

The Watering Can

FELLOWSHIP PART 1

Introduction

The subject for this letter is Fellowship. I want to make it clear what I mean by Fellowship. It is not just the idea of being in Fellowship at an assembly or a church, but of being together with fellow saints in their struggles. We will look at a number of aspects.

What is Fellowship?

The first thing we need to cover is what exactly is Fellowship. Very simply, Fellowship, when concerned with the Church is the thought of being on the same level of Spirituality and Doctrine as others in an area and gathering together with them. When I write about the Church, it is not the building that I am referring to. It is the people. The original Greek is Ekklesia, which means a calling out of, and has the idea of a separate people. This is exactly what we should be. Separate (as previously considered in these Letters).

Fellowship is not something to be lightly considered. Turn with me to Acts chapter 2 verses 41 to 47. Here we have Fellowship being carried out practically.

Verse 41 *"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."* In the verses preceding this passage, we have the Pentecost. This is where the Holy Spirit came upon the Disciples and gave them the power to do wondrous signs (I will consider this in depth in a future newsletter). The disciples came out of their room speaking various languages and the people thought that they were drunk. Peter stands up and speaks to them and puts them right. When he is finished, some of the people believed. 3000 souls were baptized. I had the joy recently of witnessing just 1 baptism, and it was an extremely joyous occasion. Can you imagine the joy of witnessing 3000 souls being baptized? I would love to witness such a baptismal service. However, Scriptures do not stop there.

Verse 42 *"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers."* Those that were baptized desired to learn from the Apostles, and to put into practice the things that they learned. This is why it says that they continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine. To know the doctrine, they had to hear. Once they heard, they continued in it. Do we continue in the things that we hear? We are blessed with having many ministry meetings, and there is always Tintagel, Kingfisher Camp and Hill House as well as many other young people's events right across this land. This relates to a lot of ministry in one year. How much of this ministry do we put into practice and live? These people continued stedfastly. Not only that, but we have the word fellowship. Vine says that this word means 'sharing in common'. This means that all 3000 people who were baptized desired to spend time with the Apostles because they were sharing in common their faith in Jesus Christ. When we attend the meetings, are we left feeling an outsider? Do we poke fun at those who are in our Spiritual family? While we may not like some people, we are reminded that they are sharing in common a faith with us in the Lord Jesus Christ. As such, we are commanded by Him to love one another. This means we are not to fight within the family. I would urge all that read this to consider how well you treat your Spiritual Family. Remember that Christ's words are *"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"* (John 13 v 34 & 35) This means that the World is watching. If we truly are Christ's disciples, then we should have love one to another. Actions always will speak louder than words. Jesus Christ proved that He was approved of God by the many signs and wonders that He did (Acts 2 v 22). We should therefore

seek to prove that we are His people by the actions that we do. Teasing and taunting anyone should not present among believers.

Moving on to breaking of bread. The breaking of bread is, as I am sure you all know, the remembrance of the death of Jesus Christ. The most common statement that I have heard is this 'The Bible says that as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come. Therefore we do not have to take the bread and wine every week, we can do it whenever we like.' This is not what the account in Acts is telling us. I am sure that the disciples, full of wonder at seeing their crucified Lord alive and ascended back into heaven, that they would not have said to themselves 'He has gone. We will remember Him in His appointed way once a month.' They would have been more likely to have said 'We will remember Him in His own appointed way every day' This was the love that they had for Him. 1 Cor 11 v 26 says "*For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*" Let me sum up what He has done. The Lord Jesus Christ came from Heaven to Earth with the sole purpose of dying upon the cross (Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, Matthew 1 v 23). However, He died to take our sins away. This accomplished, there was no need for Him to remain dead and to complete the redemption He had to rise again, for if He had no power to rise from the dead, how could we be redeemed to God? (1 Cor 15 v 12-21).

The next thing we find is "*...and in prayers.*" Prayer is an important part of our spiritual lives. If we have not prayer, we cannot communicate with the Father and we do not grow. I am not talking here about public prayer. It is easy to put on a show when others are watching. (The Pharisees, you will remember, were criticized for just this very thing. See Luke 18 v 10 to v 14). I have heard it said that if we are far from God, then the first meeting we should not attend is the prayer meeting. In other words, how can we be a Christian and not listen to our Lord? For in prayer, God can speak to us. These newsletters are a direct result of prayer for one individual that I was and still am concerned about. When I prayed, I became burdened to do something about the problem. You can see how prayer is important. I would recommend that we take an example from the Lord. He arose up early to spend time with God before He went about that day. (See Mark 1 v 35).

Verse 44 and 45 "*And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.*" These verses are confirming some of what I have said above. The believers were together and had all things common. They shared the things that they had. They brought this down to the physical level and sold possessions so that they could meet each other's needs. When was the last time we saw one of our family in need and yet did nothing to help? Let me speak from experience. The Saints gathered at Crawley have really helped me to grow spiritually. Time and again they have seen my need and have provided so that I may not go without something that is essential. As much as they have helped me, I help them by praying for them. There is always something that we can do for our assemblies. Just by praying for someone can help them enormously. I have been greatly encouraged of late by an email that simply says, "I am praying for you". We can all pray.

Verses 46 and 47 "*And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking of bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*" Now we come to one of the most important verses. I want to stress the importance of regular attendance in the assemblies. Now, this should not be a case of 'Well, I'd better go to the meeting for I will get told off if I don't.' It should be a matter of wanting to attend. We should be willing to spend as much time together, as a group of believers, as we possibly can. When these first believers were converted, they were part of a minority group. It is understandable then that they sought to spend every day with each other. Notice where they spent their time first of all. They were in the temple. We have what they would have loved to have had. A building of their own to meet in. I am sure that had these believers had a building of their own, it would have been used a lot more than some of ours are. We have peace to worship the Lord our God in these buildings. These early believers would have been persecuted on a regular basis. If the

authorities thought that they were meeting together in the same place at the same time, then the believers would have been caught and killed for their faith. God is merciful and allowed them to meet in secret BUT THEY MET!!!!!! I know of some that consider the meetings to be not important. Their attitude is 'it doesn't matter.' Had these people been alive when these believers were meeting, I am sure that they would change their minds pretty quick. So why am I writing this? I want you all to realise the importance of meeting together. We are still in the minority. Therefore we cannot attempt to get through this life as a Christian unless we meet together with those who are likeminded. I would like to awaken a sense in you all that you need each other, to help each other. Now you cannot be helped if you refuse to meet and make your problems known. When I first arrived in Winchester I had many problems that I tried to solve on my own. It was only when I let the assembly at Crawley know that I was having difficulties that they could help me and hence I am here trying to help you. It is most interesting to see that these believers had favour with all people. The people around them could see something different about them. The people looked on them, and approved of what they could see. What do others see about us? Do we have favour with all people? If we seek to serve God, and as such serve others, then He will bless us too with the favour of others. If we serve the Lord in the way that He wants us to then we shall be blessed with the Lord adding to our decreasing numbers on a daily basis.

Women in fellowship

I cannot write about Fellowship without stating a couple of things about women. I want to use the verses found in 1 Corinthians 11 to explain why the women are to have their heads covered.

Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 11 v 1-16.

Paul starts off in this passage with the words "*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*" Here he is exhorting his readers to follow Christ, by looking at the example of Paul's life that they have in front of them. This is not saying that men should follow Paul and worship Paul. Paul is just trying to get them to look at every aspect of his life and to see Christ dwelling there. I looked this verse up in the original Greek and there, the word translated followers is the same as imitators (mimetes being the actual word.) This confirms what I am saying, that Paul is pointing to Christ by using his example. Can we do the same? Can we tell others to imitate or follow us, even as we imitate or follow our Lord Jesus Christ?

The next verse is also of great interest to us. "*Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.*" Paul here is seeking to encourage the saints at Corinth. He is praising them for remembering Paul in all things and, as such, have kept the ordinances (which can be translated as traditions but the original Greek has the idea of precept.) In other words, Paul has taught them the teaching of Christ and they have kept this teaching. These newsletters are designed to teach the things of Christ, which are found in His holy word. I want each of you to remember the teachings of Christ and to put them into practice in your lives. Let us keep the ordinances as they have been taught to us.

Paul now goes on to explain about headship. "*But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.*" What does Paul mean when he says that each of us have a head. He is talking about authority. This is the chain of command (this is just my way of making things clear): God the Father as the top of the chain. Every decision comes from Him and is passed down the line to His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, you will remember, came into the World as a man. He left the glories of heaven to die upon a cross so that we can communicate with the Father through Him. He came to reveal the Father to each of us. When Christ returned to heaven, he sent "*another comforter*", the Holy Spirit. It is this Spirit that dwells within and allows us to hear the words of Christ as we study the Bible and pray. So where do men and women fit into this chain? Well, God the Father, Son and Spirit are part of one God, but with 3 distinct persons (see 1 John 5 v 7). Next in the chain is the man and then the woman. This does not mean that the man is superior to the woman. He is not to be filled with his own importance. Just as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one, so the man

and woman are one. As we shall see, the woman does not reflect the glory of God but reflects the glory of man. As you read this passage, read and consider the words of verse 11. *"Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord."* Men and women need each other to give God all that He desires from us. On a Sunday morning, the women may not be audible in what they say or what they do but I find that the presence of the women praying during the meeting lifts the meeting. What do I mean by this? Very simply, I can feel the love that the women have for the Lord because they are praising and worshipping God at the same time as the men. The only difference is that the men stand up and verbally express that love to the Lord. The women sit on their chairs and silently offer up their praise and thanksgivings to the Lord. He accepts the worship from both. I want you to note, however, that the women are to have a head covering on. There is a great debate over whether this should be a hat or a scarf. Let's turn to Scripture to see what it says on the matter. (Scripture is the only place to turn to, when we are not sure on what to do.) Notice in this passage that Paul says the following on the subject: *"Every man praying or prophesying with his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man."* Paul states that her head is to be covered. That then is the end of the debate. As long as the head is covered, whether it be by a hat or a scarf, it does not matter. Paul does not state that it must be covered by a certain thing or in a certain way, he just says that it has to be covered. So, why should the woman cover her head? The Lord is gracious and provides the answer in this passage. Verse 10 says *"For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels."* Paul says that the angels are watching therefore the woman needs to cover her head. The angels see the glory of Christ in man, but as we have already considered above, the glory of the woman reflects man. The angels, therefore, need to see that glory covered up so that all glory is directed to God and not to man.

One thing before I move on. I have heard it said that this teaching was for the Corinthian assembly only. What nonsense. If it were for them only, it would not be included in the Bible that we have. You cannot pick and choose which passages of Scripture you follow and which you don't. If you do not believe that the whole Bible is truth, then you cannot accept any of it. Therefore, you cannot be a Christian. These are hard words, I realise. Why have I said them? Simple, we learn of Jesus Christ, the Son of God through the words of Scripture. If we cannot trust certain parts of it, then we cannot trust any of it. It is all or nothing. There can be no pick and mix when it comes to the Scriptures. I hope that this has sunk home. Many people over the years have tried to change bits of Scripture. Who are we, a mortal race, to change what the eternal God has written through His Holy Spirit? What authority do we have to add portions or remove portions? The bible itself speaks clearly on not changing the words. (See Revelation 22 v 18).

Moving on to why women must keep silent in meetings, turn with me to 1 Corinthians 14 v 34 and 35 *"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."* Here we have it told to us that the women must keep silent. Here we are told that the women have to be under subjection (or obedience) as also saith the law. Genesis 3 is the account of the fall of man. Here, it was the woman Eve that was deceived and ate and gave to Adam. As a result of what she did, the Lord said to her *"...and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."* So we know that the woman must be silent during the meetings, but we are still not told (here at least) the full reason why. For that, we must turn to 1 Timothy 2 v 9 to v 15 *"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I*

suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." I have written these verses out so that we can consider what Scripture says. Notice what Paul has written here. He tells us that women need to be dressed modestly. This means that what women wear should be nice, but not too nice that it attracts the attention of the men, so that instead of concentrating on the Lord at the meetings, the men are too busy looking at the women. Anything that takes our attention from the Lord is not to be encouraged within our assembly lives. Interesting to note that Paul also says that women are not to have braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array. In other words, women are not (and I repeat NOT) to follow the worldly fashions. Fashion seems to come and go and there are enough people who follow it closely (almost religiously), it is like a god to them. This should not be encouraged among you. I have met many nice women who dress modestly but still look very nice. The word to avoid is eye-catching. If a woman is dressed eye-catchingly in a meeting, then it takes away from the Lord.

Also in this passage, we have why women are to be silent. The women here are told to learn in silence and with subjection. The woman is commanded to not teach or to exercise authority over the man. This is because man was created first, and then the woman was created from the man. However I do not wish for women to feel that there is no reason for them to be at the meetings. These letters are for encouragement to continue in the ways of Christ. So, what can women do? Women are to continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety. Women are to show themselves to be faithful to Christ, to love Him and serve Him with all that they have. However, this is not just for the women. All of us can show ourselves to be faithful to Christ; we can all serve Him with all that we have.

The fall

I have mentioned the fall quite a bit in the passages above. Let us turn to Genesis 3 and learn what it teaches us.

I am sure that you all know the story of the fall. I will cover it again, just so that we are all aware. When God created heaven and earth (there was no evolution), He made man and woman and set them to work, looking after the Garden of Eden. He only gave them one command to follow, but they could not even do that. God told them not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The serpent comes along and questions what God has told them. Notice that the serpent says, "*Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*" Eve, for that was the name of the woman, replies that God has told them that they can eat of every tree except one. But she goes further than what God does. She says "*God hath said Ye shall not eat of it*" This is correct, but then she added to what God had said with "*neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die*" How dangerous then to add to what God's word says. For the serpent used what she said against her. The serpent proceeded to undermine God's authority. "*Ye shall not surely die.*" The Serpent (or Satan) still seeks to undermine God's authority and contradicts what God has said in His word. We must even more careful to understand fully what God has said, so that we do not add to it or take away from it.

I want to look at the results of Adam and Eve's actions. Eve took of the fruit, and gave it to Adam and they both ate. Their eyes were opened and they knew that they were naked. Some may say that this was not a bad thing in itself, but they had disobeyed God. They knew it too. Adam and Eve heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day and they hid. It is interesting to note why they hid. "*I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.*" Adam feared the Lord, and so he hid. Now God asked Adam "*Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?*" I want you to realise that God knew the answer to the question, but wanted Adam to confess. Instead, Adam did what we often do. He sought to blame someone else for his actions. Adam blamed Eve. Eve blamed the serpent. God held all three

accountable. Every time we sin, we are accountable for that sin. This is why it is important to confess our sins (and keep short accounts with God over all the wrong things that we do.) See 1 John 1 v 9. The blood of Christ has taken away all judgement concerning our sins, but we will still have to give an account of what we have done in our lives.

So what did God do to these three? Let's look at each separately.

The Serpent:

Cursed above all cattle and above every beast of the field. He had to crawl along upon his belly and had to eat dust all the days of his life. This has been passed onto every snake that we have. Each one has to crawl upon his belly because of what happened in that day. I want you to notice, though, that the serpent is cursed above all cattle. The whole of creation suffered because of this day.

Eve:

Sorrow was multiplied in child bearing. The women now have a desire to be ruled by their husbands. The results of sin in Eve's life have been passed on to every single woman.

Adam:

Adam hearkened unto his wife and therefore the ground is now cursed. Again, it is in sorrow that man has to eat of it. He now has to work hard to provide a living for his wife and family. This too has been passed onto every man. Notice that the ground will now produce thorns and thistles, to complicate the food production. "*and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;*" Adam was not permitted to eat of the animals. This privilege was given to Noah after the flood. But the gravest of things came next for Adam. He will return to the dust of the ground. Death has now entered into the life of Adam. There will come a day when Adam will die. By the same token, spiritual death occurred the moment he disobeyed. We were all spiritually dead, until the day when we received Jesus Christ into our lives. "*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*" Romans 5 v 12.

What else happened in the garden?

Well, verse 21 tells us that the Lord made them coats of skin, and clothed them. This is significant, because it tells us that animals had to die, in order that they may surrender their skin. What I have not included above, is the prophecy that Christ will come and stand on the serpent's head. I want to look at it in connection with the animals dying for man. Verse 15 tells us that the Lord will put enmity between the serpent and the woman, and between the woman's seed and the serpent's seed. "*it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*" This is significant for the following reason. If you receive a head injury, your thinking is reduced, if you survive at all. If you receive a heel injury, you will not die, but you will be restricted in your walking movements. Satan could only restrict Christ's walk for a short time. However, Satan has received a fatal blow to his head and will not survive. We know from Revelation what Satan's final end will be. (See Revelation 20 v 10). So why have I linked it with the animals that were killed to provide clothing for Adam and Eve? Very simply, Christ died to provide us with spiritual clothing, to fit us to live with Him forever in eternity. Just as the animals were killed to provide physical clothing, Christ died to provide spiritual clothing. (See Matthew 22 v 11 to v 13. Those who do not have this garment will be cast out of the wedding feast. The master knows each one who is His.)

Finally, the Lord says these final words in verse 22 "*And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So He drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to*

keep the way of the tree of life." So man was driven out of the Garden of Eden forever. There was no going back because of the flaming sword. Adam no longer had everything provided for him, he had to work for what he needed. This is not what God had intended for each of us when He created man.

Closing remarks

Before I close this letter, I want you to consider a couple of verses with me.

The first is found in Colossians 3 v 1 to v 4. *"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."* These verses remind us that we are to seek those things that are not on this planet. I was saddened when I learned that the organized church (i.e. the Church of England, etc) had decided to move their meetings because it clashed with the recent England football match. This is not seeking the things above. What we have to remember is that we no longer have any ties to this world. As far as the world is concerned, we should be dead. As verse 3 says, we are dead. Our life is hidden from them because they cannot and do not want to see it. However, if we are dead, then we should not be having any contact with the entertainments that are present in this world. We are waiting for Christ to appear, for He is our life and we shall appear with Him in glory. I am waiting and expecting to be with Him every single day. Are you?

The second is found in Proverbs 27 v 1 *"Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."* Here, we find that we are not guaranteed any day. We are told that the Lord may return today. I am aware that many may not read this newsletter before the Lord returns. But this has not stopped me writing it. When the Lord returns, I will go with Him. It may be that I will be taken home before He returns. Whatever He wills for my life, do I accept. We do not know what God has planned for us, but we must serve Him with everything that we have while we can.

May God be glorified, not man.