints,"* that is, fellow citizens with all God's people generally, and, with regard to the context, with Jewish believers especially. Although as Gentiles they had been *"alienated from the citizenship of Israel"* (v. 12, literal translation), now as *"fellow citizens with the saints,"* they share equally in all the rights and privileges of every child of God.

Paul's multiple citizenship

It is not surprising that Paul should express the identical blessings of believing Jews and Gentiles in terms of joint citizenship because he enjoyed no fewer than four citizenships himself.

The apostle was a citizen of Tarsus (Acts 21:39), Rome (Acts 16:37-38; 22:25-28), Israel (Eph. 2:12; Php. 3:5), and heaven (Php. 3:20). The Gentile believers at Ephesus could not share Paul's citizenship of Tarsus, Rome, or Israel. But he insisted that they certainly shared the most important of his citizenships. For, along with the rest of God's people, they enjoyed the full citizen rights of heaven! There are no second-class citizens in the church.

Perhaps we ought to remember that the man who wrote verse 19 was a Pharisee, and that it had been to Pharisees that our Lord had once told His parable of the prodigal son. Towards the close of that parable, in Luke 15:24, the returned prodigal's father said, *"This my son was dead and is alive again"* (which is, in a sense, the teaching of the first half of Ephesians 2); *"he was lost and is found"* (which is, in a sense, the teaching of the second half of Ephesians 2: those who were once distant coming from the far country to the father). "Note the marvelous change in the heart of that elder brother, the erstwhile bigot, Saul of Tarsus! Listen to that Hebrew of the Hebrews, as he welcomes the prodigal son home... ."[2]

By God's grace, we can say with both converted Jews and converted Gentiles of the first century, *"Here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come"* (Heb. 13:14). That is the only citizenship that matters.

So what?

Paul exhorted the Philippians, *"let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ"* (Php. 1:27), where the word translated "let your conduct" is closely akin to that translated "citizenship" at the close of chapter 3.[3] Paul's words could well be rendered, *"Continue to exercise your [heavenly] citizenship in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ."*[4] Our minds should not be set on earthly things (Php. 3:19); our manner of life should demonstrate to the world the kind of citizenship which is ours in Christ. May God so help us.

Endnotes

1 These "No trespassing signs" made chilling reading: "No Gentile is to enter within the wall and enclosure around the holy place. Whoever is caught there will have only himself to blame for his death, which will follow"! Copies of the actual inscription were found in 1871 and 1938.

2 Ruth Paxson, *The Wealth, Walk and Warfare of the Christian* (London, GB: Oliphants Ltd, 1939), pp. 68-69.

3 "Paul uses here a verb here that strictly means 'live as citizens.'" F. F. Bruce, "Philippians" in *Good News Commentary* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row Publishers, 1983).

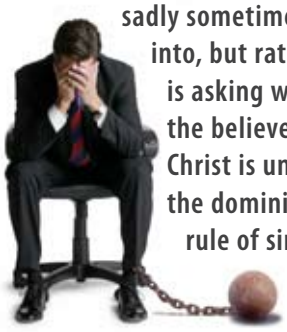
4 See William Hendricksen, *New Testament Commentary, Philippians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1962), p. 80. "Do your duty as good citizens of a heavenly kingdom" is J. B. Lightfoot's paraphrase in *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (London, GB: Macmillan and Co, 1879), p. 105.

Do Believers Continue in Sin?

Deliver us from evil

The title of this article is provoked by a study of a frequently misunderstood question raised by Paul in Romans 6:1: *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?"* It is a rhetorical question, asked after the apostle had shown that Christ is the head of a new creation in the same way that Adam was head of the old (5:12-21). Paul shows that, in this way, Adam was a type of Him that was to come. Both are shown to be representative men: what they did (Adam in Eden and Christ at Calvary) affects all those who are associated with them. We are "in Adam" by virtue of our birth but "in Christ" and belonging to a new creation by virtue of our new birth, through faith in Him. Although true Christians may still sometimes act according to the flesh (the corrupt nature inherited from Adam), we are not "in the flesh" (that is, not dominated by it), but "in the Spirit." The Holy Spirit now permanently indwells those who believe in Christ (Jn. 14:16; Eph. 1:13; Rom. 8:9) and frees the believer to live a new kind of life..

Paul is not speaking of the sins (plural) that each of us may sadly sometimes fall into, but rather he is asking whether the believer in Christ is under the dominion or rule of sin.



But we are running ahead of the apostle's argument. First, he shows that it is impossible for even believers to live as God wants by our own efforts.

We cannot free ourselves

Jeremiah tells us that the flesh cannot be changed or improved. He puts it this way, *"Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good who are accustomed to doing evil"* (Jer. 13:23). The point of the verse is not that we humans cannot remove the stains of sin—though that is true—but rather that we cannot alter or overcome something that is part and parcel of being a fallen creature. Sin is characteristic of mankind as spots are of a leopard. We not only need to be forgiven for the individual sins we have committed but freed from continuing in bondage to sin. In Romans, Paul demonstrates how unreasonable it is to think that God would forgive us but not free us, that He would pardon us for being in the mire of sin without also providing a way out.

This is not the first time Romans calls upon us to follow the way the Holy Spirit reasons or argues. The late Tom Westwood entitled his commentary on the Roman epistle, *"A Courtroom Drama,"* and so it is. We hear again and again an appeal to think something through with Paul. *"If our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say?"* (3:5) *"What then shall we say that Abraham has found?"* (4:1) *"What shall we say then, is the Law sin?"* (7:7). *"What then shall we say to these things?"* (8:31), and so on into chapter 9. The beginning of chapter 6 is no exception: "*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?"* We are invited to reason through the question and decide for ourselves if the idea makes sense.

In writing this, Paul is not himself proposing that his readers continue in sin, nor supposing that anyone in their right mind would suggest such a thing. Rather, he is inviting us to consider whether such an idea makes any sense in the light of the deliverance that the Lord has effected through His death. *"For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (6:10-11). Is it likely that God's salvation would provide pardon and forgiveness of sins but no present power to overcome sin? The NASB makes this clearer by translating the question as, *"Are we to continue in sin?"* In other words, is that the way it is to be? Think it through. As Denham Smith wrote:

"Jesus came Himself and sought me:

Sold to death, He found and bought me;
Then my blessed freedom taught me—
Peace, peace is mine."

The Law cannot change us

Freedom from sin can never be attained by self-effort, even with the best of rules or principles to guide us. This is made abundantly clear in Romans 7:7-25. There the most earnest seeker after day-by-day holiness is heard to cry out, *"O wretched man that I am!"* The exacting demand of the Law enabled him to learn his wretchedness but could not impart power to effect any change. Note how many times the words "I" and "the Law" appear in the passage. It is a graphic and painful description of an individual who agrees with the Law and struggles most earnestly to fulfill it, not realizing that the sons of God are no longer under it. Instead of this fruitless struggle, he must appropriate the provision made to free him from sin's dominion. The liberating role of the Spirit in the life of the believer is made clear in Chapter 8, where the 3rd and 4th verses show how the righteousness of the Law may be truly fulfilled. The practical outworking of this is expounded more fully in Galatians 5:16-25.

Can we become sinless? Not in this life. The apostle John wrote in order that we might not sin but also recognized that we may do so (1 Jn. 2:1). However, Christ died to sin (ours, not His own) and He now represents us as surely as Adam once did (Rom. 6:10). It is His death that we are to reckon as ours. The flesh in us isn't dead, and we should never try to reckon it so. That is an unscriptural delusion. Rather, in Christ we have died to sin as the controlling principle in our lives, and, by faith in His finished work, we enter into freedom.

Sin versus sins

Our understanding will be helped by noting that the text does not ask *"Shall we continue **to** sin?"* but *"Shall we continue **in** sin?"* Paul is not speaking of the sins (plural) that each of us may sadly sometimes fall into, but rather he is asking whether the believer in Christ is under the dominion or rule of sin. His answer is that the believer is freed from it (6:7, 18, 22) rather than under its dominion (6:9, 14).

Confirmation of this is also found in the use of the word "continue" in our text. Is that where we are left after receiving Christ? It is the same Greek word that appears in John 1:38. Two followers of John the Baptist wanted to know where Christ lived (*meno*). Again, in John 15, the disciples were charged to "abide" in Him. In neither of those cases was something accidental or temporary in view; they speak of what was characteristic. Later, in his first epistle, John confirms that those who practice righteousness are born of Him and those who do not are not, regardless of what they profess (1 Jn. 2:29; 3:10).

This answers the challenge, "Do you mean to say that once you are saved you can live as you please or live like the devil?" No, you cannot, because it is no longer your nature as born of God. If a person lives like that, he cannot and should not be regarded as a believer. *"By their fruits you will know them"* (see Mt. 7:17-20).

in Christ we have died to sin as the controlling principle in our lives, and, by faith in His finished work, we enter into freedom.

In this short article we cannot develop these thoughts any further, but we draw the reader's attention to the summary of chapter 6 by J. Oswald Sanders as quoted by William MacDonald in the *Believer's Bible Commentary*. He writes: *"Shall we continue in sin?"* and answers:

1. You cannot because you are united to Christ. ***Reasoning*** (vv. 1-11)
2. You need not because sin's dominion has been broken by grace. ***Appealing*** (vv. 12-14)
3. You must not because it would bring in sin again as your master. ***Commanding*** (vv. 15-19)
4. You had better not for it would end in disaster. ***Warning*** (vv. 20-23)

Our purpose in this article is not to help readers to have a head knowledge of the subject of deliverance, but to encourage them to go on and experience it in an ever fuller way. The grace is available. Let us all appropriate it!

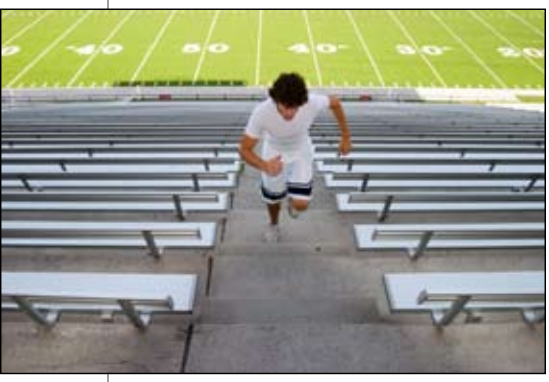
—Colin Anderson

Fellow Heirs

Training for reigning

There are two things in [Romans 8:17] associated with being a fellow heir of Christ. The first is suffering and the second is glory.

I am a state champion football player. I accomplished this wonderful feat in 1989 when the Jr. Blues of Washburn Rural took the field and completed an undefeated season to become the uncontested best team in the state of Kansas. I know this is true because I was in the stands watching the whole thing. I watched them score, I watched them defend, and I watched them win. I am a state champion football player. Yet I never touched the ball or the field. I didn't even have pads on the day we won the championship. But my name is recorded in permanent record as a member of that team. I could even have put a patch on my letter jacket that touted my accomplishment (which I didn't have the gall to do). I was on the freshman team that year and was invited to play in the post season with the varsity—an honor which four of us declined for more couch time and fewer windsprints. None the less, our names were on the roster, and, when the team won, we won, too.



Forest Woodward

Romans 8:17 says, *"and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."* That means that when the Lord won the victory, I won too! Since I am in Christ, His inheritance is my inheritance, His reward is my reward, His acceptance is my acceptance, and so on. Just as identification with my team earned me a state title, identification with Christ ushers me into all of His blessing. Notice that the verse says "if children, then heirs." Every person who has come to God through Christ is a joint heir with the King of kings and Lord of lords. What a blessing! What grace is ours through Him. Hebrews 1:2 tells us that the Lord Jesus is *"the heir of all things."* And if we are in Him, then we are to inherit all things (Rev. 21:7). If you are in Christ today then you are rich, you are secure, and you are loved—all because Christ deserves the inheritance of a perfect heaven, and we have come into the good of His reward by being identified with Him. He became poor that we might be rich. We have so much to be thankful for!

There are two things in this verse associated with being a fellow heir of Christ. The first is suffering and the second is glory.

The heir will suffer

A would-be toddler bride was once asked the question in her mock wedding ceremony, "Do you take this man?" She responded, "Yes". Next came the phrase, "For richer or poorer?" to which she responded with delighted eyes, "Richer!" As cute as that may be, far too often it reflects our thoughts toward our bridegroom. The phrase *"if indeed we suffer"* carries the meaning "since we are suffering." This portion assumes that the fellow heir is a partaker of His sufferings. We can be so thankful to be associated with the wealth and blessing of Christ but so hesitant to bear His reproach and suffering. Our leader was put to death on a cross. He promised us that the world would hate us because it hated Him first. Verses like this one make us ask ourselves, "To what extent am I willing to suffer for Him?" or "How am I currently suffering for Him?" For many of us, the answer is little or none at all. We should no longer be content with such insulated lives. Let us go outside the camp and bear His reproach! Are you shining as a

light to such an extent that the darkness around you notices and reacts? If we are like Christ, then it will be so. *"For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake"* (Php. 1:29).

Glory will follow

I have seen many saints become teary-eyed at the singing of songs about heaven. Ones they have loved the most are already there. They look forward to seeing the face of the One who loved them and gave Himself for them. At times, the suffering of this life is deep, but the Scriptures often remind us that it is nothing compared to the glory to follow! Notice just two of the many great verses the Lord has given us for our comfort and hope.

"He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap to set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of glory." (1 Sam. 2:8)

"When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory." (Col. 3:4)

The heir of God is blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. We will reign with Christ in His kingdom, and we are looking forward to ultimately being received into glory based on His worthiness. 1 Peter 1 tells us that the inheritance of God's child is incorruptible (will not cease to exist), undefiled (was not obtained or kept in an unworthy way), and unfading (will never diminish). In these three ways, it is better than anything we can live for here on this earth. It is also reserved (guarded by a strong man) so that nothing can separate the heir from his rightful inheritance. Roman law made all children, including adopted ones, equal heirs. Jewish law gave a double portion to the eldest son. As a Gentile child of God, I'm thankful that every heir gets an equal and full inheritance. All are treated as the firstborn. In this respect, all are treated as Christ. To be associated with Him is everything. We are called by His name, loved with the same quality of love that He is, given the privilege of suffering for His sake, and so on.

Lari Kemiläinen

To be associated with Him is everything.

Praise the Lord for the opportunity to be with Him in glory! Praise the Lord for the opportunity to suffer with Him now. May we have the joy of honoring the Father through a life poured out in the same way as His, *"...who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while..."* (1 Pet. 5:10).

Why is fellowship so important?

What makes fellowship so important is that man was created to enjoy fellowship with his God, and undoubtedly did so in his unfallen state in Eden. But the entrance of sin changed all that, and the spiritual death which ensued from Adam's disobedience made such communion impossible. Now, on the basis of the abounding grace of God, by means of the reconciling work of Christ on the cross and the regenerating work of the Spirit, believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17), with the spiritual capacity for fellowship with their God. ... Thus the believer in Christ has been brought into fellowship with the triune God. And this becomes the basis for our fellowship with all of like precious faith. – *H. G. Mackay, Assembly Distinctives*

Fellow Members of the Body

Participants in the mystery

As fellow members of the body, we are to share in all the privileges and responsibilities of body function.

Paul's letter to the saints in Ephesus turns our hearts to the heavenlies where we are seated with Christ. From this balcony view, we see the church as a bride, as a building, and as a body. Looking at the church as the body, we see ourselves as its fellow members.

Paul's stated reason for writing this letter to the Ephesians is to share the revelation of the mystery of Christ that was given to him. Namely, that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and fellow members of the body of Christ! He tells us that keeping this in mind will help us understand his writing.

Roger Branch

The oneness of the body is indeed a glorious truth revealed by the Spirit of God. But we may not realize the importance of it if we see things only from our present day in the local church. Take a moment to look at the big picture and gaze into the wonder of it all: we are fellow members of the body of Christ!

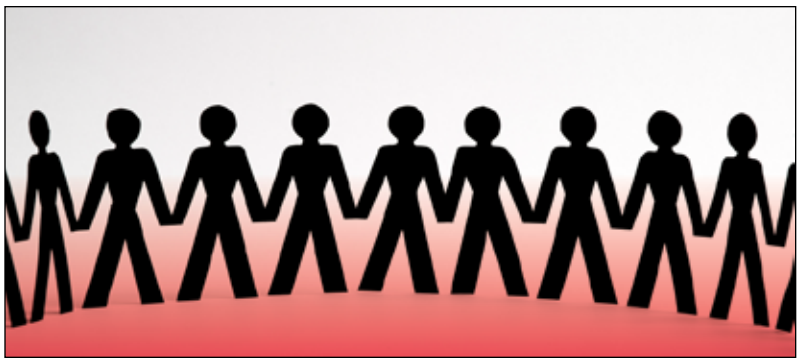
To truly appreciate the significance of this, we must go back. Back to what we were, back to where we came from. Then, we must consider where we are now and how we got here.

Then and now

Ephesians 2 reminds us that we were dead in our trespasses and sins. We were disobedient, following the course of this world. We were doomed as children of wrath. We were desperate, without hope and without God in this world. And we were distant, being referred to as those who were far off. That's where we've come from.

In Ephesians 2:13, Paul uses two words, "But now", to introduce where we presently are. It is not a rude interruption; it is a divine intervention. We are now brought near. The wall of separation has been demolished, and the law of condemnation has been abolished. We are now fellow citizens with the saints and fellow members of the household of God (Eph. 2:19).

How? By the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13) and by His work of the cross (Eph. 2:16). Picture His two hands stretched out. One hand reaching out to the Jew and the other reaching out to the Gentile alike, to bring us all to Himself. He makes one new man, reconciling them both into one body. For Gentiles to be saved is not new. But to be fellow members of the body of Christ, Jew and Gentile alike, is a brand new concept.


Mike Bentley

Consequences

As fellow members of the body, we are to share in all the privileges and responsibilities of body function. While we are fellow heirs, we are also fellow workers. While we are fellow citizens with the saints, we are also fellow soldiers. We are fellow servants, fellow prisoners, and fellow laborers.

We are called to a partnership in all aspects of body life, each member doing its part. The camaraderie we share is thrilling, unless you sing as I've heard sung before,

To dwell above with saints we love;
Oh, that will be glory!
But to dwell below with saints we know;
Now, that's another story!

Time to rephrase that old chorus, isn't it? Try this,

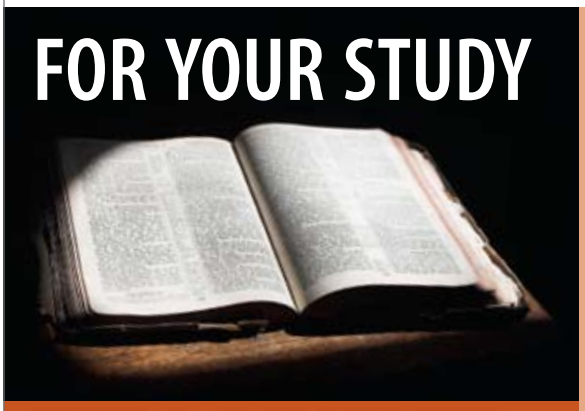
We come from ev'ry tribe and tongue,
To tell Redemption's story;
To share and bear and show we care;
And do so for God's glory.

As fellow heirs with Christ, we share the inheritance. There will be no dispute at the reading of His will. As fellow workers, we share in His work. The apostle Paul acknowledges by name his fellow workers and their work. We should, too.

With all the diversity of the body, we have Christ in common, and He makes us one. We are stuck together for eternity, so we should stick together here and now. As fellow members, we share the blessing and burden with all our brethren worldwide.

Lastly, Colossians 3:15 reminds us to, *"Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful."*

We are stuck together for eternity, so we should stick together here and now.



FOR YOUR STUDY

FELLOWSHIP

DEFINITION:
- koinōnia – from koinōnos (= "a sharer")
- 2 Cor. 6:14 – sharing, in common, partnership

THE SOURCE OF OUR FELLOWSHIP:
- the Holy Spirit – 2 Cor. 13:14; Php. 2:1

WE SHOULD HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH:
- the Father – 1 Jn. 1:3, 6
- Christ – 1 Cor. 1:9; 1 Jn. 1:3
- other believers – 1 Jn. 1:3, 7; Acts 2:42; Gal. 2:9

WE SHOULD NOT HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH:
- darkness, unrighteousness, unbelievers – 2 Cor. 6:14

WHAT WE ARE TO SHARE:
- the gospel – Php. 1:5
- the Lord's supper – 1 Cor. 10:16
- Christ's sufferings – Php. 3:10
- our faith – Phm. 6
- the work – Gal. 2:9
- our resources – Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:13; Heb. 13:16

REQUIREMENTS OF FELLOWSHIP:
- walking in the light – 1 Jn. 1:7

Spiritual Leadership Starts at Home

How important to be an example to both family and flock!

One of the requirements of an elder is that he be a man who manages his own household well (1 Tim. 3:4). Faithful in little, faithful in much. So the Lord instructs that we should wait until a man is capable of leading his own house properly before we let him attempt to lead God's house, the local church.

With this in mind, men should consider what they are doing to encourage spiritual growth and service in their own homes. It is wonderful to see children saved in Christian homes. It is also commendable if those children are raised to have the high moral standards that the Scriptures demand. But that is only the beginning. Genuine spiritual leadership in the home has the aim of producing children who are not only saved and moral, but who are deeply devoted to and passionate about the Lord and His work. Christian fathers ought to understand that spiritual leadership in the home is not seen in shallow terms of "I set the rules." Rather, it is a high calling to lead our homes so that our children grow up to genuinely love the Saviour and be vitally involved in eager, whole-hearted, sacrificial, life-long service.

Accomplishing this will require first of all that Christian fathers set the example. It's relatively easy to behave ourselves during the few hours each week occupied by church meetings. But what are we like in the vast amounts of time we spend in the privacy of our homes? I'm reminded of the Christian wife who asked her husband, "Why don't we try something different this week? How about you be charming at home and grumpy at church?" Our children are affected by our example far more than by our words. Take a few minutes and consider what they're learning as they watch us.

- Is it evident to our children that we love the Lord?
- Do they see that we are daily in the Word of God?
- Are we known to them as men who are devoted to prayer?
- Do we demonstrate Christ's love for the church in the way we treat our wives?
- Do we model the fruit of the Spirit in our words and conduct with our family and others?
- Are we committed to the assembly and its activities?
- Do they see us active in sharing the gospel?
- Do we speak of spiritual matters often and naturally?
- Do we demonstrate peace and faith in difficulties, or do trials easily shake us?

Gino Santa

Our personal example in the home will either underscore or undermine any spiritual work we hope to see accomplished in our children. This is an important lesson for any man to learn in his home before seeking to lead the assembly. Too often, men want to lead their families and assemblies by command, largely ignoring their example. But a faithful example is necessary for it provides both the moral authority for healthy leadership and a pattern for others to follow. As the Lord instructs through Peter, *"nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock"* (1 Pet. 5:3).

In our next issue, we hope to consider some specific ways in which Christian fathers can encourage their children in spiritual growth.

We appreciate the comments and questions we receive. They help us deal with current needs. Please keep them coming to **elders@uplook.org**


Christa Bosco

Join the gospel team in the lower Naugatuck Valley region JUNE 1-7, 2008.

CONNECTICUT "REACH THE VALLEY" EFFORT

You're invited to a major gospel effort arranged by *Good News on the Move* and the Waterbury, CT assembly. Other assemblies in the region are also cooperating in this outreach.

We are seeking to evangelize Waterbury and much of the Lower Naugatuck Valley. This region, which includes Naugatuck, Seymour, Ansonia, Derby and Shelton, is often called simply "The Valley."

As in other united efforts, we hope to utilize various gospel methods, including:

- after-school kids' clubs
- door-to-door evangelism
- evening presentations
- street preaching
- campus work
- literature tables

In addition, we hope there will be some exercised to pray, prepare meals, and help with transportation. For more information or to register, visit the ***Good News Connecticut*** web site: **www.goodnewsconnecticut.com**

BROOKINGS, SOUTH DAKOTA OUTREACH

Clock tower at the South Dakota State University in Brookings.

Brookings, South Dakota was voted one of the 100 best places to live in 2007, but does that mean it's also one of the best places to die? It's a proven statistic that one out of every one person dies. The Word of God says that we are all sinners (Romans 3:23), and that *"the wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23). But if you keep reading, you will find that, *"the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

Because of this so great salvation we have been given, you are warmly invited to a major gospel effort in Brookings to share that message with needy people during **July 7-26, 2008.**

Outreach Details

From **July 7-11**, there will be preparation activities such as filling gospel packets, handing out kids club invitations, etc.

Then, **July 12-26** will be the main outreach, with planned activities such as: kids club at Hillcrest park, door-to-door evangelism, literature distribution, "Christianity on Display" crews, visitation at a local nursing home, community activities, and morning Bible studies. Brookings is the fifth largest city in the state of South Dakota. It is what you could call a college town, with South Dakota State University (SDSU) making up one third of its population. Brookings is only 45 miles north of Sioux Falls, where there have been previous major gospel outreaches. We are looking to the Lord to work as mightily in Brookings as He has in Sioux Falls. For more information, visit: **www.brookingsoutreach.com**

Join the gospel team in Brookings, just north of Sioux Falls from JULY 12-26, 2008.

Christian Field Training for young men in NT fellowship

Good News! ON THE MOVE

EARLY INVITATION TO CONSIDER GNOM4

We are pleased to announce another opportunity for serious single men (age 18+) who feel God is calling them to gospel work. If prepared to commit one school year, this is a great way to learn first hand to study the Word and feed others, to be equipped to win souls, to encourage assemblies of the Lord's people, and then to train others for Christian service.

Visit the web page at **www.uplook.org/gnom** for expanded information on GNOM or write to Jerry Denny at: *jerrydenny@bellsouth.net*

Fellow Soldiers

Fight the good fight

Those who strive with us in the battle form strong bonds with us. These are the people we count on. Likewise, others involved in the fight need to be able to count on us.

Although I have never personally been in the military, I have close relatives who have. One thing all military personnel have in common is the experience of going through basic training or "boot camp." The idea of boot camp is to break down any resistance to authority and to train the soldier to follow commands without hesitation and to work together with others as a team. Self-reliance and rugged individualism don't have much of a place in the military. The goal in military training is to break the individual and make a group of soldiers function as one.

Unity

In Philippians 2, the apostle Paul starts off by exhorting the Philippian believers to be of one mind. Essentially, he is telling them to function as one even through hardships.

He goes on to cite our Lord as the ultimate example of obedience and humility: putting the objective of His mission, namely others, first. In case we don't think we can measure up to that supreme example, he then lists other brethren who have modeled some of these same characteristics. One of these men, Epaphroditus, was commended as a fellow soldier. He knew his mission; he put it and others above his own well-being and saw it through. Paul seems to have found a kindred spirit in Epaphroditus and counts him as one who fought bravely with him in the battle.

I find it interesting how many bonds of friendship are made while in the military, particularly through battle. I am amazed to hear stories of the men in World War II. They tell, in detail, of battles and still remember the names and faces of the men who fought alongside them. When your life is on the line and you are facing intense pressure from the enemy, the people around you become memorable. Those who fight beside you in the battle know your deepest fears and your true character. It stands to reason that a strong bond will be formed with those you have trusted with your life.

There is also a camaraderie experienced by military personnel—a sense that you are all pushing toward the same goal. This is experienced whether you are a private or a general, located near home or in a foreign land. You are all fighting for the same thing: victory.

This same is true of the Lord's army. Joining believers in the battle for men's souls binds us together. We can enjoy fellowship and a common bond no matter what the task God has called us to. We are to work together in unity (Php. 2:2), not striving to have mastery over one another, but all of us submitting willingly to our Commander-in-Chief, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Fidelity

In 2 Timothy 2:3, we are told to *"endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."* Soldiers don't expect to be coddled and comforted. On the battle field, they are fighting for their very existence because they believe in the cause for which they are fighting. Creature comforts such as soft bedding and air conditioning are nowhere to be found. Name brand clothing, the latest techno-gadget, and fancy cars are irrelevant. War brings what really matters in life into sharp focus. Paul advocates this same principle in verse 4 when he says that no good soldier *"entangles himself with the affairs of this life."*

We must remember that the Christian life is a war. We are instructed to daily prepare for battle (Eph. 6:11). When we do God's work, we face, head on, a fight with the enemy. Those who strive with us in the battle form strong bonds with us. These are the people we count on. Likewise, others involved in the fight need to be able to count on us. Just as we depend on others in the body, they need to be able to depend on us.

The United States Marine Corps has the motto *"Semper Fidelis"* (or *Semper Fi* for short), which means "always faithful." As fellow soldiers for our Lord, I can hardly think of a better phrase for us. In the battle, we have to stand ready as a unit to fight the good fight, undistracted by the world or other matters, always ready to do the task we have been trained to do.

Diversity

Remember, not all soldiers in the army perform the same task. They have a common goal, but not a common function. Some fly airplanes while others repair them. Some are in the heat of the battle while others perform a supporting role. David demonstrated this in 1 Samuel 30, when he allotted the same portion to those who "stayed by the stuff" as to those who followed him into battle. Every believer is called upon to take part in the war effort, but the Lord has a unique role for each of us.

Paul commends Archippus as a fellow soldier in Philemon 2. In Colossians, however, he exhorts Archippus to *"Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it."* I can't help but wonder if Archippus had gotten the feeling that some of us have had when we start to doubt the relevance of the particular work God has us doing. We question our specific ministry and, if we are not careful, we begin to neglect it. We need to view each ministry, no matter how big or small, as being received from the Lord. That will elevate even the most menial works.

Oleg Prikhodko

God has a specific purpose for every task He calls us to.

God has a specific purpose for every task He calls us to. It may be a burden to pray for an individual or to encourage a lonely believer or to participate in an evangelistic outreach. Whatever the call, see to it that it is fulfilled and remember: *Semper Fi!*

 by Wesley Ferguson

Paul's Fellow Laborers

Lessons in laboring together

"And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me." (Col. 1:29)

The study of how Paul related to his companions in the service of Christ is revealing—and humbling. Before his conversion, he had been an ambitious man, making a career in religion and marked out for distinction in that career. His encounter with the glorified Christ on the road to Damascus changed all that.

Paul saw that his service for Christ was one in which the will of the Master was paramount. He saw himself as a master-builder, but the building was God's and its plan was God's. Paul and his companion builders were employed to work together. He thought of the work as spiritual agriculture, but the field was God's, and the workers were companions together in the work as God required.

Wolf Schubach

The old road heading north from Galillee toward the city of Damascus.

As he preached, Paul rejoiced to see souls saved and added to the great body of the redeemed. This figure of the church as the body of Christ became an important one in his thinking and writing. Of vital importance in this figure is the fact that Christ is the head of the body; His glory is the central priority. But a question may arise about whether some members of the body are to be elevated at the expense of others, as would happen in a man-made system.

Paul explains that a body does not function like that. If I bruise my little finger, I feel pain and my whole body is affected. Each member of the body has its own function, and, most importantly, each is valuable as it contributes appropriately to the welfare of all. To apply this, I learn that my spiritual gift is important not as it brings me profit or prominence, but as it helps and strengthens others to the glory of Christ. It is given to me for the glory of Christ and for the benefit of others.

Euodia and Syntyche

This teaching of Paul's explains his behavior and attitude towards those who served the Lord with him. Perhaps we remember Euodia and Syntyche (Php. 4) as two women who quarreled, but Paul remembered how they had labored with him in the gospel. He honored their contribution to the work for they were also serving the same Master, and Paul was a servant, not an overlord. Clement, who is mentioned in the same chapter, is spoken of with respect. He may have been obscure, and he certainly has no detailed mention in the epistle, but he was honored as a fellow laborer. How could Paul fail to honor people like these, *"whose names are written in the book of life"?* Many valuable servants of God in our day will never be mentioned by name in our Christian periodicals. They may not be important names in human reckoning, but in God's reckoning—in His book—they are.

Mark and Aristarchus

Mark and Aristarchus have the distinction of being twice mentioned in Paul's epistles: in Colossians chapter 4 and in Philemon verse 24. Mark had disappointed Paul because he had turned back during a very difficult mission, but Paul bore him no grudge for he recovered and went on serving faithfully after, as it were, a moment's hesitancy. In Colossians 4, Aristarchus is also described as Paul's fellow

New Tribes Missions

prisoner of war. This is the strict sense of the term by which Paul links this faithful servant of God with himself. It gave Aristarchus the honor of being able to say that he had been a fellow soldier with Paul. He had borne the hardship of warfare and the restriction of POW conditions along with the apostle. According to Ephesians 3, the honor which they shared was of being captives for the sake of Jesus Christ, but the glory in all of this belonged to the Commander, not to the serving men.

Demas and Luke

In his epistle to Philemon, Paul refers to Demas and Luke together as fellow laborers. Luke has the added distinction of later being noted as Paul's sole companion in the final stage of his last imprisonment (2 Tim. 4:11). Paul and Luke seem to have been close companions in the Lord's service. Luke was entrusted with the tremendous responsibility of writing by inspiration two vital books of the New Testament canon: the gospel which bears his name, and the Acts—lengthwise, more of the New Testament than any other author, including Paul. In a significant portion of the Acts narrative, Luke traveled with Paul, yet the only indication given to us that this is so is his repeated use of the word "we." We can follow this easily in Acts, from their departure from Troas (16:11) to their arrival in Philippi (16:40). The same pattern is repeated in the journey from Philippi (20:5) to Jerusalem (21:18). Luke did not seek to bask in reflected glory. It must have been a tremendous boon to Paul, with his frequent bouts of ill health, to have a doctor with him. It is not surprising that Paul refers to Luke as "the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14). This description was not lightly bestowed on Luke. God chose Luke, unassuming and faithful, to write a history marked by the most consistent accuracy. Its value as evidence is especially seen when men seek to discredit it and find, to their discomfiture, that he is accurate where they have been inaccurate. The service of God deserves men who value accuracy and integrity. Paul and Luke were well-matched.

It is sad that Demas, listed beside Luke in the epistles to the Colossians and Philemon, did not prove so consistent. Faithfulness to the facts led Paul to relate that Demas had forsaken him, *"having loved this present world"* (2 Tim. 4:10). We must not reach assumptions about the precise meaning of this, but it seems that he found the hardships too much to bear and sought an easier path. Can we be critical, if we have perhaps never served in a way which demanded sacrifice?

Priscilla and Aquila

Sometimes people of the same profession or occupation also form close friendships in the service of God. This was the case with Paul and that worthy couple, Aquila and his wife Priscilla. We first meet them in Acts 18:2, while they are living in Corinth. They had been expelled from Rome by the Emperor Claudius along with all Jews. During his stay in Corinth, Paul stayed with them and worked at their shared occupation of tent-making. When Paul went on from Corinth, they accompanied him as far as Ephesus and they remained there after his departure. It appears from Romans 16:4-5 that they returned to Rome after the death of Claudius. An assembly in Rome was meeting in their home at the time Paul wrote the Roman epistle.

Aquila and Priscilla show us the power of a stable marriage. Circumstances demanded that they move house and travel to a distant city. They had at least two further changes of residence. In the narrative of Scripture, we find them always acting together in the service of God. It is not for us to decide that one of them was more spiritual than the other. The inspired record keeps them together and this is their great example for us. Paul calls them *"my fellow workers"* (Rom. 16:3) and mentions that they *"laid down their own necks"* for him. We are not told when this sacrificial loyalty to Paul was exhibited, but it may be taken as a good example of the kind of influence Paul had on faithful people. He who worked with his own hands to support himself as well as his fellow workers (Acts 20:34) would have led from the front, going into danger himself before urging others to do so. This reinforces Paul's teaching about body-unity. He was a team man, but the work was directed by the Lord, not Paul.

You and I

We, too, are Paul's fellow laborers (1 Cor. 3:9-10). Let us learn from these many lessons from those who worked with him in Scripture.

Fellow Servants

Not even the Son of Man came to be served, but to serve.

"You do not do God a favor by serving Him. He honors you by allowing you to serve Him."
–Victor Nyquist

David Claassen

There is something rather warm and heartening in the term "fellow." A man who is my fellow is, at some level, my neighbor and certainly a peer. A man whom I choose to describe as a fellow anything is a man with whom I confess an intimacy that is unknown to my typical daily contacts. "Fellows" have common experiences, ambitions, and hopes. The prophetic reference in Zechariah 7:14 is made all the more doleful by the inclusion of the simple word of commonality, "fellow." So it is that when we come to the term "fellow servant(s)" in the New Testament, we find instruction and illustration around the particular theme of shared Christian service.

The other servant

The first lesson about fellow servants is simple and obvious; it comes from the term itself. In 1 Kings, we read of Elijah, a dispirited prophet who complains bitterly that he alone remains a faithful man of God. It is a very patient God who listens and then reminds Elijah that he is most certainly not alone, that there remain yet 7,000 faithful. God, both then and now, has designed much of His service to be done not in isolation and solitude but with the assistance, support, and encouragement of other godly believers. The first lesson of fellow servants is simply that there are fellow servants. These are servants of God who may not be immediately evident to us as we bend our backs to the work we've been given, but they are servants who are nonetheless available and eager to labor alongside us when God calls them. If the work God calls us to requires more hands, we may be assured that they will arrive when—though perhaps not before—they are needed.

Of course, shared work and shared goals in a fallen world mean that there will, of necessity, be friction and misunderstanding. After all, very few fellow servants will perform the work in the way that we imagine it should be done! Some will perform at a higher level and provoke jealousy or adulation; some will perform at a lower level and fairly earn (in our eyes) our indignation or rebuke.

The worshipped servant

In Revelation 22, John was shown a future day in a far better place than he had ever dared imagine. He saw the eternal state where the curse is lifted and the Father and the Son dwell with mankind in uninterrupted harmony and fellowship. What was his response? *"I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things"* (Rev. 22:8).

To worship the one who had shown him the sorts of things no man had ever seen before was a natural enough reaction, and perhaps we can sympathize. But John's reaction was rebuked in the subsequent verse with these words: *"Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book; worship God."* In case the lesson is lost on us, we have a similar scenario unfolded in chapter 19. In both cases, the angel identified itself as a "fellow servant" who was unworthy of the worship that is due to God and God alone.

In application, we have our second lesson of fellow servants: it is possible if we have our pantheon of Christian heroes. Those who led us to the Lord have rightly earned our appreciation at a minimum. There are those who have shown us wonderful things we might never have imagined or seen if not for their leadership. It's good to appreciate men and women who have been guides and

FELLOW SERVANTS *continued*

Why shouldn't we strive to work together with fellow believers to point lost sinners to their only Hope?

helpers, but we must never forget they are simply fellow servants. If what they have shown is wonderful, it is only wonderful because God graced them with an opportunity to share His wonders, not their own. The angel's repeated words should ring in our ears and often be on the lips of true Christian leaders: "Do not do that!"

The scorned servant

Starting in Matthew 18:23, we have another account of a servant falling at a fellow servant's feet. Here we read of the far more common problem of an unforgiving spirit. After having been forgiven an impossibly large debt, we find the forgiven servant seeking out a fellow servant who in turn owes the first servant a much smaller amount. But where there was kindness and forgiveness shown from the Lord to the first servant, there is no such spirit evident in the first servant's treatment of his peer. In fact, we read that he took him by the throat, demanded what was owed, and ultimately cast him into prison until the debt could be satisfied.

We noted earlier that friction was unavoidable in shared service, even divine service for the Lord is no exception to that unhappy rule. We may only rarely find a fellow servant we are tempted to worship, but we will most certainly find many fellow servants we would like to throttle and of whom we would make demands that really serve only our own pride and greed. But, that being the case, there are two immediate effects of an unforgiving spirit among fellow servants that ought to capture our attention and inform our behavior:

A hindrance to fellowship with other believers. *"So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done"* (Mt. 18:31). When you fail to treat your fellow servant as a peer and instead treat him as an object of scorn and abuse, you dispirit not only your antagonist but also all the other fellow servants who are unfortunate enough to learn of your conduct. If you want to take the joy and life out of your home assembly, an unforgiving spirit will do the job very efficiently indeed. It will also—as verse 31 notes—make you the subject of some rather pointed prayers.

A hindrance to fellowship with the Lord. Verses 32-34 tell us the standard of forgiveness between fellow servants is not based whatsoever on our peer's worth or merit but rather on the nature and depth of the forgiveness we ourselves have already received from the Lord. The peril of failing to forgive our peers is not that they will one day gain the upper hand and return the favor. Rather, it is that we will answer to God Himself.

We then are to understand that we must not think too highly or too poorly of our fellow servants; both these perils rob God of his rightful due in either worship or gratitude.

The faithful servant

We turn finally to happier examples:

"Epaphras...is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf" (Col. 1:7).

"As to all my affairs Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord will bring you information" (Col 4:7) NASB.

In both of the above, we have a beautiful commendation from Paul as to the character of his fellow servants. Paul identifies himself fully and without regret with both Epaphras (who has already brought information to Colossae) and with Tychicus (who has yet to arrive). But whether Paul looks back to words already spoken or ahead to what someone might soon say, Paul is utterly and completely identifying himself with his peers. He knows them to be faithful, and he knows as well that the work is not his own but God's. Though space prevents a full reprinting here, there is in the verses surrounding both commendations the most amiable spirit of fellowship imaginable. As we consider the manner in which we speak of our brothers and sisters who are not present, may we take Paul as an example.

In closing, we turn to the peerless servant for our final admonition. One day we will appear before the great Lord, but not one who cannot understand what a servant must do and endure. Instead, we will face the greatest Servant there has ever been or ever will be, One who understands what humility is to a far greater extent than any of us will ever know. As we deal with our fellow servants here and now, let us do so for His glory rather than our own.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Php. 2:5-8)

Fellowship with Christ

Do we yearn for His company? He longs for ours.

"…truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." (1 Jn 1:3b)

Christianity is about sharing. People often focus on the importance of sharing with others, forgetting that, first and foremost, the gospel tells us of a God who shares with His redeemed ones. While it is important to give to others, one must never neglect the wonderful relationship that God has given the believer in Christ. Some of the things involved in that fellowship might not seem like cause for gratitude. Nevertheless, to be called to the fellowship of God through His Son the Lord Jesus is to enter a life of contrasts: suffering and glory, hardship and holiness, extending from time into eternity. In short, it is partaking of the divine nature and embracing a Christ-like life, accepting, although to a lesser degree, the same treatment He received—both on earth and in heaven.

Leah-Anne Thompson

A high privilege

Rather than a philosophy based on mere dogma or creed, Christianity is a relationship with the living God. He made His creatures to know and serve Him. What is more, Christ Himself defines eternal life in relational terms, saying, *"And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent"* (Jn. 17:3). Similarly, 1 John 1 verses 3 and 7 describe vertical and horizontal fellowship, picturing the former as walking with God: *"…truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ… But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."* The verbiage conjures up memories of Enoch who, in the midst of an ungodly generation, enjoyed sweet communion with the Almighty during their "walks" (Gen. 5:22-24). Likewise, believers are *"called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord"* and this shared life results in a walk with God (1 Cor. 1:9). It means that the Christian partakes of the life of God, resulting in the closest of bonds with the Lord (2 Pet. 1:4). 1 John 4:17 expresses the closeness between believers and Christ in the famed words *"As He is, so are we in this world"*; Ephesians goes further, repeatedly referring to believers as being "in Christ" and "in the Beloved One" (Eph. 1:1, 6; 2:6, 10, 13). The life that we possess is the life of the risen Christ (Col. 3:1-4).

Take the world but give me Jesus

The practical reality of fellowship is illustrated by the life of Israel's leader at the time of the exodus from Egypt. Moses' early life was one of tremendous outward blessing. First, he was an attractive infant (Ex. 2:2; Acts 7:20; Heb. 11:23). Second, he was rescued from the massacre of the male Israelite infants by a princess and adopted into the Egyptian royal family. This auspicious event ushered him into the highest echelons of power and privilege. As Stephen summarized it, *"Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds"* (Acts 7:22). Given ancient Egypt's advanced science, literature, and engineering, it is safe to say that he had a first-class education with many opportunities for advancement. With such advantages, one would expect that Moses would turn to an affluent, easy life, or perhaps that he would devote himself to amassing greater power and fortune.

In fact, Moses did the exact opposite of what most people would do in his position: he gave it all up. The Bible records his carefully reasoned decision: *"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 in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward"* (Heb. 11:24-26). He weighed Egypt, with its innumerable temporal pleasures, against the future reward that he would receive from the Lord and chose the latter. This put him on a long pathway involving hardship, privation, and persecution. Instead of influence in Egypt, he gained fellowship with the eternal God and His suffering people, Israel.

The glory that should follow

Moses thought it was a worthwhile trade and spent two thirds of his life in wilderness areas, first learning in God's school and later leading His people to the border of the Promised Land. The palace was exchanged for a tent, opulence gave way to austerity, and life at court was traded for the longsuffering leadership of a grumbling multitude of former slaves. On the positive side, he learned of the great I AM, conversing with the Almighty *"face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend"* (Ex. 33:11). His sophisticated early life was abandoned in favor of a dwelling place in God Himself (Ps. 90:1). While Egypt's palaces, temples, and monuments were covered by sand over the succeeding millennia, Moses found a place in glory. His exalted position was revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration. There he communed with the Lord of glory regarding the "exodus" that He was about to make at Jerusalem (Lk. 9:31—"decease" is literally "exodus" in the Greek). Whatever secrets and truths he was privy to in his early life of learning could not compare with the things that he gleaned from his communion with the Lord. Psalm 103:7 describes God's intimacy with him in these words: *"He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel."* Moses was exposed to the counsels of God and learned something of the dealings of the Almighty with His creatures.

If such was Moses' lot in the old economy, then what a privileged position modern believers have, *"upon whom the ends of the ages have come"* (1 Cor. 10:11, NASB). Like the Old Testament saints, Christians are called to forsake the world in favor of a life of fellowship with Christ. This may entail material loss and ordinarily results in persecution or opposition (2 Tim. 3:12). Possessions must be lightly held and one's own will put aside in order to serve the Lord. Nevertheless, the benefits far outweigh the difficulties, for we have One who promises never to leave or forsake us—indeed, One who is always there for us in every situation (Heb. 13:5). We possess *"an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven"* (1 Pet. 1:4). Like Enoch, we can walk with God, knowing that *"he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him"* (Heb. 11:6).

Jacob Hellbach

In our fast-paced world where so many things vie for our attention, do we take the time to commune with the Lord Jesus? He is always ready to share His sacred secrets with us. They are like jewels—some hidden—contained within His Word. As we prayerfully meditate on the Scriptures, Christ draws near and has fellowship with us. Sadly, time with Christ is the most undervalued advantage of the Christian life. Above the ethics and intellectual stimulus of Christianity—above even the promises of provision for time and eternity—is interaction with the Son of God Himself. Nothing compares with spending time in His presence. He is always refreshing and knows exactly what to say. Let us walk with the Lord of the Word by communing with Him daily. Time spent in His presence will never be regretted and will bear future fruit. After all, we are going to spend eternity adoring Him. When faith gives way to sight, will we be practiced in having fellowship with Christ?

Time spent in His presence will never be regretted and will bear future fruit.

Anastasiya Maksymenko

Acting on Acts

Careful! That book is alive!

If Paul visited your assembly for a time, and then wrote an epistle to you all, what would it say?

It shouldn't surprise us that the early believers *"turned the world upside down."* After all, they had the promised co-laboring of the Son of God, who would be with them to the end of the age. In addition, He told them He would be in their prayer circle, interceding for each of them with His mighty prayers. And, as instructed, they had waited for the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit of God. What wonders He performed—convicting, enlivening, filling, guiding, equipping, comforting, teaching, and a thousand things more!

They had in their hands a sword so remarkable because it was alive, making its own deft moves *"to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"* (Heb. 4:12). Imagine having a weapon that could read the minds and motives of those on the enemy's side? By such an armory, these first century believers were able *"through God"* to *"[pull] down...strong holds...and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God"* (2 Cor. 10:4-5). God always led them in triumph.

And the people themselves were remarkable. Why, they opened their hearts to one another as Christ had said, showing their discipleship of the Master by their practical love for each other. They didn't just sing about it, and preach about it. They actually proved it!

Acts Become Facts You know the record. Daily salvations. Steadfast continuance. Godly fear sweeping before them. Sacrificial care of every saint. Unity. Open homes where they *"ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved"* (Acts 2:46-47).

There is so much more in this amazing book. Prayers were answered in mighty ways. Miracles happened. Baptisms occurred, always within days of conversion. The gospel rescued people from the clutches of the enemy. Wherever they went there was either a riot or a revival. Prisons could not hold them. Persecutors became preachers. Assemblies welcomed into fellowship once demon-possessed women, former drunkards, and religious hypocrites. A bonfire burned three-quarters of a million dollars worth of witchcraft books and amulets on the streets of Ephesus. And Gentiles rode over 1000 miles to find the God of the Bible (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia is 1580 miles or 2543 km from Jerusalem).

Where did they hold gospel meetings? In theaters and markets, in schools and synagogues. Rich people like Erastus, treasurer of Corinth, and Manaen, Herod's foster brother, were saved. So were slaves like Secundus, Tertius, and Quartus (Numbers 2, 3, and 4). What days they were! Should we expect this today? All of it? Any of it? If so, what parts?

Take the Test How can we sort through this amazing book? It's not so much "The Acts of the Apostles" as it is the ongoing acts of the Lord Jesus by His Spirit through His people. In other words, how can we reclaim New Testament Christianity as the Lord intended it?

Let me suggest a series of filters—questions to ask that may help us determine the subtle (or not-so-subtle) differences. May the Lord give us good help to see the very heart of the risen Christ for His people in this age. And may we joyfully embrace all that He has for us.

continues

1. What is Apostolic; What is Exemplary? The men featured in the Acts and the Epistles were apostles—witnesses of the resurrection, tutored personally by the Lord (Acts 1:21-22), and selected by Him (Gal. 1:15-16), with confirmatory signs (2 Cor. 12:12), along with the writing prophets for this foundational task (Eph. 2:20). On occasion, they stated they were acting in this official capacity (e.g., at the beginning of their letters). But when we encounter an action of an apostle which we may not want to do ourselves, can we write it off by saying, "But he was an apostle"?

Paul, for example, stated in 1 Corinthians 9 that he, as an apostle, had certain rights he could claim. Specifically, he should be financially cared for, so that he might give himself fully to this work. Do soldiers have to buy their own bullets? Shouldn't oxen and hirelings receive fair compensation for their work, enjoying some of the fruits of their own labor?

But Paul was concerned that the saints were not only taught but shown (Acts 20:20). *"Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample to you to follow us"* (2 Thess. 3:8-9). I would venture to say that, unless Paul, or the other apostles, specifically claimed apostleship, they were providing an example, not an exception.

2. What is Transitional; What is Permanent? Again, the NT was written clearly, not cryptically. You see the transition between Old and New Testament approaches in John 16:25. Our Lord declared, *"These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language..."* (NKJV). The disciples saw the obvious transition, stating, *"Now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech!"* (v. 29).

Therefore, we can expect to see indications in either the immediate or general context if it is to be treated as a transitional form. An example already cited is the apostles and prophets who were foundational, although their ministry is still with us in the Scriptures. Other examples: the gifts of knowledge and tongues (1 Cor. 13:8), and law-keeping as a rule of life (Gal. 3:24-25).

On the other hand, the believers were in each others' homes daily. Is there any indication that this was not to be a permanent feature of assembly life? Or the way they were all pouring their financial resources into the work of God (Acts 2:45-46). Was this a temporary arrangement, or was it in fact a response to the teaching of the Master (Mt. 6:19)? If some of these characteristics turned out being temporary, perhaps it was through the failure of the church, not by the intent of the Spirit. Maybe we need to heed the Savior's warning: *"Remember...from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works"* (Rev. 2:5).

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3. What is Descriptive; What is Prescriptive? There are many features of first century living included in Luke's account of the early church. Paul always travelled on foot or by sailing vessel, for example. Are these merely described or are they being prescribed as the way we should continue to do it? Again, context is key.

While Paul does not cite these features as "the only way to go," he does describe his teaching (not evangelism here) as carried on both *"publicly, and from house to house"* (Acts 20:20). Is it possible that the hollow nature of some public teaching is the result of teachers not being in the homes of God's people, and therefore not really knowing the needs of their audience? I recall a story in which J.N. Darby observed that Mr. F.W. Grant would do better if he knew less about Bible numbers and more about the street numbers on the houses of God's people.

J. N. Darby observed that Mr. F. W. Grant would do better if he knew less about Bible numbers and more about the street numbers on the houses of God's people.

4. What is Mechanics; What is Dynamics? This is not so much a matter of choosing between things we do or don't do. It is a matter of seeing the roles of both and making sure that both are included. It was the tragedy of the Ephesian

assembly that they cared very much about mechanics, but were destitute in the dynamics department. They knew about *doing* what they should *do,* but failed in *being* what they should *be*. I fear it is a common malady. It is like having a car with all the options, but no gas.

How often I have heard outlines on the characteristics of the New Testament church. It was all good. Yet it never seemed to be mentioned that love for the Lord and for one another were the chief characteristics! Stated plainly, we cannot pretend to have New Testament churches if we do not have New Testament life. It is of little use to have form without function. This is the difference between a store mannequin and a living body.

It's good to know about NT priesthood; it's also good to know about how to visit the widows. It's good to know about the Headship of Christ; it's also good to know about caring for strangers. After all, some day the One will say about the other: *"Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me"* (Mt. 25:45).

5. What is General; What is Particular? Again, the details of Scripture are so important. There are general responsibilities and privileges that encompass the whole Body. In the areas of prayer and worship, fellowship and stewardship, we are all accountable. What about gospel witness? One of those details to be noted is the absence of evangelism listed as a gift in Romans 12 or 1 Corinthians 12. Why? The early church understood the Great Commission to include them all. Note Acts 8 where those scattered abroad *"went everywhere preaching* (*euaggelizo*) *the word"* (v. 4) yet verse 1 tells us that this did not include the apostles, who remained in Jerusalem.

Two qualifying details. First, evangelists are mentioned as a special gift from Christ in Ephesians 4. But as noted in an article in the last *Uplook,* the evangelist mentioned there is to equip the saints so they can do the work. Secondly, while everyone was involved in evangelism, they did it in an amazing variety of ways.

Every saint should be actively, joyfully, sacrificially involved in the work of God. But it is always a danger when people see things only through their gift. If we do, we expect everyone to be doing what we see as the great need. We see it as the great need because God has burdened us to do it. But there is great need in every sphere. Thankfully there are also great resources in the church by the engifting of the Spirit to meet those needs.

6. What is Cultural; What is Universal? When the Lord visited the house of Simon the Pharisee (Lk. 7), He said to him, *"...thou gavest Me no water for my feet:...Thou gavest Me no kiss...My head with oil thou didst not anoint..."* (vv. 44-46). Do we do exactly these three things to our guests today? No, but we ought to do something similar. We might take their coats, provide them with fresh towels and show them the washroom, give them the best chair and perhaps a drink of water or cup of tea.

Yet we must not be too hasty in rejecting any of it as directly transferable. What about the verse, *"Greet one another with an holy kiss"* (2 Cor. 13:12). Did I say verse? It's found four times in Paul's epistles (here; Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 1 Thess. 5:26). Peter calls it a kiss of love (1 Pet. 5:14). These were not verses my Scottish/Irish assembly majored on! But what do you do with them?

Even though a kiss might not work in Japan, or an embrace in Scotland might be akin to hugging a fence post, the purpose of such a directive is easily translatable. When you greet another believer, do it in both a holy and loving way. Be real; be caring; be brotherly.

7. What is Local Church; What is Whole Body? One of the ways to distinguish the gifted men in Ephesians 4 from, say, the elders of a local assembly is by understanding the breadth of their burden and vision. Notice the difference between these two verses: *"If a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?"* (1 Tim. 3:5). *"...that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches"* (2 Cor. 11:28).

I would suggest that the Ephesian 4 men are to be loosed from local church ties and, while working with other similarly gifted men, become directly accountable to the risen Head. Is this not the force of the Spirit's words: "***Separate to Me*** *Barnabas and Saul for the work to which* ***I*** *have called them. Then...they sent them away (apoluo,* loosed and let go)" (Acts 13:2-3). Elders should be watching for such men. They are part of the New Testament pattern for the strengthening of existing assemblies and helping with the starting of new ones. Or so the book of Acts shows.

An article like this can't provide all the answers, but perhaps these questions may encourage us. Rather than excusing or explaining away our dissimilarity to early church life, may we eagerly embrace (and in some cases adapt) all we can from this vibrant, thrilling book.

UPLOOK MAGAZINE
If the outlook is dark, try the uplook.

FELLOWSHIP ON THE WAY HOME

How can we stay alert and refreshed as we journey Home? As they traveled the road to the Celestial City, Christian and Hopeful discussed this very matter.

"Now, then," said Christian, "to prevent drowsiness in this place, let us fall into good discourse."

"With all my heart," said the other.

"Where shall we begin?"

"Where God began with us. But do you begin, if you please."

"I will sing you first this song:

'When saints do sleepy grow, let them come hither,
And hear how these two pilgrims talk together;
Yea, let them learn of them in any wise,
Thus to keep ope their drowsy, slumb'ring eyes.
Saints' fellowship, if it be managed well,
Keeps them awake, and that in spite of hell.'"

— John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*