

The Fellowship of the Christian

By Xavier Pickett

Introduction

Christian and fellowship today are two words that hardly go together. In the minds of many Christians, the word "Christian" has several different meanings as well as "fellowship." We dare not confuse, nor compound the matter when we bring the two words together. In the face of that, the Bible brings the two words together, though, not literally, but conceptually and presuppositionally. It does so by the mere fact a Christian is someone who will desire by nature true fellowship. However, in the midst of all the confusion, a hint of "Christian fellowship" would arguably still seem to exist. Christians rallying around at a baseball game eating chilly dogs and popcorn, calling each other mainly because they need someone else's help and talking to one another after some church service because after all, that is the only time we will be able to see one another or even care to do such, generally speaking of course. Today, this is what passes off as Christian fellowship. Unfortunately, what passes off is no more than the residue of genuine fellowship or perhaps the lack thereof.

Based upon the title of this article, it is obvious that I intend to write about the basis of Christian fellowship. Nevertheless, it is important before I mention a few things about the basis that I first establish briefly the need for Christian fellowship in the life of the believer and the church.

The Need for Christian Fellowship

Regarding the need for fellowship among believers, the Bible again speaks to this issue. The Scriptures are clear that we need one another and we cannot function properly without each other (1 Cor. 12, Eph. 4). We are all (various) members of *one* body, the body of Christ. "For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body...for the body is not one member, but many" (1 Cor. 12:12, 14). The *connectedness* of the members of the body has corporate effects, which also means there is a genuine and deep-hearted concern for other members no matter what their function and nature (1 Cor. 12:21-26). Through these realities, we see, not only the need for fellowship in the body, but also the fact that we cannot help but to fellowship with one another as members of one body, if we are to have true fellowship at all. For us, as Christians to buck against this, is to buck against God Himself and what He has established because this need finds its origin and source from God (Eph. 4:11-16). Not to mention, God is also the cause of Christian fellowship. "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13) and "God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired" (v. 18). Therefore, by divine necessity Christians must interact with one another in order for the body to function properly because it is through the interaction

of Christians with one another, according to Scripture that the body will act as a unit, even in light of the diversity of members. Hence, we will rightly reflect both the ultimate equality of the unity and diversity of our triune God as his body bear his image.

Moreover, if it is not clearly seen by now, this sort of interaction and fellowship is not optional. Not only is it not optional individually, but also in a corporate sense as far as being a part of a local church (Heb. 10:25). Sadly, many American Christians (if I can make such a qualification) are content and even prefer individualism rather than biblical solidarity. If given the option, many Christians would probably trade in biblical solidarity for some trite, corny, shallow individualism, which is self-centered and Christ-negating. If we are concerned about solidarity, it is definitely not biblical because we rather find unity in us going to a football game, belonging to the same church, having the same trivial and superficial interest, being in the same family, corporation, race, county, city, state, region, and nation than Christ Jesus, in whom we are united in and find our ultimate identity. Therefore, our camaraderie comes not merely, through what we may externally participate in together, but through our eternal participation with the Son in the redemptive plan of His Father by the Holy Spirit!

Christian fellowship is not optional, but needful and it will naturally flow from the members of the one body. Therefore, in order for the body to operate, as it should, the members must properly relate to one another because in doing so, we glorify the head of the body, Christ Jesus (Eph. 5:23)! What this means for our daily lives is that we ought to prioritize and value more the importance of Christian fellowship because, in large biblical fellowship is to extend beyond the walls of a local church. I hope that this article can assist as we continue along that journey together.

Xavier@reformedblacksofamerica.org
www.reformedblacksofamerica.org